CULTURAL ASSUMPTIONS, PRODUCTIVITY AND INNOVATION: UNDERSTANDING THE UNITED STATES THROUGH CONTRAST WITH THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

BY

EDWIN C. NEVIS

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
50 MEMORIAL DRIVE
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139
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INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been a profusion of books and articles about Japanese economic success and about how the U.S. might improve its economic performance by learning from and adopting Japanese practices and norms. A band-wagon of enthusiasm has been generated, propelling the study of comparative management to new popularity. Inevitably, this has raised questions as to whether it is feasible to transplant specific practices and policies from one culture to another. For example: is the lifetime employment of large Japanese firms workable in the U.S.? Drucker (1981), Hofstede (1980), Schein (1981), Pascale and Athos (1981) and Ouchi (1981) are among those who have addressed these issues recently, particularly with regard to Japan-U.S. exchange. Indeed, this pursuit has led to new questions of what culture is and whether one can understand another culture (Schein, 1981).

This paper is an attempt to contribute to the growing body of literature in this area. It draws upon my recent work in the People's Republic of China (PRC) and my years of working with U.S. managers in the areas of motivation, creativity and innovation. From May 25th to September 4th, 1981, I lived and worked in the People's Republic of China.* While in China I met with university professors, managers of various enterprises and ministry officials. I

* I was one of twelve people recruited to conduct a demonstration project at the Shanghai Institute of Mechanical Engineering. Our mission was to transfer the technology involved in a two-year graduate management degree program as it might be conducted at a major U.S. university. Our students were twenty-eight teachers in training; we were to teach them the entire curriculum and also to leave behind teaching materials, books and articles which they and other Chinese could utilize later in developing management education throughout the country. We lectured and worked in English and had some assistance in developing materials which were to be translated into Chinese after we left. My function was to teach a course in organization psychology and to serve as the senior faculty person for the first semester's program.
also traveled in five cities and was exposed to a variety of cultural and industrial endeavors. During this time I heard repeated comments and read numerous articles which defined two of the major problems of China as low productivity and difficulty in applying innovations which would improve motivation and performance in all areas of work. The similarity of these comments to the preoccupation with productivity and innovation by U.S. managers was striking. Though the industrial base and the standard of living in the two countries are considerably different, it became clear that the importance of the issue to economic well-being was very high in both cultures.

As I began to understand the perspective from which my Chinese informants were speaking, I became more and more interested in trying to understand problems of productivity and innovation from a cultural perspective, and to see what kinds of assumptions were behind the development of current Chinese management practices, particularly those which were becoming blocks to enhanced productivity at the present time. As a basis of comparison, I undertook a similar analysis for the United States. Having had a background of trying to understand creativity and innovation in the United States for many years, it became an interesting challenge to see if I could gain new understanding of both the U.S. and the PRC from this perspective.

In making this analysis, I worked from the position that the study of another culture is highly useful as a means of understanding one's own culture better, not that one culture should borrow from another. This approach allows for and uses the heightened awareness of contrast as a method of illumination. I do not conclude by proposing another theory, such as "Theory Z" (Ouchi, 1981), but I hope through this presentation to remind the reader that cultures are not fixed, closed systems which can be understood in static, mechanistic terms. By using an analysis of basic cultural assumptions in the People's Republic of
China and in the U.S., and by looking at recent developments in these societies, I attempt to isolate the kinds of practices and norms that might be supported in a dynamic, changing U.S. so as to bring about positive changes in productivity and innovation. This perspective is respectful of basic, enduring cultural assumptions, but it also raises a question as to whether discontinuities can be perceived when they are in an early stage of development and thus be supported and enhanced.

Specifically, my analysis suggests that China is moving in a direction of more openness to individualism and free market assumptions, and that the U.S. is poised for—perhaps already into—a new kind of group or community-oriented adjustment. With regard to the U.S., my thinking is very consistent with the communitarianism discussed by Lodge (1975) in his book, *The New American Ideology*.

In the course of this analysis I examine Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as applied to the U.S. and develop a different hierarchy that seems to fit the assumptions driving the culture of the PRC. This comparison shows that the concept of a hierarchy of needs can be understood only in terms of a specific culture. It is a culturally relative concept, not a biological imperative—as Hofstede (1980), working from the perspective of massive data from managers all over the world, also shows. And, as cultures change, or as problems of environmental adaptation undergo significant shifts in importance, adjustments in the prominence of needs and their satisfaction lead to changes in priority from one level of the hierarchy to another. The recognition and acceptance of such fluidity in our own society is necessary if we are to understand what may be done in the U.S. to deal with our current problems of motivation, productivity and innovation. In searching for this insight, the use of two very different cultures has been enormously useful. It leads not to recommendations to adopt a version of the group-oriented society of China (or Japan, for that
matter), but to recognition that U.S. values of community and the satisfaction of belonging needs are in disarray and need attention in a way that is consistent with our present culture. A movement in this direction seems to be developing. It is a major thesis of mine that we must support this trend toward communitarianism in the United States, recognizing it as a flexible attempt to bring into balance some trends which are fundamentally American but which have been dormant or neglected as we have been pursuing individualism to the utmost in more recent years.

PERSPECTIVE ON THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Following Liberation in 1949, enormous energy poured forth to support the development of a new society. Most Chinese involved in that period speak well of the times. Though there was much suffering and deprivation, the general thrust was forward and positive in tone. Even with substantial set-backs from time to time during this period, the development of the country--particularly in agriculture and health--proceeded forward until the Cultural Revolution began in 1966. This period and its aftermath has been well documented elsewhere (Bonavia, 1980; Evans, 1978; Fraser, 1980; Garside, 1981); suffice it to say that for a ten year period (1966-1976) there was great upheaval, with dismantling of structures and policies to develop the country industrially, and an attack upon all intellectuals or those showing individualism in any way. This led to fear, poor morale and apathy. Survival came to depend on unquestioning loyalty to Chairman Mao, and the good citizen's reward was to be taken care of by the country in one form or another. Since 1976, there has been considerable freeing up of people and policies, but there is general consensus that people do not have the same dedication that was apparent in the early 1950's.

