Cultural Intelligence, Diversity Climate, and Employee Behavior: A Study of MNE Subsidiaries in China

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ABSTRACT

This study draws from the literature on workplace diversity, cultural intelligence, and creativity to examine the relationship between diversity climate and employees' behaviors. With data collected from three multinational enterprise subsidiaries that operated in China for over 25 years, this study reveals that employees' metacognitive cultural intelligence is positively related to their perceived diversity climate, leading to creative behavior and citizenship altruism behavior. In addition, this study examines an important interpersonal factor that is sensitive to the Confucius culture, harmony, and finds it directly impact motivational cultural intelligence. The mediating effect of harmony on the relationship between motivational cultural intelligence and employees' altruism behaviors is also tested. This study contributes to the literature by investigating the organizational mechanisms underlying the role of cultural intelligence on employee behaviors in culturally diverse workplaces. Practical implications are also discussed.

Key Words: Diversity climate; cultural intelligence; harmony; creative behavior; organizational citizenship altruism behavior

INTRODUCTION

Organizational efforts in the management of diversity climate continue to grow, responding to the increase in workplace diversity. More multinational enterprises (MNEs) today strive to enact policies, procedures, and training initiatives designed to manage and leverage their diverse employees (Holstein, 2009; Ng et al., 2009). Diversity climate has been examined as the aggregate member perceptions about the organization's diversity-related features including formal structural characteristics and informal values (Schulte et al., 2006), which result in inclusion or exclusion of people from diverse backgrounds (Mor Barak et al., 1998). Scholars have studied the antecedents and consequences of diversity climate to provide a comprehensive understanding of managerial implications. An extensive literature points to a strong association between organizational diversity climate and employees' behaviors (Gonzalez & Denisi, 2009; Richard, 2000; Richard & Kirby, 1997); however, the boundary conditions and the specific mechanisms of how the diversity climate could affect different organizational outcomes have not been studied extensively in the literature.

Scholars have not agreed on whether a diversity climate ensures positive organizational behaviors. On the one hand, numerous studies have shown that diversity climate has helped companies generate higher earnings, net profits, and chief executive officer salaries and enables companies to better

meet their customers' needs and develop competitive advantages (e.g., Hartenian & Gudmunson, 2000; Richard et al., 2004); on the other hand, some scholars argue that diversity climate in organizations does not automatically ensure positive outcomes (Kratzer et al, 2004; Lauring & Klitmøller, 2017; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Numerous studies have demonstrated the negative effects that employees' perceptions of language, demographic, psychographic, or cultural diversity have had on the retention and performances of individuals, work teams, and organizations (e.g., Fleming & Kopperlman, 1996; Lauring & Selmer, 2011; Sacco & Schmitt, 2005; Tsui et al., 1992).

Current research results do not provide clear evidence to support that a diversity climate inevitably leads to positive or negative organizational performance. It is crucial to further explore the organizational mechanism of how diversity climate could impact employee performance and how organizations can foster the conditions to leverage the benefits of diversity climate. Furthermore, researchers call for further studies to explore under what conditions (individual versus organizational level) organizations can benefit from the perception of diversity climate (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Gonzalez & Denisi, 2009; Heath, 2007; Richard, 2000; Shore et al., 2009). Notably, there is a gap in the literature regarding how the individual capability of employees is related to the perception of diversity climate and how employee capability can be deployed to leverage the benefits of organizational diversity climate (Bogilovic & Škerlavaj, 2015). It is worth further exploring the organizational mechanism under which employee perceptions of organizational diversity could lead to positive organizational behaviors, such as creative behaviors and organizational citizenship altruism behaviors, in order to develop an advanced understanding of organizational contextual factors of MNEs in Asian Societies.

Cultural intelligence (CQ) has been studied as a critical determinant of organizational behavior in culturally diverse settings, as it triggers positive behavior, which results in superior organizational performance (Adair et al., 2013; Crotty & Brett, 2012). CQ refers to traits and skills allowing one to interact with novel cultural settings more effectively. Researchers reached a consensus that CQ helps one to function effectively in culturally diverse settings and therefore perceive diverse environments positively. Metacognitive CQ delineates mental and cognitive capacity in acquiring cultural knowledge, while motivational CQ captures individuals' mental capacity to direct energy toward learning about and functioning in culturally diverse settings (Ang et al., 2007). In other words, CQ helps employees to benefit from an organizational diversity climate by generating positive organizational perceptions, which results in positive organizational behaviors.

Further, Deutsch (2007) has recommended that studies of social interactions and complex organizational realities should include individual and contextual perspectives. Along with this discussion of CQ, Earley and Ang (2003, p. 212) have established that individual personality aspects and contextual parameters will co-influence one's capability to internalize CQ. However, there is a gap in the literature regarding the specific mechanism that organizational contexts and individual traits could collectively lead to positive organizational behavior. Particularly, researchers call for a more advanced understanding of different dimensions of CQ as a multidimensional construct, and how different dimensions of CQ could help employees to benefit from diversity climate. Responding to this research gap, we propose the following research questions: How and within what organizational contexts is individual capacity (e.g., CQ) associated with the perception of diversity climate? How is perception of diversity climate associated with positive organizational behavior (e.g., creative behaviors and organizational citizenship altruism behaviors)?

Built upon current literature on CQ (e.g., Earley & Ang, 2003) and diversity climate, we develop several hypotheses asserting direct and indirect effects of CQ of employees on diversity climate in MNE subsidiaries, and the positive relationship between diversity climate and positive employees' behaviors in multicultural organizations. We argue that individual capacity (e.g., CQ) and interpersonal contextual factors are important for perceptions of diversity climate, leading to employees' positive organizational behaviors. We analyzed survey data of MNE subsidiaries, including employees and their supervisors, to support our hypotheses.

The research results contribute to the literature on CQ in culturally diverse settings and to our understanding of CQ of employees in MNE subsidiaries in a Confucius culture. Special consideration of Confucius cultural context and cultural characteristics are amplified in this setting through the lens of harmony (Cheung et al., 2012). Our findings reveal a direct connection between metacognitive CQ and harmony as a crucial interpersonal contextual factor in MNEs in a Confucius society. Our results also contribute to the scholarly debates on the relationships between diversity climate and positive employee behaviors. It illustrates a positive direct effect of perceptions of diversity climate on positive organizational creative behavior and citizenship altruism behavior with empirical data support. Furthermore, the results further support the trait activation theory by testing the effect of harmony, as an interpersonal contextual factor, on the relationship between motivational CQ and organizational citizenship behavior. Last but not least, this research contributes to the literature on diversity climate by highlighting the role of harmony as an important Confucius cultural

feature in Chinese subsidiaries of MNEs, contextualizing the discussions of harmony in MNEs in the Asian society from an intercultural perspective. The research findings could be extended and further studied in other Confucius cultures.

