

Culture and Trust in Fostering Knowledge-Sharing

Christine Tan Nya Ling

Multimedia University, Melaka, Malaysia

nltn@mmu.edu.my

Abstract: In this competitive age, knowledge is continuously being identified by both scholars and practitioners as the most competitive asset. Numerous organisations in today's knowledge-intensive economy are keen not only to determine knowledge-sharing but to also introduce strategies to adopt as well as implement knowledge management (KM) so that knowledge coming from workers are transformed into organisational knowledge. In spite of this, businesses find it a challenge to leverage knowledge due to their workers' intentional and unintentional practice of knowledge hoarding. For that reason, the purpose of this paper is to further understand and explore the co-existence of two influential elements in knowledge sharing, namely, 'culture' and 'trust' in inculcating a culture that shares. A review of literature managed to highlight and examined the need for organisations to extend a deeper understanding of the interactions between these two elements, which are often regarded as crucial factors that supports the tradition to share knowledge (both tacit and explicit) originating from organisations' valuable assets - workers. The paper discusses and reveals 'sociability' and 'solidarity' with the different essentials of culture as well as elaborating on 'benevolence trust' and 'competence trust' that facilitate sharing. At the same time, this paper had further investigated the main pre-conditions to foster knowledge-sharing in a culture of organisations, which identifies the levels of trust and solidarity in explaining the four types of cultures i.e. networked, communal, fragmented, and mercenary.

Keywords: knowledge-sharing, trust, culture, sociability, solidarity, benevolence, competence, networked, communal, fragmented, mercenary

1. Introduction

It is often said that knowledge created and applied in the mind of the knower (Alavi & Leidner 2001) is the most crucial and prized resource of an organisation. Hence knowledge originating in the minds of workers, especially in the current emergent knowledge-economy, is indeed valuable and should not be taken lightly, ever so in accomplishing business performances. As strongly suggested by Jain, Sandhu, and Sidhu (2007), the impeccable success of a knowledge-intensive economy is purely supported by the ways in which organisations effectively acquire, use, and leverage these knowledge. In fact, many of these organisations actively support their workers' productivity by improving their 'know-how' and experiences so as to maximise competitiveness and innovativeness.

As a result, knowledge have been fundamentally perceived as the most critical industrial resource that businesses should embrace since it is considered to be a valuable organisational survival kit in this present knowledge-economy era. The excellent management of knowledge, which is distinctively known as knowledge management (KM) is essential and should be lauded by organisations throughout. Thus far, KM has helped businesses to evade struggles related to business cost by minimising the waste of precious time and resources, therefore avoiding the need to 'reinvent the wheel'. With KM, businesses are able to determine better ways to cultivate, nurture and exploit individual knowledge together with organisational knowledge as a whole, coming from diverse levels and contexts throughout numerous organisations (Handzic 2004). Sadly, there are still numerous corporations that are unable to grasped the idea and concept of KM, which had resulted in the slow embracement of KM initiatives and activities; the incapability to further improve organisational productivity and in strengthening competitiveness (Holsapple & Joshi 2002) that could eventually lead towards poor innovation.

The term 'knowledge' as rendered by both Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), originates from the human brain in the form of 'tacit' - personal and context-specific knowledge needs to be expressed by explicit measures to achieve its 'explicit' - formal and systematic form. It is therefore essential to inculcate the sharing of both tacit and explicit knowledge among workers within the organisation itself (Syed-Ikhsan & Rowland 2004). In doing so, KM will only be acknowledged as being successful as a result of knowledge-sharing by further placing that knowledge in plain good use (Gurteen 1999). Apparently, Gurteen (1999) had considered knowledge in KM as a systematic set of principles, processes, organisational structures, and technologies that help workers share and leverage knowledge to fulfil their business objectives. Hence, the viable sharing of knowledge will be helpful in supporting KM initiatives since knowledge-sharing has been revealed as one of the successful facets of KM practices (Alavi & Leidner 2001; Earl 2001; Hendriks 1999; Kuo & Young 2008) through formal or informal interactions and collaborations (Friesl, Sackmann & Kremser 2011).