During the thirty-year period since Liberation, the population has grown to almost one billion people, but for the most part it is well fed. Many basic
needs are cared for by an individual's work unit or by the government in general; just as we talk of the "golden handcuffs" in the U.S., the Chinese often refer jokingly to the "iron rice bowl." Two major outcomes of the Cultural Revolution need mentioning. The first is that great caution about standing out in any way became the norm. It became too risky to assert a great deal of initiative unless one was absolutely clear how it might be received. Since such clarity was generally lacking, few people dared take the risk. Secondly, in order to reward loyalty to the unit and the nation as a whole, the concept of sharing equally became extremely prevalent throughout all walks of life. Everyone was to make sacrifices equally; and the idea was to make sure that all shared in the relatively meager rewards or outcomes. Thus, poor performance was rewarded equally with good performance. Since the standard of living was low and incomes were marginal anyway, it was considered better to have people share what little there was than to give extra rewards to those who had earned more by higher productivity.

Mao was adamant that national unity and loyalty was not to be compromised, and much of the suffering and deaths that occurred stemmed from an absolute application of this policy. He was also quite firm about developing agriculture as a main priority, putting it ahead of industrial development. He saw the need to feed the country adequately and to establish a higher standard of living for the enormous number of peasants and rural dwellers. Farms were to be communal only and were developed along the lines of collectives; no individual farming was allowed. As for industry, this was to be controlled and operated by the state, leading to the development of a large bureaucracy which includes, for example, eight ministries of machine building. Each of these ministries owns and operates thousands of factories, as well as supporting organizations, including colleges and training schools. In addition, Mao stressed the concept
of perpetual revolution. As classes began to form in the new China it became necessary to take strong actions to attack these classes and recycle the revolutionary pattern in order to be as classless as possible. The most dramatic example of this was the unleashing of the Red Guards to attack the growing managerial and intellectual class in Chinese society. Another major aspect of the new China was de-sensualization. Since an important aspect of classical Mandarinism was the refinement of one's senses, overthrow of this culture required the implementation of a bland, austere society. The lack of color in clothing and many other policies and structures were developed to bring this about.

A last point about Chinese society that is critical to this paper is the extensive use made of groups. It is not necessary to repeat here discussions of the use of groups for political and ideological work, and the success that the Chinese have had in using small groups for socialization and "thought control." What is important for the present purposes is that most factories and agricultural organizations are broken down into small units. In the factories, work is carried out in small units, called workshops, which may be anything from a cost center to a small group of people working around two or three machines. Likewise, in the communes, smaller units such as brigades and teams are employed. Thus, from the beginning work was to be organized and controlled in small groups. While there have been changes over the years as to what the correct size and structure of these groups is, the basic concept has remained the same. It followed from this structure that people help each other not only with work problems but also with personal problems. Since so much of one's life is oriented around the work unit—-with housing, education, and medical care often part of the fringe benefits—-the life pattern of the typical Chinese person is strongly group-oriented. Chairman Mao also encouraged and rewarded the propriety of intervening in the lives of friends, neighbors and co-workers for the purpose of "correcting" deviations from ideology or expected behavior.
CULTURAL CONCEPTS UNDERLYING CHINESE MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS

Figure 1 lists the most apparent cultural assumptions gleaned from study of Chinese management structures and norms. These reflect the changes since 1949 and represent the basic aspects of the new society. It will be seen that the focus is on ideology and national unity, yet the emphasis on family, age, and conservative ways follows traditional Chinese norms. Thus, though there is great need to improve professional management of the enterprises, it is very rare to find a high potential young manager supervising an older manager at this time. In this instance, the old continues along with the new; the older managers (or "leaders," as the Chinese prefer to call them) are also trusted contributors to the Revolution and the Party. In an important speech Chairman Hu Yaobang (1981) stressed the need to promote younger people into higher positions of leadership but it is generally conceded in China that this will be a slow process and will not result in older people at top levels being passed over.

An important thread in these assumptions ties together national loyalty (Item 1 of Figure 1), equity (Item 4), avoidance of personal credit for accomplishment (Item 7), importance of communal property (Item 9), and emphasis on group forces for motivation (Item 10). The most basic assumption is that being a good member of society and putting group goals before individual needs should govern all practices. Belongingness—a moral imperative—is to be the driving core value or force. Without some grasp of this fundamental premise, it is very difficult to understand Chinese management and organization. To take one example, though incentives such as piece rates were used after Liberation, these were downplayed or eliminated by the Maoists, and a group-oriented system of equal pay and equal bonus was installed. This reached its height during the Cultural Revolution. All loyal (meaning everyone) were to share alike regardless of any differences in skill or output. Also, in place of emphasis on
Figure 1. CULTURAL ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING CHINESE MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS

1. Nation has priority over everything; loyalty to the country is of the utmost importance.

2. Consideration for family very important.

3. Personnel selection (leadership) based upon exploits or ideological contribution.

4. Great respect for age.

5. Equity is more important than wealth.

6. Saving, conserving (money, resources, etc.) is to be valued; also high respect for traditional ways.

7. Considered unhealthy for an individual to stand out or take personal credit for accomplishments.

8. Every decision must take ideology into account.

9. Communal property more important than private possessions; collectivism is the best economic mechanism.

10. Emphasis upon group forces for motivational purposes.

11. Emphasis on central planning; powerful state.
financial incentives, much use was made of honoring "model workers." Every factory displays in a prominent place the picture and name of those chosen as having the attitudes and the behavior best exemplifying the revolutionary ideals. Obviously, the others are expected to, and are exhorted to, follow suit. In addition to this practice, being a member of a work unit brought with it free or very inexpensive housing, schooling for one's children, medical care and recreational activities. The power of this combination of incentives and rewards has been great; if you thank a Chinese person or recognize his accomplishment, the reply is something like "I am only doing my job," "It is my duty." These are fundamental requisites of one kind of a group-oriented society, and must be understood if Chinese practices are to be appreciated. Though there have been changes in the last six years, these assumptions and practices still prevail to a large extent.
CULTURAL ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING U.S. MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS

In contrast to the group-oriented, central control assumptions in the PRC, U.S. culture has developed out of assumptions stressing a limited state and individualism. Figure 2 lists the most critical of these. The list is expanded from an extensive analysis by W.H. Newman (1972), and reflects what Lodge (1975) and others have referred to as the Lockeian or Jeffersonian perspective of human nature.