The results have several practical implications. Firstly, it suggests that the crucial and direct role of MNE subsidiary employees' CQ in MNE settings in Confucius societies is not contingent on diversity climate. This finding needs to be considered in the human resources (HR) practice and recruiting process. Secondly, it suggests managers of MNEs a way to encourage organizational citizenship and creative behaviors by fostering employees' perceptions of diversity climate. Finally, the findings on the direct effect of harmony as an interpersonal contextual factor on metacognitive CQ has implications for MNE subsidiaries to build its organizational culture in a meaningful and effective way in Confucius societies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Diversity Climate

Diversity climate refers to employees' shared perceptions about how much their firm values diversity by utilizing fair practices and socially integrating all personnel (McKay, et al., 2008). Organizational diversity climate is purported to expand the plurality of perspectives and experiences within an organization and can serve as a strategic resource to the organization in securing a competitive advantage (Cox & Blake, 1991; Richard, 2000; Richard & Kirby, 1997).

There has been an increase in literature on how organizations can foster conditions that leverage the benefits of a diversity climate or, at least, lessen its possible negative effects (e.g., Ely & Thomas, 2001; Richard, 2000; Shore et al., 2009). For instance, Kochan et al. (2003) studied four large firms and demonstrated that organizational context is crucial in determining the impact of diversity climate on organizational performance. More recently, organizational diversity climate has been identified as a crucial contextual catalyst that activates the benefits of diversity (Gonzalez & Denisi, 2009). More specifically, when the corporate core value system commits to diversity, firms create a prodiversity climate in which employees perceive that their firm has adopted fair employee policies and socially integrated all personnel (McKay et al., 2009). An organization with a prodiversity climate tends to treat diversity as an asset and proactively leverage its benefits in developing their employees and the organization (McKay et al., 2009), encouraging demographically different peer integration, intimacy, and knowledge sharing (Bacharach et al., 2005). It results in lower adverse impact on intergroup conflict and social integration (Ely & Thomas, 2001) and

mitigates the negative impact of diversity on performance (Sacco & Schmitt, 2005).

Cultural Intelligence and Diversity Climate

Following Sternberg and Wagner's (1986) framework of intelligence, Earley and Ang (2003) conceptualized CQ as a multidimensional construct comprising metacognitive, cognitive, behavioral, and motivational dimensions with specific relevance to functioning in culturally diverse settings. Metacognitive CQ reflects mental and cognitive capacity in acquiring cultural knowledge. Cognitive CQ captures knowledge structure and overall knowledge about cultural differences. Behavioral CQ reflects the capacity to exhibit culturally appropriate verbal and non-verbal actions. Motivational CQ refers to individuals' mental capacity to direct and sustain energy toward learning about and functioning in situations characterized by cultural differences (Ang et al., 2007; Van Dyne et al., 2012). CQ has been proposed as a key factor of successful managerial interactions (Alon & Higgins, 2005), as it is positively related to outcomes such as cultural adaptation (Ward et al., 2011), adjustment (Lee & Sukoco, 2010; Ramalu et al., 2012), intercultural negotiation effectiveness (Imai & Gelfand, 2010), leadership effectiveness (Rockstuhl et al., 2011), team performance (Moon, 2013), and individual performance (Cheung et al., 2012). The present study emphasizes metacognitive and motivational dimensions of CQ, which have been examined extensively in a culturally diverse workplace.

Metacognitive cultural intelligence

The metacognitive dimension of CQ reflects an individual's mental consciousness and awareness during intercultural interactions. Metacognitive CQ relates to how individuals plan their behavior before interacting with culturally diverse colleagues, monitor their assumptions during multicultural interactions, and make mental adjustments if expectations differ from their experiences with multicultural interactions (Ang et al., 2007). Metacognitive CQ entails active monitoring and orchestration of cognitive processes to achieve the cognitive goal of cultural integration. Employees with high metacognitive CQ consider what the other person knows about and what the person is currently doing toward another culture (Phakiti, 2003). Leaders with high metacognitive CQ consciously question cultural assumptions and adapt their mental maps of cultural assumptions and values during and after interactions (Brislin et al., 2006).

Metacognitive skills can trigger positive thinking in employees working in culturally diverse settings (Feldhusen & Goh, 1995) and involve three specific metacognitive self-regulated mental processes, including planning (Schmidt & Ford, 2003), awareness (Sitzmann & Ely, 2011), and checking

(Bell & Kozlowski, 2008). Individuals with high metacognitive CQ are more likely to start to create a fusion culture in the work environment and blend diverse cultural values into one organizational culture (Crotty & Brett, 2012). Furthermore, metacognitive CQ positively affects shared values in culturally heterogeneous teams (Adair et al., 2013). If culturally diverse teammates have shared values, they see themselves more as in-group members, which will, on the one hand, increase social interaction (e.g., sharing information and engaging in communication) and, on the other, decrease social categorization processes. It also found that leaders with high metacognitive CQ reduce cultural gaps between the organization and other stakeholders (Luu, 2016). In that sense, they are more likely to perceive and respond actively to a culturally diverse environment.

Built upon the above discussions, we propose the following hypothesis (as shown in Figure 1, the proposed theoretical framework):

H1a: Metacognitive cultural intelligence will be positively related to diversity climates.

Motivational cultural intelligence

Motivational CQ predicts employee cross-cultural tasks (Chen et al., 2012). Motivational CQ provides "agentic control of affect, cognition and behavior that facilitate goal accomplishment" (Kanfer & Heggestad, 1997, p. 39). In other words, it is more fundamental than metacognitive and behavioral CQ, which will likely result from motivational CQ. Templer et al. (2006) also argued that motivational CQ has the potential "to advance our understanding of CQ and serves as a model of future research on CQ" (p. 155). In addition, numerous studies examining the effects of CQ in diverse cultural settings and task performance demonstrated that motivational CQ is a significant predictor across various settings and tasks, whereas other dimensions of CQ did not show consistent results (Ang et al., 2007; Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Chen, et al., 2010).

