

The individual level of the high-commitment measure we constructed in study 1 excluded five items from the scale. Why these respondents did not include good remuneration (item 9) and overarching goals (item 14) into characteristics of a high-commitment organization is probably easy to understand: for these knowledge workers in a high-tech world, remuneration could never be good enough (citation) and goals were always overarching. It is, however, worth pondering why promotion from within (item 1), employment security (item 4), and behavior-oriented appraisal (item 7) are not included in what they believe are the characteristics of a high-commitment organization.

We posit that this interesting result speaks to the history and institutional environment of Chinese companies. First, in the central-planning era, state-owned enterprises were notorious for the Iron Rice Bowl (employment security) they offered to all employees. Social security systems were virtually non-existent; it was technically almost impossible for the management to fire any employee from the enterprise. A second related fact was that since there was no external labor market, people would typically spend their life within the unit (*danwei*) they were assigned to by authorities. Promotion, hence, was mostly from within. Thirdly, the appraisal process in these enterprises typically put more emphasis on personal virtues rather than on real job performance. The ranking order guiding most personnel departments' appraisal process was: virtue (*de*), ability (*nen*), diligence (*qing*) and performance (*ji*). Performance, or results on the job, the most objective one of the four, was only the last item in this ranking order.

Added together, these practices created room for manipulation by the management, which inevitably led to the birth of intricate personal networks of client-patronage. The result is an

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organized dependence system which Walder (1986) succinctly called the Neo-communistic Traditionalism. The bad memory of those old days, consequently, gives these three work practices a very different connotation from that of high commitment as perceived by the West. So while these characteristics (employment security, promotion from within and behavior-oriented appraisal) represent an employee's goodwill and the firm's commitment to its employees in a Western context, the same characteristics in China convey instead a fading fashion of the central-planning era. This is especially so for items 4 and 7 which only have a negligible small loading on the principal component. These results hence, in a way, indicate the indigenouslyness of this measure: it is embedded in the local culture and history rather than imposed from the Western literature.

There are 3 items that were excluded in the organizational-level measure of high commitment in study 2: employment security (item 4), behavior-oriented appraisal (item 7) and ownership-sharing (item 10). Why ownership-sharing is less a characteristic for these companies is hard to explain. One possible reason may be that, in general, the level of employee ownership-sharing is very low for foreign-invested companies. The pattern for item 4 and 7, however, is clear. They are the two items that have the lowest loading on the principal component (.20 and .23, respectively). This result is consistent with study 1. Although our sample is foreign-invested companies, the institutional environment of China changes the meaning of high commitment within them.

Item 9 (good remuneration) and 14 (overarching goals) was included in the organizational level of measures since this was not an IT-specific sample. More importantly, our respondents were HR professionals and they were evaluating the work system from an HR perspective.

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Their opinions on the remuneration and aspiration levels of their organization, hence, were more likely to be objective than those of individual employees.

Social scientists have long been debating [etic](#) versus [emic](#) approaches in social science research (Pike, 1967). While the [etic](#) approach puts the emphasis on discovering generic theoretical frameworks that can be generalized across cultural boundaries (for instance, [Berry](#), 1990; [Geertz](#), 1983; [Shweder](#), 1991), the emic approach argues that the nature of things is essentially emic and each culture should be viewed [in](#) its own terms and with respect to its context (for instance, [Malinowski](#), 1922; [Nisbet](#), 1971; [Smith and Bond](#), 1998). Those who hold less radical views espouse [different](#) ways to integrate the two approaches. For instance, in the context of promoting [management research related to China](#), [Whetten](#) (2002) called for context-sensitive research which includes both context-specific and context-embedded (or context-bound, [according to Tsui](#), 2004) research. By putting high-commitment into the [Chinese](#) context, this note contributes to the understanding of both the notion of high commitment (the [etic](#) approach) and also of the context of China (the emic approach). While the logic of high commitment, as manifested by the trust game, is probably no different in China, [which](#) work practices constitute trust and commitment, however, [are](#) affected by the history and institutional environment of Chinese organizations.

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