While U.S. management practices and structures are not always true to these assumptions, they are the guiding, modal values of our culture. Even those companies selected out by Ouchi (1981) as "Theory Z" organizations as opposed to "Theory A" (American) firms are dominated by practices stemming from these assumptions. The contrast between assumptions and practices of the U.S. and those of the PRC is striking for its differences. Even where we may have some overlap with regard to fringe benefits and welfare, the ideology or strategy is quite different. The Chinese want loyalty and national unity; we desire the integrity of the individual and wish by these means to remove barriers to its attainment. A Chinese work unit, such as a factory, has many features of the "company town" which today are anathema to most Americans. In short, Chinese assumptions are organized around actualization of group, organization and state, and U.S. assumptions organize around actualization of the individual. As Veroff et al. (1981) point out in their large-scale survey of Americans, we now seek to use interpersonal intimacy rather than social organization as a means of integrating our lives. Finally, it should be noted that U.S. assumptions reflect equality of opportunity and Chinese assumptions focus around equality in the sharing of output.
Figure 2. **CULTURAL ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING U.S. MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS**

(Adapted, with additions, from W.H. Newman)

1. Belief that people can substantially influence the future; self-determination; master of my own fate.

2. Freedom of expression and opinion is generally valued; individualism encouraged.

3. "To get ahead" is taken for granted; there should be equal opportunity for all in this regard.

4. Independent enterprises are most effective instruments; competition the most effective mechanism.

5. Emphasis upon private property; limited state.

6. Personnel selection based on merit.

7. Decisions must be based on objective analysis.

8. Continual quest for improvement; a pragmatic orientation toward change.

9. High value on specialization in all fields.

10. View of the country as having virtually unlimited resources; "streets paved with gold" hypothesis.

11. "Fairness" as the guiding principle for the integration of individual and group needs.
CONTRAST IN U.S. AND CHINESE HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

While speculating on the above sets of assumptions it occurred to me to develop a Chinese hierarchy of needs, as contrasted with Maslow's classic formulation. Figures 3 and 4 show, respectively, Maslow's (1954) conceptualization for Western, presumably U.S., culture, and my construction of a version for the PRC. Analysis of the figures leads to the following hypotheses:

1) A hierarchy of needs may be postulated for every culture. This hierarchy may contain universal human needs but it cannot be assumed that physiological and safety needs come first in every culture. The only way to understand China since Liberation is to place belongingness as the primary need: basic life needs and security needs become focal after belonging needs are "worked through" and satisfaction is achieved. This formulation is the only way to explain the coercive or brutal aspects of Chinese life, during and since Liberation. It is consistent with the massive unequivocating effort to achieve group loyalty and national unity at all costs. It provides a basic integration of the underlying cultural assumptions discussed earlier (see Figure 1). This hypothesis also helps to understand other cultures in which individual life itself becomes fundamentally or temporarily subordinated to other values. Perhaps Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty or give me death" represents this phenomenon at one point in U.S. history. Japanese kamikaze pilots in World War II may reflect this as an aspect of the Imperial Japanese culture.

2) The formulation of self-esteem needs as a driving force makes sense for cultures which emphasize individualism but it is not a necessary, universal requirement to be found in all cultures. Indeed, one can examine numerous cultures--primarily Eastern or primitive--in which language and customs are process-oriented and where words or referents with the differentiation and richness of self and other individuals are not to be found. As a product of
SELF-ACTUALIZATION

SELF-ESTEEM

BELONGING (SOCIAL)

SAFETY

PHYSIOLOGICAL

TENDS TO BE DEFINED AS BEING IN THE SERVICE OF INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT

Figure 3. **MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS: AN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE**

STEMS FROM: WESTERN CULTURE

FOCUSES ON: INNER NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS
SELF-ACTUALIZATION IN THE SERVICE OF SOCIETY

TENDS TO BE DEFINED IN TERMS OF SUPERORDINATE GOALS: "MORAL IMPERATIVE"

SAFETY

PHYSIOLOGICAL

BELONGING

Figure 4. CHINESE HIERARCHY OF NEEDS: AS INTERPRETED BY NEVIS

STEMS FROM: EASTERN CULTURE

FOCUSES ON: REQUIREMENTS OF THE SOCIAL ORDER
Western culture, it seems very awkward to do so, but it appears warranted to eliminate self-esteem needs from a Chinese hierarchy of needs if the formulation is to fit Post-Liberation culture up to this point in time. In this connection, Chinese scholars have emphasized that the concept of "personality" does not exist in the Chinese tradition. As F.L.K. Hsu (1971) has pointed out, the Chinese use a concept of "jen" (man) which is defined as the person plus the salient, intimate societal and cultural environment which makes his/her life meaningful. This implies much less differentiation in the self-concept of individuals and stresses identity as a social phenomenon.

Another way to look at this issue is to consider whether self is a creation of private consciousness or a creation of shared meanings learned within each culture by each citizen. In recent U.S. culture the former definition--supported by the rise of interest in existential philosophy--has prevailed. However, the latter definition is also appropriate, and the question to be answered is whether there is a middle ground for the U.S. between the all-powerful group-oriented definition of self in China and the equally all-powerful private definition currently in vogue here.