Motivational CQ captures an individual's ability to direct attention toward learning about and functioning in situations characterized by cultural differences (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). It covers both cross-cultural self-efficacy (i.e., belief in the ability to be effective in culturally diverse environment) and cross-cultural intrinsic motivation (i.e., intrinsic interest in other cultures) (Ang et al., 2007; Chen et al., 2010). Individuals with high motivational CQ tend to "direct attention and energy toward cross-cultural situations based on intrinsic interests and confidence in their cross-cultural effectiveness" (Ang et al., 2007, p. 338) and they are likely to achieve superior intercultural task performance (Earley & Ang, 2003; Ng et al., 2009).

Motivational CQ is positively related to work performance in a cross-cultural environment (Templer et al., 2006). International managers with higher motivational CQ reported
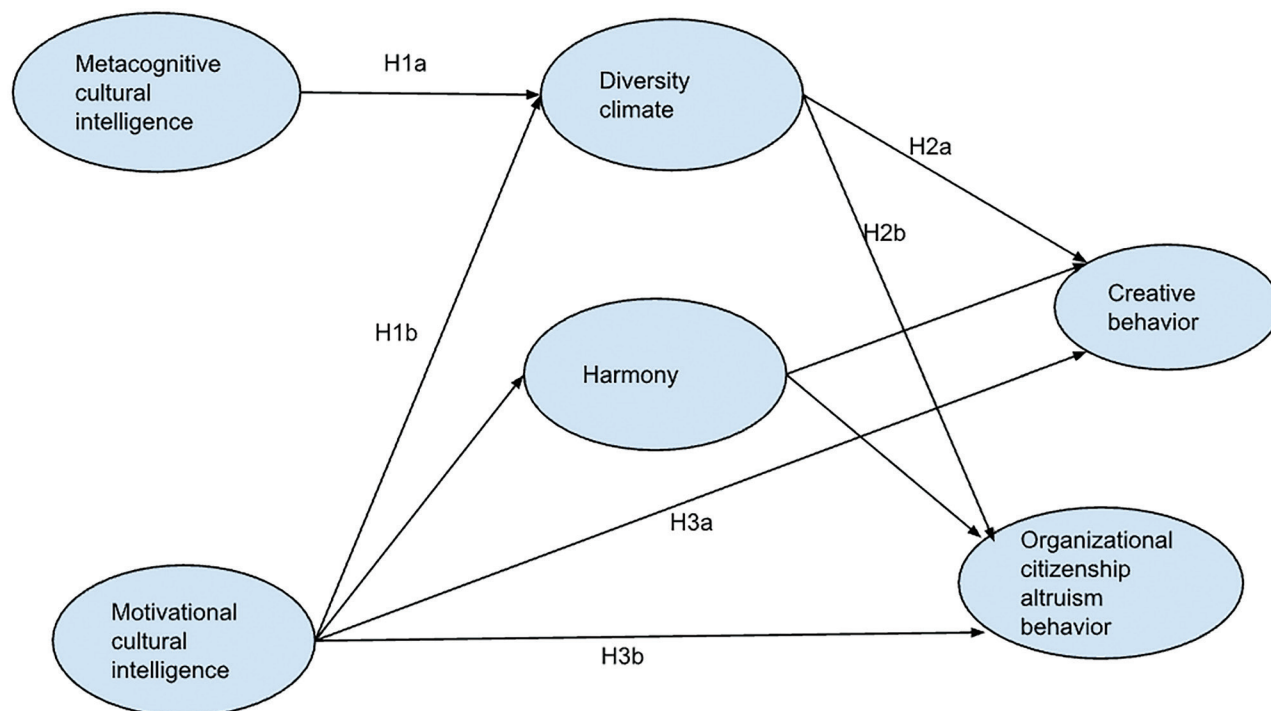

FIGURE 1 Proposed Theoretical Model

enhanced cultural adjustment (Ang et al., 2007). Additionally, Chen et al. (2010) surveyed 556 expatriates in 31 foreign subsidiaries and found that expatriates' motivational CQ contributed to their work adjustment, which led to superior job performance in an international assignment. In addition, it found that individuals with high motivational CQ are effective negotiators in cross-cultural conversations. Individuals with higher motivational CQ have a stronger communication motive that enables them to overcome the barriers in communication (Templer et al., 2006). Imai and Gelfand (2010) revealed that individuals with higher motivational CQ had a higher cooperative motive and could devote more effort to understanding their culturally unfamiliar counterparts.

Built upon this empirical evidence, motivational CQ has been regarded as being conducive to working in a culturally diverse environment, a crucial determinant of superior performance in culturally diverse settings (Chen et al., 2010). Research demonstrates that motivational CQ significantly predicts effective performance in a culturally diverse environment. For instance, people with high motivational CQ are intrinsically interested in other cultures (Ang et al., 2007). As suggested by research on intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2008), these individuals tend to initiate intense efforts, persist in working with culturally diverse groups, and diligently adjust their attitudes and behavior to make their tasks successful. High motivational CQ can reduce the likelihood of emerging social categorization processes within a culturally diverse group (Rockstuhl & Ng, 2008). Therefore, people with high motivational CQ expect themselves to be able to handle culturally diverse situations (Ang et al., 2007). The self-efficacy literature indicates that when people believe in their ability to succeed in challenging situations, they will be proactive in obtaining relevant information and marshaling valuable resources to develop effective coping strategies (Bandura, 2002). As a result, those with high motivational CQ will be more capable of understanding the cultural backgrounds of diverse groups, identifying a common ground of cultural diversity climate to establish personal connections, and tapping into necessary resources to overcome communication barriers. Given these discussions, we develop the following hypothesis:

H1b: Motivational cultural intelligence will be positively related to diversity climates.

Diversity Climate and Organizational Positive Outcomes

A burgeoning literature on diversity climate emphasizes collective perceptions about diversity-related organizational values and formal structural characteristics (Gonzalez & Denisi, 2009). Diversity climate provides crucial insights into the actual employee experiences with the organization. As noted,

"it is one thing to know what the VP of HR says happens, and it may be another to hear how employee experience practices" (Schneider et al. 2002, p. 126). For this reason, it can be argued that employee perception is a more telling indicator of the organization's actual diversity climate and employees' behavior (Kossek & Zonia, 1993; Rynes & Rosen, 1995). Researchers revealed little about diversity climate in MNEs, as much research has been limited to gender or racial diversity and focuses only on domestic firms (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Nishii, 2013). This is a need for research that explores how MNEs frame diversity from an employee perspective (Hajro et al., 2023). Research concerning diversity climate supports these assertions by demonstrating its association with a wide array of important organizational outcomes, including the heterogeneity of an organization (Kossek & Zonia, 1993), turnover intentions (Mckay et al., 2007), organizational commitment, job satisfaction, career commitment and satisfaction with managers (Hicks-Clarke & Iles, 2000), and positive financial ramifications (McKay et al., 2008). Diversity climate has also been shown to mitigate the adverse efforts of diversity, such as increased relationship conflict, decreased productivity, intent to quit, and lower organizational commitment (Gonzales & Denisi, 2009). Furthermore, diversity climate was positively associated with organizational commitment and decreased absenteeism across cultural groups (Avery et al., 2007).

Diversity climate and employee creative behaviors
Evidence of diversity climate improving the outcomes of organizational behavior might be gained from studies focusing on attitudes toward diversity (e.g., Nakui et al., 2011) and diversity beliefs (Hobman et al., 2003; Homan et al., 2007; Meyer & Schermuly, 2012; van Dick et al., 2008; Van Knippenberg et al., 2007). This line of research has mostly examined the antecedents or specific subsets of antecedents, such as personal and contextual factors that facilitate or inhibit creativity (Shalley & Gilson, 2004; Shalley et al., 2004; Zhou & Hoever, 2014). However, the empirical evidence on diversity climate and creative behaviors has yielded mixed results about whether diversity climate enhances creative behaviors (Anderson et al., 2014, Bogilovic & Škerlavaj, 2015).

Literature on diversity climate proposes that a diverse work environment extends the range of different problem-solving styles, knowledge, perspectives, and skills (Pelled et al., 1999; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998), which in turn stimulates individuals and leads them to create new ideas (Cox & Blake, 1991). Therefore, diversity climate may be valuable for employees' creativity (Amabile, 1996). On the other hand, the similarity attraction argument (Pfeffer, 1983) suggests that diversity climate may indirectly decrease employees' creativity due to a social categorization process. Evidence indicates that the social

categorization process (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), in which individuals start categorizing colleagues as in-group/out-group members based on cultural differences, hinders the use of information available to solve problems (Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Moreover, the possibility of emotional and relational conflicts in a culturally diverse group is much higher (Jehn et al., 1999; Mannix & Neale, 2005). Diversity climate may therefore relate negatively to individual creativity.

Considering these different findings in recent reviews of creativity literature, scholars have repeatedly called for further studies of the conditions under which diversity climate will stimulate creativity (Anderson et al., 2004; Anderson et al., 2014; Shalley et al., 2004; Zhou & Shalley, 2003). Broader concepts of the organizational factors and conditions that allow people from different cultures to collaborate creatively are needed (Anderson et al., 2004; Leung et al., 2008).

Built upon the work by Perry-Smith and Shalley (2003), we argue that a creative process is often a result of social interaction in which individuals interact, collaborate, and share ideas and solutions with others (Chua et al., 2012; Perry-Smith, 2006; Unsworth et al., 2005), while social exchange with different individuals may invoke new information and knowledge, which in turn stimulates individual creativity (Madjar, 2005). Therefore, the key to employees' creativity is with whom and how they perceive to interact.

Diversity climate literature suggests that diverse coworkers can be a valuable source of employee creativity (Amabile, 1996). This value-in-diversity argument suggests that individual exposure to the diverse knowledge, skills, and perspectives available from diverse colleagues enhances the generation of individual ideas (Pelled et al., 1999; Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). A culturally diverse work environment "provides for the confluence of disparate ideas from different cultures; the appropriate combination of ideas and perspectives from different cultures potentiates creative solutions" (Chua, 2013, p. 1545). Built upon these discussions, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2a: Diversity climate will be positively related to an employee's creative behavior.

Diversity climate and organizational citizenship altruism behavior

Diversity climate has been discussed in the broader social context within which interpersonal aggression from coworkers can be restrained (Cortina, 2008). It is proved that diversity climate is a crucial contextual factor that may be changed to discourage interpersonal aggression (Gelfand et al., 2005; Mckay et al., 2008; Mor Barak et al., 1998). In addition, studies showed that diversity climate could moderate the team diversity–interpersonal aggression relationship by provoking

decategorizing processes (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Thatcher & Jhen, 1998; Vasquez et al., 2007). Through its focus on multiple opportunities for recruiting, promotion and training, respect for different perspectives, top leaders' commitment to diversity, and a diversity-friendly work environment, diversity climate might reduce the threats and challenges to team identity, thus creating an inclusive team categorization (Thatcher & Jhen, 1998) and preventing intergroup bias (Van Knippenberg et al., 2004).

When it comes to the organizational context of Chinese subsidiaries of MNEs, research suggests that traditional Chinese employees will engage in citizenship behavior according to their perceived in-group roles within their work organization, not according to whether they feel they have been treated justly. Additionally, other forms of relational constructs differ from those based on a Western equity principle of justice governing interaction. Presumably, employees engage in citizenship behavior not merely because they perceive the work environment as just; they do so in satisfying their self-derived obligations to their in-group members, which may facilitate effective collaborations among cross-functional teams (Gong et al., 2010) and improve firm performance (Chang & Smithikrai, 2010). This framing supports the discussion that organizational citizenship behavior as a social construction (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010) is the product of meaning making and communication (Adame & Bisel, 2019). Working in organizations with diversity climate invites employees to compare themselves, based on similarities to and differences from their colleagues, to reduce uncertainty (Pitts & Towne, 2015; Tajfel &Turner, 1986; Van Knippenberg et al., 2004), and to create an inclusive in-group. More precisely, working within culturally diverse organizations motivates employees to generate new subgroups in the work environment based on cultural dissimilarities among in-group members (Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). Individuals who perceive their work environment as more diverse will interact more efficiently with out-group members, and the social categorization process will thus decrease, which will trigger their organizational citizenship altruism behavior (Van Knippenberg et al., 2007). As a result, employees are more likely to behave in ways favoring others. Built upon this discussion, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2b: Diversity climate will be positively related to an employee's organizational citizenship altruism behavior.