3) Elimination of esteem needs does not render self-actualization unimportant as a human need--but self has a different definition in varying cultures. Actualization remains at the pinnacle of the hierarchy for both U.S. and Chinese cultures, but the criterion of its manifestation varies considerably between the two cultures. In recent U.S. history self-actualization has been defined as being the highest order of individual development; our version may be summed up as: "you owe it to yourself to be the best you can be in fulfilling the promise of your potential." This explains our great preoccupation with personal development, continuing education, wholistic health, individual career planning and other manifestations of the human potential movement. Recent works by Lasch (1978) and Yankelovich (1981) document this phenomenon very well. In
China, however, self-actualization is defined in terms of the highest order of attainment of individual competence for reasons related to superordinate goals: "My country needs me to be the best..." "It is my duty to do the best or be the best..." "To achieve the four modernizations, I must..." In this framework, awareness of self and realization of potential is in terms of how well one's functioning meets societal development needs or meets a criterion of excellence as a member of society. While coercive power may be an important background support for this attitude, with failure in any self-development endeavor bringing severe loss of face or other punishment, internalization of the value is widespread. This is the moral imperative that the Chinese have in mind when they use this term, and it contrasts sharply with the narcissistic quality ("you owe it to yourself") of much self-actualization in America. This line of reasoning also suggests that each culture will have its own definition of the meaning and the means of satisfaction of other need levels. The very concepts of belonging and safety are culture-bound and will reflect differences in basic assumptions and values.

4) Each culture will define its own psychological or phenomenological importance of a given level and the "distance" between need levels. There may well be uneven amounts of preoccupation or satisfaction required at a given level in different cultures. For example, a society with a great deal of paranoia will require much more to satisfy safety needs than one with little such fear. This suggests that gaps or blind spots will exist as to the satisfaction of other needs while the culture is very busy with its obsession around the predominant need. If we consider that the two great thrusts in American culture today are concern with national security (safety) on the one hand, and self-fulfillment on the other, it may well be that we have narrowed or squeezed out concern with intermediate levels such as belongingness needs. In this regard, it is interesting that Maslow (1954) considered the thwarting of belongingness
as being at the core of individual pathology or maladjustment in mental health. Combining social needs and love needs in this category, he saw breakdowns in relatedness, intimacy, and identity through social connection, as blocking or preventing self-esteem and self-fulfillment. The question today is whether we have taken too much for granted or ignored attachment or commitment to social groupings as we have focused on self-fulfillment. As many observers have commented, interpersonal intimacy is replacing group membership and group identification. Even Maslow, to say nothing of the legions of this followers, focused on self-actualization in his later years, giving the impression that belongingness needs were no longer important. What few people realize, however, is that Maslow was very sensitive to issues of commitment to family and organization. He accepted the presidency of the American Psychological Association in 1963 largely because he felt that he could make a contribution toward healing of a schism between the clinical psychologist and the experimental psychologists - certainly an awareness of need at the belongingness level.* At any rate, it makes a big difference if one assumes that these needs are vital to U.S. culture and are in need of attention, or if one assumes that they are relatively insignificant in today's stage of advanced individualism.

5) If cultures change, and if we accept the notion of new needs emerging after old ones are satisfied, we can expect that esteem needs might arise in China. It also seems likely that, as pursuit of these new needs arises, other levels which are being reasonably well-satisfied will be taken for granted and become problem areas. This is not an idle point in China, where many leaders believe that the recent opening up of individual freedom in the country will lead to a breakdown of the emphasis on group and national unity which is the backbone of the culture. Indeed, there is great concern that newer generations will develop self-esteem needs much like those of Western developed nations. As

* Personal communication, Big Sur, 1963.
Table 1 shows, younger Chinese rank interesting work, feeling in on things, and full appreciation of work done (recognition) very high; these are usually defined as self-esteem needs.

While the above argument is somewhat impressionistic, and lacks the support of significant, hard data, very similar conclusions are reached by Geert Hofstede in his recent book, *Culture's Consequences* (1980). Using his own data and that of others, he also shows the cultural relativity of the Maslowian framework and suggests different need hierarchies for varying cultures or countries classified according to an individualism-collectivism dimension and an ego-social dimension. From an ensuing categorization he derives four possible patterns, with the U.S. and China falling into groupings about as described above.
Table 1. WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>MIDDLE MGRS.</th>
<th></th>
<th>CHINESE GRADUATE STUDENTS **</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Interesting work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Promotion and growth</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Good wages</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Full appreciation of work done</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Job security</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Feeling in on things</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Good working conditions</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Personal loyalty to workers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Tactful discipline</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Sympathetic help on personal problems</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data gathered by E.C. Nevis from "Fortune 100" Company

** Data obtained by E.C. Nevis at Shanghai Institute of Mechanical Engineering, July 1981
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE TWO SOCIETIES

The previous sections of this paper outline major elements of Chinese and U.S. cultures, with particular attention to need hierarchies. This discourse aims at stating core values and basic assumptions, the bedrock modal qualities that help to define each culture. If we take an evolutionary, gradualist approach to change, attempts to make changes in organizations in either of these cultures must be respectful of these assumptions if they are to succeed. If either country is to enhance its industrial productivity and its quality of life, attention must be given to new trends or ideas, but those which support the core assumptions and values will be most fruitful. Yet, if we are too respectful of accepted assumptions, we merely insure the status quo, not the possibility of true innovation through experiment. Perhaps changes in basic assumptions can only be achieved through revolutionary means, by looking for and supporting potential discontinuities or radical experiments—even if they violate core values. But here too, it would seem that for new values or concepts to become acceptable through revolutionary means they must build upon or relate in some way to old values. For example, the Chinese may have been aided in no little way in achieving loyalty to the nation by centuries of feudalistic subservience that existed right up to the time of the revolution.