Motivational CQ, harmony, and positive organizational behaviors

Harmony, which depicts individuals' interpersonal orientation, has been studied to indicate interpersonal rather than

personal contextual behaviors. Emphasis on harmony, social reciprocity, and traditionalism is a unique feature of Chinese social relationship. These values are embedded in the interpersonal relatedness factor, as one of the four factors of the Chinese Personality Assessment Inventory (CPAI). These factors are dependability, interpersonal relatedness, social potency, and individualism (Cheung et al., 2012). In particular, the interpersonal relational factor could explain the additional variance in the outcome variables (e.g., work performance and achievement), beyond what can be explained by the universal personality constructs (Cheung et al., 2012). This factor stood out as the sixth factor beyond the Big Five of the universal Five-Factor Model (Cheung, et al., 2008; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000). Studies have shown that harmony is an important personality factor with cultural sensitivity, which is developed as an indigenous measure particularly in Confucius cultures (Cheung et al., 2003; Lau et al., 2023). Some studies have explored how the interpersonally related personality dimensions in the revised CPAI, which has been neglected in organizational behavior studies developed in the West, influence leadership in Chinese business contexts. Cheung et al. (2008) reported that the relational aspects of personality (e.g., family orientation, *renqing*, and harmony) contributed to predicting leadership behaviors and effectiveness in Chinese work settings, beyond the contribution of universal personality dimensions. Executives who emphasized reciprocal relationships (*renqing*) showed greater sensitivity toward others' feelings (social sensitivity) and were more concerned about personal and interpersonal harmony (harmony) (Cheung et al., 2008). Thus, they were perceived as more behaviorally complex and effective (Cheung et al., 2008). Chen et al. (2015) examined the impact of harmony on employee creativity in China and tested a dualistic model. It revealed that harmony enhancement had a positive relationship with creativity while disintegration avoidance had a negative relationship. In summary, harmony is a predictor of relational aspects of personality, which presented a major Chinese cultural tradition stemming from Confucianism, positively impacting effective performance of employees in Chinese work settings.

Harmony has also been found to be an important predictor of supervisor-rated interpersonal contextual behaviors. Cheung et al. (2007) found that harmony and some dependability factor scales (e.g., responsibility, meticulousness, and emotionality) predicted the job performance of frontline service workers in a hotel chain as rated by supervisors. Cheung et al. (2008) further examined the relationship between personality and customer service orientation among the hotel staff. They found that the harmony scales significantly predicted customer orientation of the frontline and supervisory employees. Gan et al. (2002) found that harmony was positively correlated with multiple indicators of work ability and attitude by examining work performance of middle and top managers of a state-owned company in China. Liao (2005) studied the impact of personality on work performance among retail salespersons and found that harmony is positively associated with work performance. Chin (2014) also found that harmony positively affects employees' organizational citizenship behavior and job satisfaction.

In addition, literature shows that individuals with high harmony scores adjust more smoothly to their social environment and maintain emotional stability, which further leads to better work performance of individuals within their work teams (Lun & Bond, 2006). Along this line of inquiry, Sun and Bond (2000) found that the face, harmony, and *renqing* scales contributed additional variance in predicting gentle persuasion as a broad set of interpersonal influence tactics among Chinese managers.

As individuals with high motivational CQ score higher in intercultural self-efficacy and motivation, they are more willing and eager to interact and work with people from various cultures (Dyne et al., 2012), particularly with the presence of harmony in intercultural interactions at multicultural workplaces. Following the trait activation theory (Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett et al., 2021), researchers examined the functioning of an individual disposition which is activated by specific social contextual cues. As embedded contextual cues in organizational settings, harmony helps to eliminate the possible concerns of disagreements and conflicts due to cultural differences and strengthens the positive forces that drive employees to engage in intercultural interactions and creative behaviors. As a result, individuals with high motivational CQ are more likely to behave creatively in a multicultural workplace. In addition, in organizational settings with a preferred presence of harmony, individuals are more confident and activated by the harmony setting, so they are more willing to help colleagues to adjust to workplace, complete tasks, and solve problems through collaboration. In this sense, harmony as an organizational contextual factor mediates the relationships between CQ and its behavior outcomes (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). In cultural conflicts, CQ enables employees to actively choose strategies to avoid conflicts in intercultural interactions to align with the preference for harmony in a multicultural workplace. Therefore, we argue that harmony as an interpersonal relation dimension serves as a contextual cue that encourages creative and organizational citizenship altruism behaviors of employees more motivated to interact with colleagues from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Built upon the previous discussion, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: Motivational culture intelligence will (1) have a direct effect on an employee's creative behavior in the context of Chinese MNEs and will also (2) have an indirect effect that is mediated by harmony.

H4: Motivational culture intelligence will (1) have a direct effect on an employee's organizational citizenship altruism behavior in the context of Chinese MNEs and will also (2) have an indirect effect that is mediated by harmony.

METHODS

Data Collection

The sample firms were identified by the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), an executive agency of foreign direct investments (FDI) in China, which have operated in China for over two decades. Firms that qualified for the survey have foreign employees who work alongside one another in the same office location and have been involved in innovation activities. We used convenience sampling method and chose Chinese firm data which provide a unique Confucius context to examine employees' practices and contextual factors related to Confucius culture. Particularly, this study emphasized the role of harmony as a crucial interpersonal context variable, and MNEs located in China offer insights to studying harmony as a cultural feature of organizations in Confucius societies. We collected the data in two stages. First, we sent an introductory participation request letter and summary of the proposed research to a random sample of 20 foreign subsidiaries located in the 12 economically developed providences along the east coast of China, where the majority of the country's FDI originate. Three foreign subsidiaries agreed to participate, representing different countries of origin, including Germany, Japan, and Korea. All of the three foreign subsidiaries have operated in China for over 25 years with diverse organizational cultures and have been involved in innovation activities.

We then contacted respondents from three foreign subsidiaries. Of the 500 individuals initially contacted, 138 agreed to participate, with a 28% acceptance rate. Of the 138 questionnaires, 116 were usable. The final 116 respondents reported on cross-functional dyadic relationships with peers at work through survey questions on perceived organizational culture and workplace behaviors. The respondents were well educated (72% with at least an undergraduate degree), with considerable organizational knowledge and experience (an average tenure of 6 years). The profile of respondents by age (average 32 years old) and gender (female 43%, male 57%) corresponds well with that of the population of foreign subsidiaries in China. Although further information on the population of all foreign subsidiaries' diverse organizational cultures is not available, it appeared likely that our respondents were representative of the population.

We developed our questionnaire in English, translated it into Chinese, and then back-translated it to ensure clarity (Brislin, 1970). We used Likert-type measurement scales for our constructs, adopting most from prior studies. Before our on-site interviews, we conducted semi-structured interviews with senior executives in an MNE to help us refine key constructs and choose wording appropriate for the multicultural setting in foreign subsidiaries. To control for non-response bias, we randomly selected 500 foreign subsidiaries from the databases provided by the China MOFCOM and used an unpaired t-test to examine the mean difference between responding firms and obtained-sample firms on key firm characteristics (duration of operations and financial performance); no significant difference was found. We collected data from two separate sources. While the participants were asked to answer a set of self-assessment questions, all of them were assessed by their supervisors on their organizational behaviors.

Measurements

Metacognitive cultural intelligence

Following Van Dyne et al. (2009), we asked respondents to rate on a scale of 1-7 to what extent they agree with four statements that describe their ability to strategize and work through different cultural experiences. One item was removed after confirmatory factor analysis to construct a unidimensional scale [Cronbach's α = 0.73, M = 5.07, standard deviation (SD) = 0.85]. The included statements are as follows: (1) I adjust to my cultural knowledge when I interact with people from different cultures; (2) I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when I interact with people from different cultures; and (3) I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge when I interact with people from different cultures.

Motivational cultural intelligence

Following Van Dyne et al. (2009), we asked respondents to rate on a scale of 1-7 to what extent they agree with five statements that describe their capability to direct attention and energy toward learning about and functioning in situations characterized by cultural differences. The confirmatory factor analysis showed that all the items were loaded significantly to one factor when measuring metacognitive CQ (Cronbach's α = 0.65, M = 4.89, SD = 0.68). The included questions are as follows: (1) I enjoy interacting with people

from different cultures; (2) I enjoy living in cultures that are unfamiliar to me; I am confident that I can socialize with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me; (3) I am confident that I can get accustomed to the shopping conditions in a different culture; and (4) I am sure I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me.

Harmony

We adopted 14 items from the Chinese personality scale used in Cheung et al. (2008). All these items asked the respondents to rate on a scale of 1-5 to what extent they agree with the statements about their interaction with coworkers. Only seven items were kept after the confirmatory factor analysis, all of which were loaded significantly to one factor (Cronbach's α = 0.65, M = 3.98, SD = 0.50). The included statements are as follows: (1) I always try hard to get along well with others; (2) I found it difficult to put myself in others' shoes to consider their point of view; (3) I try my best to maintain harmony in my family because I believe that if a family lives in harmony, all things will prosper; (4) When facing a dilemma, I can always arrive at a compromise; (5) It is a virtue to tolerate everything; (6) When I am interacting with others, I seldom notice whether I am giving them a hard time; and (7) When I talk to people, I seldom notice whether I am offending them.

Diversity climate

We adopted the scale from Pugh et al. (2008) to ask the respondents on a scale of 1-5 whether they agree with four statements about their work environment. All four items were loaded significantly to one factor (Cronbach's α = 0.78, M = 4.79, SD = 0.88). These statements are as follows: (1) The company makes it easy for people from diverse cultural and national backgrounds to fit in and be accepted; (2) Where I work, employees are developed/advanced without regard to the racial, religious, national, or cultural background of the individual; (3) Managers demonstrate through their actions that they want to hire and retain a culturally diverse workforce; and (4) I feel that my immediate manager/supervisor does a good job of managing people with diverse backgrounds (in terms of race, religion, nationality, or culture).

Creative behavior

We adopted 13 items from George and Zhou (2001). The respondents were asked on a scale of 1-5 to what extent they agreed with the statements about a specific employee who responded to other questions. This approach is consistent with the tradition in the organizational creativity literature that supervisor ratings are often used to measure creative behavior (George & Zhou, 2001; Tierney et al., 1999). The statements focused on issues related to possessing unique

perspectives, generating creative ideas, and proposing new ways of solving problem. All the items were loaded significantly to one factor (Cronbach's α = 0.92, M = 2.90, SD = 0.71).

Organizational citizenship altruism behavior

We adopted the scale from Farh et al. (1997). The corresponding supervisors were asked to answer on a scale of 1-5 to what extent they agree with four statements about their employees. All the items were loaded significantly to one factor (Cronbach's α = 0.90, M = 3.27, SD = 0.87). The four statements focused on evaluating employees' behaviors in terms of helping colleagues from different cultures adjust to work environment, solving work-related problems, completing work tasks if needed, and their willingness to communicate and cooperate with these colleagues.

Analysis

The theoretical model and hypotheses were tested using structural models with the following procedures (Hair et al., 2013), employing the lavann package in R (Rosseel, 2012). First of all, the overall goodness-of-fit tests were conducted at the global level, which was assessed with a non-significant chi-square. Secondly, we reported the following indicators to evaluate the model fit: the ratio of chi-square to the degree of freedom, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI), the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), and adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI). A ratio of less than 5 indicates a good fit. RMSEA values less than 0.05 indicate a close model fit, with values between 0.05 and 0.08 suggesting a reasonable fit (Kline, 2011; Schrodt & Phillips, 2016). CFI, GFI, and AGFI greater than 0.90 suggest a reasonable fit to the data. Secondly, at the local level, the statistical significance of each path was assessed based on t values. The critical value of t is 1.96 at the 0.05 alpha level and 2.58 at the 0.01 alpha level. Thirdly, harmony was tested as a mediator of the relationship between motivational CQ and creative behavior and the relationship between motivational CQ and organizational citizenship altruism behavior. The equation for the mediation effect is stated as follows, using motivational CQ as an example:

$$Creative\ behavior = c1*Motivational\ cultural\ intelligence + b1*Harmony$$
$$Organizational\ citizenship\ altruism\ behavior = c2*Motivational\ cultural\ intelligence + b2*harmony$$
$$Motivational\ cultural\ intelligence = a*Harmony$$
$$Indirect\ effect\ (Motivational\ cultural\ intelligence) = a*b1 + a*b2$$
$$Total\ effect = c1 + c2 + (a*b1) + (a*b2)$$

RESULTS

Preliminary Analysis

The bivariate correlations between all the variables are reported in Table 1. The most significant correlation is between metacognitive CQ and motivational CQ ($r = 0.58$), followed by the correlation between creative behavior and organizational citizenship altruism behavior ($r = 0.55$), the correlation between metacognitive CQ and diversity climate ($r = 0.53$), and the correlation between motivational CQ and organizational citizenship altruism behavior ($r = 0.27$). The measurement of harmony was not significantly correlated with any of the other variables except motivational CQ.

Model Testing and Hypothesis Testing

The proposed model (Model 1) was a good fit for the data. The chi-square test was non-significant ($\chi^2 = 1.73$, df = 4, p=0.79). The ratio of χ^2 to the degree of freedom was 0.43, significantly smaller than 5. The goodness-of-fit indicator was acceptable (GFI = 0.995, AGFI = 0.974, RMSEA = 0.00). This model accounted for 28% of the variance in diversity climate, 6% of the variance in creative behavior, and 8% of the variance in organizational citizenship altruism behavior.