The remaining sections of this paper look at recent developments in the two societies and conclude with implications and possible directions for the U.S. The question is raised as to whether group or communitarian-oriented changes in the U.S. are desirable, and whether they are feasible in terms of core cultural assumptions or require a "cultural revolution" to bring about.
CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Figure 5 lists current major developments and experiments in the PRC. Some of these reflect success in actualizing cultural assumptions; other differ from concepts or practices stemming from cultural assumptions of pre-1976 China and represent new artifacts or values.

Insert Figure 5 about here

These developments have been reported by many observers, and numerous sources of documentation exist also in official Chinese publications. One of the important themes that emerges is that of allowing individual freedom and individual accountability and reward. Another is the experimental, pragmatic quality which is emerging as a counter-force to ideological purity. As experienced China-watchers know, the recent appointment of a new chairman and demotion of the old one in June, 1981, symbolizes this trend.

In a broad sense, it would appear that the Chinese are moving more toward American assumptions; at least they are experimenting boldly and widely in this direction without trying to adopt our system. In terms of a hierarchy of needs, it is worth speculating that self-esteem, ego needs will emerge as a new level in its own right. On the other hand, one wonders whether past adherence to centralized leadership, group forces and state welfare, will allow seeds of entrepreneurialism and innovation to flourish. Recent, meager data shows that belongingness and survival needs are still major preoccupations of the Chinese worker, as shown in Table 2 and Table 3. How representative these data are remains a question; what is important to note, in any event, is that new developments have not weakened the resolve of the Chinese leaders that the nation has priority and that loyalty is essential.

Tables 2 and 3 about here
Figure 5. CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS AND EXPERIMENTS IN CHINA

1. Centralized control well-established; powerful state is fully in charge; yet signs of public self-criticism by leaders.

2. Large, cumbersome bureaucracy with overlapping, often conflicting sub-systems and goals.

3. General acceptance of national, superordinate goals, but growing questioning of how well the Party is doing in achieving them.

4. Highly successful achievements in agriculture, managing to feed a huge population reasonably well.

5. Success of state and work units in providing necessities for people has produced a welfare mentality; people believe that they will be cared for in one way or another.

6. Growth of free market system as abundance makes surpluses possible in some areas; planning and market economies allowed to co-exist.

7. Growing consumerism and individualism in taste; beginnings of desire for greater privacy.

8. Select organizations allowed to retain profits, pay taxes, borrow money at interest, and make own investment decisions.

9. Experiments in finding more flexible organizational formats and in decentralizing authority.

10. Both individual and group bonuses exist; many variations in incentive plans being tried.

11. Individual ownership of enterprises now allowed and encouraged (mostly in small, service organizations).

12. Product quality now stressed highly; appearance of quality incentives.

13. Contract system in industry and job responsibility system in agriculture: MBO variations with accountability and reward mechanisms to support the objectives established.

14. Revival of workers congresses, which function as advisors to leaders, watch over welfare needs of workers, and select supervisors and managers at all levels.
Table 2. WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO CHINESE WORKERS  
(Items developed by Chinese org. psychologist)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>CHINESE WORKERS N = 343</th>
<th>PREDICTIONS BY CHINESE GRADUATE STUDENTS* N = 28**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To realize the four modernizations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Raising of bonuses and wages</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Belief in communism</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ambition</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Happy family</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. To get honourable title</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. To be a famous expert</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Promotion</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Without any ideal or motive</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* From 1980 study by Dr. Xu Lian-Cang of Chinese Academy of Science.

** Data obtained by E.C. Nevis at Shanghai Institute of Mechanical Engineering, July 1981.
Table 3. **WHAT "CHILLS" WORKERS' MOTIVATION (IN CHINA)**
(Items developed by Chinese org. psychologist)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANK ORDER</th>
<th>CHINESE* WORKERS</th>
<th>PREDICTIONS BY CHINESE GRADUATE STUDENTS*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ITEM</td>
<td>N = 343</td>
<td>N = 28**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Unhealthy tendency</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Low wages</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Housing problems</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Privileges of cadres</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Dull life</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Dissatisfaction with jobs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Factional strife</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Problems with children's education</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* From 1980 study by Dr. Xu Lian-Cang of Chinese Academy of Science.

** Data obtained by E.C. Nevis at Shanghai Institute of Mechanical Engineering, July 1981.
CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS AND EXPERIMENTS IN THE U.S.

Figure 6 presents some of the major recent developments in U.S. society. Some of these represent broad trends; others are more specific experiments or unusual solutions to difficult problems. The items are diverse, befitting the view that we are now in a period of great change. One theme that emerges, however, is that individualism and self-actualization, supported by U.S. cultural assumptions and riding a crest of economic growth and virtually unlimited resources, has been carried to a very high level of achievement. If we see this as an encompassing view of American society—not just indicative of the upper classes—we can consider ourselves to be very successful; we are well into the highest level of the hierarchy of needs. Even with pockets of poverty and some sections of the country with long-standing economic problems, and even considering that we may be entering into a period of scarce, diminishing resources, self-fulfillment forces remain very strong and are likely to continue for significant segments of the population. Expectations do not fall with the same rate that marked their acceleration. Moreover, what seems to be taking place is not a desire to increase more of what people have but, rather, a movement toward finer and finer discriminations by people—especially young adults—in the choices that they make. Thus, if self-fulfillment is beginning to mean that one cannot have everything, it still leaves open more sophisticated thinking about the aesthetics of one's life than is possible at a lower level of need attainment.

This state of affairs might be quite acceptable were it not for the fact that the means and methods of satisfying needs at the safety and belonging levels have deteriorated. Current major troublesome issues are economic uncertainty, job security and social disorganization, suggesting that basic supports—hygiene factors in the Herzberg terminology—are in disarray for a large portion of the population, not just the poor and very needy. Many of the items listed in
1. Self-fulfillment at a high point; high expectations regarding satisfying many needs and actualizing self.