H1a examined the effect of metacognitive CQ on diversity climate. The results showed that the higher the perceived metacognitive CQ, the more likely the employee will perceive the workplace as diverse. Therefore, H1a was supported ($\beta = 0.53$, SE = 0.10, $p<0.001$). H1b examined the relationship between motivational CQ on diversity climate. The results showed no effect ($\beta = 0.06$, SE = 0.13, p=0.64). H1b thus was not supported. H2a examined the effect of diversity climate on creative behavior, which was not supported ($\beta = 0.13$, SE = 0.08, p=0.08). H2b examined the effect of diversity climate on organizational citizenship altruism behavior, which was not supported either ($\beta = 0.11$, SE = 0.09, p=0.24).

H3a and H3b examined the direct and indirect effects (via harmony) motivational CQ may have on creative behavior. The results revealed no significant direct effect ($\beta = 0.13$, SE = 0.10, p=0.21) or indirect effect (b1 = 0.06, S.E. = 0.13, $p>0.05$). H3a and H3b thus were not supported. H4a and H4b examined the direct effect and indirect effect (via harmony) motivational CQ may have on organizational citizenship altruism behavior. The findings showed a significant direct effect ($\beta = 0.30$, SE = 0.12, p=0.02) but no indirect effect (b2 = −0.01, SE = 0.16, $p<0.05$). H4a was supported while H4b was not supported. The lack of mediation effect from harmony was due to the lack of effect from harmony to either of the two dependent variables (DVs) (creative behavior and organizational citizenship altruism behavior). This finding suggests that motivational CQ still matters when predicting outcome variables at culturally diverse workplaces. Table 2 summarizes the results.

To further explain the relationships between independent variables (IVs) and DVs, we created in Table 3 a summary of different effects. The effects of CQ stood out when explaining employees' behaviors at the workplace in that metacognitive CQ was related to diversity climate and motivational CQ was related to organizational citizenship altruism behavior. However, no effect was found from any of the IVs in the tested model. We conducted a simple regression with diversity climate as IV to further explore the relationships among the IVs and creative behavior (given the significant correlation reported in Table 1). Another regression model with diversity climate and the two dimensions of CQ was added. The result showed that in the simple regression model ($R^2 = 0.04$, $F(1, 114) = 5.30$, p=0.02), diversity climate had a significant effect on creative behavior ($\beta = 0.17$, SE = 0.07, p=0.02). However, when all the other variables were added, the effect of diversity climate disappeared ($R^2 = 0.04$, $F(3, 112) = 2.42$, p=0.07). Same tests were conducted using organizational

TABLE 1 Zero-Order Bivariate Correlation

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Min	Max	MEAN	SD
1. Metacognitive cultural intelligence	—						1.67	6.67	5.07	0.85
2. Motivational cultural intelligence	0.58***	—					3.20	6.80	4.89	0.68
3. Harmony	0.18	0.19**	—				3.13	4.88	4.01	0.44
4. Diversity climate	0.53***	0.34***	0.09	—	—		2.00	7.00	4.79	0.88
5. Creative behavior	0.14	0.19**	0.08	0.21**			1.00	4.38	2.90	0.71
6. Organizational citizenship altruism behavior	0.22**	0.27***	0.05	0.19**	0.55***	—	1.00	5.00	3.27	0.87

Note: *N = 116*
SD, standard deviation.
*** indicates a parameter where $p<0.001$, ** indicates a parameter where $p<0.01$, and * indicates a parameter where $p<0.05$.

TABLE 2 Summary of Variable Effects from Model Testing

	Path Coefficient	SE	*p* Value	Hypothesis Testing
DV: Diversity climate				
Metacognitive cultural intelligence	0.53	0.10	0.00	Supported
Motivational cultural intelligence	0.06	0.13	0.64	Not supported
DV: Creative behavior				
Diversity climate	0.13	0.08	0.08	Not supported
Motivational cultural intelligence (c1)	0.13	0.10	0.21	Not supported
Harmony (b1)	0.06	0.13	0.66	Not supported
DV: Organizational citizenship altruism behavior				
Diversity climate	0.11	0.09	0.24	Not supported
Motivational cultural intelligence (c2)	0.30	0.12	0.02	Supported
Harmony (b2)	−0.01	0.16	0.95	Not supported
DV: Harmony				
Motivational cultural intelligence (a)	0.14	0.07	0.04	Supported

DV, dependent variable; SE, standard error.

citizenship altruism behavior as DV. The simple regression ($R^2 = 0.03$, $F(1, 114) = 4.23$, $p=0.04$) with only diversity climate as an IV shows a significant effect (ß = 0.19, SE = 0.09, $p=0.04$). Similarly, the effect of diversity climate disappeared when the CQ variables were added ($R^2 = 0.06$, $F(3, 112) = 3.45$, $p=0.02$). These post hoc findings further suggest the importance of CQ variables in predicting employee behaviors at the workplace.

DISCUSSION

This study examines the organizational mechanisms of diversity climate in a multicultural work environment, with data collected from employees and their supervisors from MNE subsidiaries in a Confucius culture. There are several major findings in this research. Firstly, we find that metacognitive CQ significantly impacts diversity climate, which confirms previous findings and further supports the discussion regarding the positive impact of metacognitive CQ on organizational outcomes with empirical data support. Secondly, we find a significant relationship between motivational CQ and organizational citizenship altruism behaviors. These findings highlight that both the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (e.g., motivational CQ) influence employees' behaviors in the workplace.

We expect harmony to mediate the relationship between CQ and outcome variables. However, the mediation effect was not found. Harmony, as a relational contextual factor, is unique in the Confucius culture. Its lack of direct effect on perceived diversity climate, creative behavior, and organizational citizenship altruism behavior may suggest that employees have different interpretation of the concept and do not necessarily view it as a facilitating factor in a multinational corporate setting albeit the studied subsidiaries are located in Asian societies.

Cultural Intelligence of Employees in MNE Subsidiaries in a Confucius Culture

The current research advances the scholarship on CQ by discussing its impact on diversity climates in the context of Chinese subsidiaries of MNEs. In particular, the finding reveals a positive relationship between metacognitive CQ and diversity climate and sheds light on understanding CQ as a multidimensional construct in a Confucius culture. The finding is consistent with previous research on metacognitive CQ (Adair et al., 2013; Crotty & Brett, 2012; Feldhusen & Goh, 1995), with empirical data support from the context of Chinese subsidiaries of MNEs. The hypothesized positive relationship between motivational CQ and diversity climate was not significant, and it is meaningful to further discuss it in other organizational contexts with a larger sample size in future research.

The finding further discusses the effect of motivational CQ on employees' behavior in a culturally diverse environment. Our results further confirmed that motivational CQ directly

TABLE 3 Summary of Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects

Direct Effect		
Independent Variable	**Dependent Variable**	**Coefficient**
Metacognitive CQ	Diversity climate	0.53***
Motivational CQ	Diversity climate	0.06
Motivational CQ	Harmony	0.14**
Motivational CQ	Creative behavior	0.13
Motivational CQ	Organizational citizenship altruism behavior	0.30**
Harmony	Creative behavior	0.06
Harmony	Organizational citizenship altruism behavior	−0.01
Diversity	Creative behavior	0.13
Diversity	Organizational citizenship altruism behavior	0.11
Indirect Effect		
Independent Variable	**Dependent Variable**	**Coefficient**
Motivational CQ	Creative behavior	0.001
Motivational CQ	Organizational citizenship altruism behavior	−0.001

Total Effect			
Independent Variable	**Mediation Variable**	**Dependent Variable**	**Coefficient**
Motivational CQ	Harmony	Creative behavior	0.13
Motivational CQ	Harmony	Organizational citizenship altruism behavior	0.31*

CQ, cultural intelligence.
*** indicates a parameter where $p<0.001$, ** indicates a parameter where $p<0.01$, and * indicates a parameter where $p<0.05$

impacts organizational altruism behavior, consistent with previous research results on CQ (Chin, 2014). Particularly, the results highlight motivational CQ as a crucial dimension of CQ, capturing how individuals based on their intrinsic interests direct their attention to functioning in culturally diverse settings. The importance of motivational CQ was further suggested by our data analysis, as when the effect of motivational CQ was controlled, the effect of diversity climate on employee positive behavior also disappeared. Future studies could further look into the effect of motivational CQ on employee creative behavior in MNEs in other Asian societies.

Perceptions of Diversity Climate and Positive Employee Behavior

The findings contribute to the literature on perceptions of diversity climate by examining its positive impact on employees' organizational creative behavior. This study examines the effect of diversity climate by simultaneously controlling the effect of individual capabilities (i.e., CQ). Our research examined the relationship between organizational diversity climate and creative behaviors by answering repeated calls for greater research on the relationship between creativity and cultural differences (Anderson et al., 2004; Anderson et al., 2014; Shalley et al., 2004; Zhou & Su, 2010). As discussed earlier, there was a direct effect in simple regression, but the effect disappeared when controlling CQ variables (see our post hoc analysis results). Following the call by Van Dyne et al. (2012), we tested whether individual creative behavior is related to individual CQ. The lack of direct effect indicates that the role of CQ in creative behaviors might be culturally sensitive or depending on a certain contextual factor. We call for further examination of how the multiple dimensions of CQ can contribute to diversity climate and stimulate individual creative behaviors in a culturally diverse climate.

In addition, we examined the relationship between diversity climate and organizational citizenship altruism behavior in the context of Chinese subsidiaries, which extends the discussions of organizational citizenship behavior to Asia with

an emphasis on unique Confucius cultural elements. The findings revealed no significant direct relationship between diversity climate and organizational citizenship altruism behavior when CQ variables were controlled, but there was a direct effect in a simple regression (see our post hoc analysis results). It suggests that researchers might consider contextual factors at the organizational level to uncover the relationship between employees' perception of multicultural work environments and their altruism behaviors in the workplace setting. Future research should aim to understand how CQ impacts the relationship between the perception of diverse climates and altruism behavior.

The Effect of Harmony as a Contextual Factor

The results promise to further elucidate the mediating effect of harmony on the relationship between CQ and positive employee behaviors. This direction aligns with the discussions on trait activation theory (Tett & Guterman, 2000; Tett et al., 2021) that specific social contextual cues activate the functioning of an individual disposition. Literature suggests that harmony, as an interpersonal relation dimension, is a contextual cue in strengthening motivational CQ (Chen et al., 2010). For instance, Gan and Cheung (2010) found that harmony significantly moderates the relationship between proactive personality and job dedication/interpersonal facilitation. It found a positive correlation between proactive personality and job dedication/interpersonal facilitation in the high-harmony group, while the correlation was not significant in the low-harmony group. Our study also responds to the call of organizational scholars to stress the importance of adopting an interactional view, considering the interplay between contextual factors and individual characteristics in unveiling the role of individual characteristics in the organizational context (Cantor et al., 1982; Shoda, et al., 2002). Our results did not reveal a significant mediating effect of harmony, which suggests that the effect of individual motivational CQ on organizational behavior (e.g., organizational citizenship altruism) may not be contingent on the interpersonal contextual factor harmony. These research findings need to be understood within the studied context of MNEs in China and should be generalized to other cultural contexts with identical features, with caution. We call for future studies to examine harmony in different organizational settings and develop a contextualized understanding of it in other Asian societies.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

There are several limitations in the current study. Firstly, we collected data from MNE subsidiaries in mainland China.

Results may be varied in other Confucius cultures (e.g., Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam) and territories settled predominately by Chinese people, such as Singapore. In particular, the role of harmony in MNE subsidiaries in other Confucius societies need to be further studied. Secondly, while we believe our sample size was adequate for the current analysis, a larger sample size could have catered for MNEs from other cultures besides the three cultures covered in the current sample. As we used convenience sampling in this research, the findings need to be understood in other similar cultural contexts with caution. While the results indicate promise, cultural nuances within regions and countries need to be considered. Thirdly, we did not include the possible cultural variables from the countries where the headquarters of the MNEs are located, so the corporate value of the headquarters might impact the employees' perceptions of diversity climate. Future research can address these types of study limitations and answer other research questions that arise because of our analysis. For instance, what role does harmony play in the relationship between other dimensions of CQ and employee behavior? What is the role of harmony in other organizational contexts in Confucius cultures? We hope future work can build on the current findings and examine these questions about diversity climate in the modern era where organizational diversity has become ubiquitous in the workplace. Last but not least, we acknowledge that additional variables may influence the DVs tested in the current study (e.g., supervisor age, supervisor gender). We call for future research to consider employee and supervisor demographics when evaluating the effects of CQ and harmony in the workplace.

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