2. Establishment of many institutions and methods for development of the "authentic self"; unblocked, expressive behavior is the goal, versus instrumental behavior or self-denial.

3. Increase in the number of people living alone; relative failure of the communal experiments of the 1960's; yet sharing of housing seems to be increasing, particularly among young adults and the elderly.

4. Strong focus on interpersonal intimacy: friends, family, personal "little" worlds important; individuals less willing to move or make job changes that have negative impact on these relationships.

5. Concern with quality of relationships in large institutions; desire for less manipulative, warmer, generous relationships than were formerly associated with the business world (see data in Bray and Howard, 1981; and Veroff, et.al., 1981).

6. Lessening desire for dominance in leadership roles among young managers (Bray and Howard, 1981) and for being an entrepreneur or working for oneself (Shapero, 1981).

7. Growth of pluralism; increased acceptance of deviation from traditional roles.

8. Deterioration of faith in government and ability of leaders to govern; lack of consensus and the growth of interest groups and lobbying as a means of gaining objectives; individualistic, everybody-for-self approach.

9. Deterioration in industrial growth rates, productivity decline; quality of products and services declining.

10. Establishment of equal employment opportunity and affirmative action programs supported by federal laws, but threatened by economic problems and unemployment increase.

11. Growth of size of organizations in all spheres; conglomerates and huge enterprises dominate industry.

12. Dismantling of Great Society programs; advocates of laissez-faire seem to be prevailing over state intervention in significant areas.

13. Movement into the information revolution and broad use of electronic devices, automation, etc.

14. Many organizations experimenting with work innovations such as quality of work life programs, quality circles, flexitime, Scanlon-type incentive plans, autonomous work groups, etc.
15. Appearance of phenomena like the "Lordstown Case": workers making changes which better support their social, group needs.

16. Community intervention to help the independent enterprise: Lockheed, Chrysler bailouts, etc.; the Municipal Assistance Corporation of New York City (MAC) as example of cooperation to meet a superordinate goal.

17. Agreements among workers and managers at different levels to share jobs, take pay-cuts in lieu of lay-offs of some; re-assignment of people mutually accepted in order to save jobs.

18. Possible beginnings of new union-management relationships as seen in re-opening of contracts, Ford-UAW agreement, etc.
Figure 6 are manifestations of these problems or of attempted solutions to them.

With regard to where we might be heading, two things stand out in consideration of the items on the list:

a) Desires for close, more affiliative relationships at work as well as in other spheres of life.

b) Appearance of intergroup cooperation to achieve superordinate goals in situations that typically would be left to competitive, adversary mechanisms.

While both of these trends seem to conflict with the basic U.S. cultural assumptions of individualism and competition, they relate to social requirements that are associated with the belonging level of the hierarchy of needs. Many trends and experiments are now taking place at this level, including the use of groups in quality of work life programs. Even the recently reported increase in the joining of groups—albeit largely for purposes of social action—seems to represent movement at the social level. Thus, if the Chinese are moving in the direction of individualism through more flexibility in group forces and the lessening of centralized controls, is it possible that we are moving to repair the supports for, and further the attainment of, American-style individualism by application of newer group and communitarian thinking? Numerous people have addressed this issue and believe that is what is required and is, indeed, beginning to happen. Calls for a "new social ethic" (Yankelovich, 1981), for "communitarianism" (Lodge, 1975), and for a cooperative theory of management (Driscoll, 1982) are being heard, with arguments akin to the thrust of this paper.

This view raises questions as to the cultural appropriateness of the assumptions behind these movements. Perhaps this concern may be laid to rest if we think of it as a requirement to strengthen the underpinnings of U.S. individualism. From this viewpoint we may be seeing attempts to correct imbalances which are
very consistent with U.S. values but which now require consideration of lower-order needs as a pragmatic matter. Study of our history of the past 50-60 years does show periods of cooperation and consensus at critical times. Some noteworthy examples of this are:

a) Camaraderie and group spirit of large segments of the working class in the early days of unionism.
b) Sharing and sense of community by victims of the great depression.
c) Patriotic attitudes, sacrifices and mobilization of people during World War II.
d) Broad-gauge support for the space program at the time the Russians launched Sputnik.
e) Advances in inter-group relations after World War II and the heightened appreciation for group forces brought about by the group dynamics/sensitivity training movement.*

The above items represent critical periods in our history in which people were able to rally around superordinate goals. Temporarily, in hard times, we have been able to put aside individualism. It may well be that we are in such a period where attention to the belonging level will help us to deal with current problems. President Carter appeared to have some insight into our need for this kind of superordinate thinking, but his personal style and the mood of the American people combined to minimize his impact. This may have been only a temporary set-back to a growing awareness in our society.

* In this regard, it is interesting to note that industrial managers and other leaders were much taken with group dynamics in their T-Group experiences in the 1940's and 1950's. By 1960, however, the self-actualizing, freeing-up aspects of these experiences predominated, supported by changes in the objectives and outlook of the professionals conducting these programs.
Another emerging awareness is that human development specialists have been stressing a definition of self identity as the outcome of private consciousness and the satisfaction of inner needs, ignoring or playing down identity as a result of shared meanings and the outcome of the individual relating to human units greater than one. Self-fulfillment is as likely to stem from being a participant in important social processes as from inner exploration and development. Both approaches are legitimate endeavors, but concentration on the latter has led to confusing self-preoccupation with self-fulfillment, as Yankelovich tries to show (1981). Perhaps unwittingly, the human potential movement often sounds as though the criterion of the fully actualized person is that of the fully developed, independent individual living in full splendor and alone on some lofty mountain peak. This may be possible to attain if everything around us is working well and lower order needs are being met, but the complexity and necessary interdependence of modern living make it highly unlikely to achieve, if desirable to begin with.

The work of Felix Rohatyn and the MAC to save New York City from bankruptcy, and the bailouts of Lockheed and Chrysler by the Federal government pose a more complicated issue with regard to assumptions of free markets, competition and a limited state. From the standpoint of such assumptions, these actions were inappropriate and possibly harmful. We might counter-argue that they merely face up to the reality that we no longer have a society in which unlimited resources permits these assumptions to hold as they did earlier in our history. What stands out beyond adherence to any assumptions is that many people and significant social systems would have been severely damaged if these rescue attempts were not made. This is superordinate thinking at a high level, and it represents action at the social or belonging level of the need hierarchy, as well as in the service of basic life needs. These are community actions, and we may need a lot more of such interventions at the present time. It would
appear, by contrast, that the Chinese have this level in relatively decent working order and need to take more actions to free up individualism and competition for similarly pragmatic, survival purposes.

If this analysis is a useful guideline, there are some specific things American management can do to improve our productivity and innovation at this time. The concluding section of this paper discusses some of these.
IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Given the current picture in the U.S. and our fundamental cultural assumptions, actions to solve our problems which involve centralized planning or tightening of organizational controls are likely to be ineffective. A more fruitful approach will be to make greater use of relatively autonomous groups or small social units as the focal point for producing changes. This would directly attack issues of the belonging level at a manageable system size. Both self-fulfillment through individual expression and identification with personally meaningful social processes are satisfied this way, as is the desire for deeper or more generous relationships with relatively few people. This proposal will run counter to the mistrust of group decision-making among American managers. However, this mistrust has been in reaction to pressures for consensus which emphasizes the sharing of power and authority. If we can shift the focus somewhat, away from pressures for shared responsibility to a more pragmatic approach to sharing of information in the service of better problems solving, we may be able to support newer models for group action in the U.S. Schein (1981) has suggested that for groups to be more palatable in the U.S. the focus must be on the need to share information held by many people, not on an attempt at spreading responsibility, as does the Japanese model of group decision-making. This is more in the direction of American values, and there may be other factors which can be emphasized in this regard. For example, it may not be entirely unrealistic to propose in a group format that unless all the individuals give up something in the service of a larger good (a superordinate goal), all will suffer. This would require the higher levels of authority involved to give up something too, but they would give up something other than individual authority or responsibility and accountability for results. While it will require great skill and inventiveness to operationalize this approach, it will be critical that all parties learn to yield on some aspect or degree of personal
goal satisfaction following a principle of equity. This suggests an approach in which all share each other's fate, a central theme in John Rawls' (1971) treatise, *A Theory of Justice*. Certainly, this is in keeping with an American cultural assumption concerning fairness. An example of this principle in operation would be an agreement by owners and management to give up something if workers are asked to make some concessions or work in a new way.

Another example of new ways to use small groups is to structure them along entrepreneurial lines. Beckhard (1981) and others have suggested this approach as being a spur to new energy. Such groups would need the authority and access to the resources necessary to operate as though they were in business for themselves. This approach is similar to the Yugoslavian use of the smallest basic unit of associated labor (BOAL) as a profit center but, more significantly, it supports American cultural assumptions of individualism, independent enterprises, and competition, to the extent possible in these days of large, centrally dominated corporations. It is only a few steps away from use of Scanlon Plans and other cost-saving incentive plans with a strong group focus. With regard to Scanlon Plans, it is interesting to note that they have generally been more acceptable and successful in small or moderate sized organizations than in very large ones.

This train of thought inevitably raises questions of scale; it is easier to try experiments in smaller organizations or parts of large ones. It may well be, in addition, that American pluralism will make room for different parts of large systems to operate differently. However, my sense is that we have been moving more toward greater centralization as our organizations have become huge, resources have become more precious, and errors in strategy or tactics more costly. This is also the state of affairs in China up to the present, and what many Chinese leaders feel they must undo. They have concluded that their cumbersome, low-productivity bureaucracy must be changed. And though
my experience in China is certainly limited, I am convinced that the major problems in the path of their success are the size of their units and their centralized controls. This is what will determine their economic growth more than whether they are a socialist or capitalist economy.

In the U.S. also, there is now much data to show that the largest of our industrial organizations perform less well than moderate sized ones on key indicators such as return on investment. For example, one study showed that, per dollar of research and development money, smaller companies produced 24 times more major innovation than large ones, and with only five percent of all available research and development money (Bedell, 1981). Likewise, between 1969 and 1979, firms with fewer than 20 employees accounted for 66% of all new jobs (Birch, 1981). Questions of scale, critical mass, and slack resources are complex, and beyond the scope of this paper. For some purposes, very large systems may be desirable. Also, it may be impossible to reduce the concentration achieved by mergers and acquisitions in the last three decades. However, we cannot go blithely into the information revolution without anticipating more problems at the social or belonging level. Forthcoming structural changes may produce more job challenge for some people, mostly skilled professionals, but the technology involved leads to even more impersonal relationships and will drive people to an even greater internal search for self-fulfillment, as automation, teleconferencing, etc., become the order of the day. To manage all this, one's relationships with others may become more critical than job enrichment--which may be quite limited for most people, no matter what we do. In their recent survey of American attitudes and well-being, Veroff et.al.(1981) reach this very conclusion from their data. My point is that more innovative use of small groups provides a workable level for integrating the belonging needs of individuals and the needs of society as a whole. Loyalty and commitment are much easier to
attain in small social units than in large ones, particularly in a culture where individualism is a central value. If anything, our large organizations tend toward collectivism and may actually be more in support of Chinese cultural assumption than those of the U.S. Interesting exceptions are some U.S. organizations, such as Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing (3M) who are reported (Klein, 1982) to continually break their units down when they become large.

I should make it clear that I am not advocating here simple renewal of a group process orientation as practiced vigorously by organization development specialists in past years. While this is helpful, it is not sufficient for the job at hand. What I am proposing requires a focus on the small social unit at a more basic strategic and tactical level. It means that management considerations will have to include the effect of varying structure, use, and composition of groups. It may require decisions to move people less frequently than in the past in order for a group to work together long enough to be most effective. Data such as Katz's (1982) findings that research and development groups are most effective between the second and fifth years of their existence need to be utilized and expanded upon for such planning to be effective. Likewise, greater use of group incentives will be necessary. As the Chinese are finding out, it is possible to have both group and individual incentives within the same work group: a group award for achievement of objectives or quotas is sub-divided by the group to allow for individual awards reflecting differential contribution. This is in keeping with a few unpublicized experiments several years ago, and it is in keeping with our assumptions of individualism and equality of opportunity. At any rate, it is time for American managers to become fully aware of the possibilities inherent in group goal-setting backed up with group incentives. Perhaps pragmatism can overcome some inherent distrust of groups.
Another issue of interest is seen in several instances recently where people have agreed as a group to accept pay-cuts or to delay pay raises so that no members of the group need be laid-off. While this does violation to seniority or expectations of salary progression, it certainly shows respect for group or community needs, and it shows recognition at a superordinate level of the importance of the well-being of others to satisfaction of our own needs. The recently completed negotiations between Ford Motor Company and the UAW may be a sign that more of this kind of thinking is beginning to take place. But it will require deliberations and negotiations at the group level to bring about successful outcomes. In a recent article in the New York Times, A.H. Raskin (1982) presents several cases in which such cooperation is now taking place between labor and management.

Another area to examine from a small group perspective is that of career planning. Presently, we use small group formats for educating managers in career planning but, essentially, the locus of control of careers is merely shifting from centralization at the top of the organization to involvement of individuals. It would be very interesting to see some experiments in which small groups or organic work units are given responsibility for on-going career planning on the job, not at a seminar. This need not detract from the importance of the individual, and it might produce a more supportive environment. Here, too, I would anticipate a workable way of integrating organizational needs and individual goals. Some years ago I participated in a highly successful program in which supervisors were selected by subordinates who were adhering to criteria developed by the organization. The Chinese now do this as a matter of routine for first-line supervisors and, more and more frequently, at higher levels of management. Assuming that most American organizations will not allow delegation of this kind of final authority, I believe that intermediate, developmental aspects of career planning would still be possible at the group level.
The proposal to involve a work group in one's career planning will undoubtedly raise fears in the minds of many that I am advocating a form of "butting into someone else's business," and that I have been unduly influenced by the Chinese use of group forces and their penchant for intervening in the lives of their neighbors and fellow workers. Actually, there is a model of great popularity in the U.S. that will support the particular form to be developed in this culture. This is the model of the consulting/helping process and its special variation, third-party intervention. While the U.S. did not invent the helping professions, we do understand something about giving and receiving help, and we have managed to integrate this with rugged individualism. Many managers have now progressed to the use of a consultative style of management. It is from the model of third-party intervention, however, that I see the most fruitful source of new approaches at the group and intergroup levels. Typically, this model provides a basis for dealing with crisis or breakdown in relationships. It requires great skill and sensitivity to use it effectively, considering that a major problem is that of gaining entry and acceptance in two or more tightly bounded systems. Thus, we think of Kissinger or Carter in the Middle East, Rohatyn in New York City, or the great labor negotiators, as special cases of people who can function well when all else fails. But there are now signs that such people, and even less skilled experts, are playing voluntary, experimental roles as bridging agents or coordinators. A few months ago an article appeared in the New York Times (Pear, 1982) describing a coalition of six organizations that usually do not agree with each other: The American Hospital Association, The American Medical Association, The Blue Cross and Blue Shield Associations, The Business Roundtable, The Health Insurance Association of America, and The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations. This coalition has agreed to take on the task of establishing local coalitions around the country to scrutinize medical costs and the use of hospital
services. While the effort was organized by John Dunlop, the noted economist and labor expert, it is an example of what may be done by all kinds of people. At the community level it is just the sort of intervention needed as an adjunct to the social action groups which unilaterally line up on one side of an issue. The approach respects the independence of the groups involved but recognizes the need for negotiating and integrating models where intergroup consensus is not a viable solution.

It occurs to me that there is an application of such thinking within single organizations. That is in the form of seeking a helper or "intervenor" early in the stage of a problem, before a crisis has developed. We do not have such norms because the U.S. ideal of "rugged individualism" emphasizes self-help and decries anything short of standing on one's own feet. Rather, our norm is to have help ordered into action, such as when corporate staff managers are sent to divisions to "fix things". But if the use of requested help became popular everywhere in an organization, we would institutionalize a new kind of helping role. This approach would do less violation to the individual responsibility of any manager using it than when other 'actors' are forced into his arena. While I am aware of the strength of the norm this works against, I cannot think of a better way to release cooperative group energy at work and to balance out the isolation of self-fulfillment with commitment to superordinate goals. Under this charter I would include seeking of help from another part of the organization with a problem that may be only peripheral to one's own responsibilities. To insure success with this we would need to support it with training in negotiating and consulting skills and with ways of rewarding both the offering and accepting of such help.

This last point may be utopian; it certainly requires specific, programmatic development if it is to be applied. I have no illusions concerning its easy acceptance. It is offered as an example of the kind of innovative thinking
we must engage in if we are to take seriously the need to repair and improve the ways in which we now deal with our social and belonging needs. We cannot simply adopt Chinese practices, which will seem burdensome and interfering to most Americans. We can search for American ways which tap into the basic flexibility we seem to have to adjust our individualistic pursuits to more cooperative means for dealing with crisis of severe proportions. The kind of community-oriented proposals contained herein hopefully are respectful enough of our values of self-fulfillment, fairness and pragmatism, that they can be given some consideration and may stimulate others to think of additional approaches or alternatives.
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