However, despite the fact that sharing is crucial, workers are still wary of those they ought to share knowledge with, especially in a competitive environment where 'knowledge is power'. This conviction is less of a surprise due to the lack of trust that exists among working personnel, resulting in only a privilege few who possess the pertinent knowledge. For this reason, businesses will need to look into creating as well as maintaining a culture whereby workers are willing and able to share, which is a prerequisite to increasing organisational success. As made clear by Gurteen (1999), it is essential that workers must not only be encouraged to join forces, but also to cooperate with each other and to share effectively to create a sharing culture. Knowledge-sharing, as supported by Mackay (2001) is a mutual practice, where workers yield to the idea that they will obtain something back in return. In this context, the missing link that exists in organisational cultures is the lack of trust leading towards the concentration of knowledge among a privilege few (Robins n.d.).

To create an environment where trust exists, a worker need to believe that his or her knowledge will not to be misused and that he or she will obtain significant value in the near future coming from reciprocal knowledge-sharing (Mackay 2001). As established by Ribière, Arntzen, and Worasinchai (2007), workers are not likely to share knowledge if they are reluctant to trust each other. For this reason, these individuals need to comprehend the benefits of knowledge-sharing, i.e. assists them in doing their jobs more effectively; helps them in retaining their jobs; facilitates their personal development and career progression; rewards them by getting things done; and gives them personal recognition; hence sharing will without a doubt turn into a reality (Gurteen 1999).

The aim of this paper is to explore the roles of trust and culture in fostering knowledge-sharing. This study had discussed and revealed the different essentials of culture (i.e. sociability and solidarity), and trust (i.e. benevolence-based and competence-based trust). In fact, this paper had also further investigated the main pre-conditions to foster knowledge-sharing, which identifies the high and low levels of trust and solidarity in explaining cultures in organisations. It is therefore highlighted that that both trust and culture need to exist altogether, making knowledge-sharing a norm in achieving competitive knowledge-based business environment.

2. Nature of knowledge and knowledge-sharing

The nature of knowledge, even though may somehow seem to be complex, continues to be defined and explained by numerous scholars and researchers in various fields and backgrounds. In *Managing in a Time of Great Change* (Drucker 1995), it is argued that knowledge is the prime economic possession and prevailing source of competitive advantage not to be reckon with. Thus, knowledge will only be seen as valuable when it is created and applied for specific purposes (McDermott 1999; Swan & Scarbrough 2001). Drucker (1995) further exclaimed that knowledge is precisely viewed in the context of KM as an approach for gathering and generating value by vigorously leveraging the 'know-how', experience, and also decisions residing within or outside the organisation (Davenport & Prusak 2000). For this reason, in the perspective of KM, the nature of knowledge can be defined as a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information (Davenport & Prusak 2000; Greiner, Bohmann & Krcmar 2007) to further enhance organisational performance, in terms of collaboration, competitiveness and innovativeness.

Derived from the observation made by Spiegler (2000), "yesterday's data are today's information, which will become tomorrow's knowledge, and knowledge, in turn, recycles down the value chain back into information and into data" (p. 2). In order to appreciate the true essence of knowledge, an individual needs to understand data and information as well. Data, information, and knowledge, as acknowledged by Bhatt (2001), are terms that are not simple to distinguish and define, especially from the perspective of a worker. He further explained that in general, data are simply raw facts, information is an organised set of data, whereas knowledge is perceived as important information (Bhatt 2001). Consequently, Bhatt (2001) further explicated that data, information, and knowledge are in fact recursive (as shown in Figure 1), wherein knowledge is a combination of organised data, incorporated with a set of rules, procedures, and operations gained from the course of experience, skills and practice. In this situation, knowledge is a 'meaning' made by the mind (Bhatt 2001; Marakas 1999). If knowledge is without 'meaning', then evidently knowledge can be identified and recognised only as information or data. Hence, it is only through meaning, that information finds life and becomes knowledge (Bhatt 2001). The interaction of data, information, and knowledge, coupled together with culture and trust that facilitate knowledge-sharing would help establish a learning organisation as a whole.

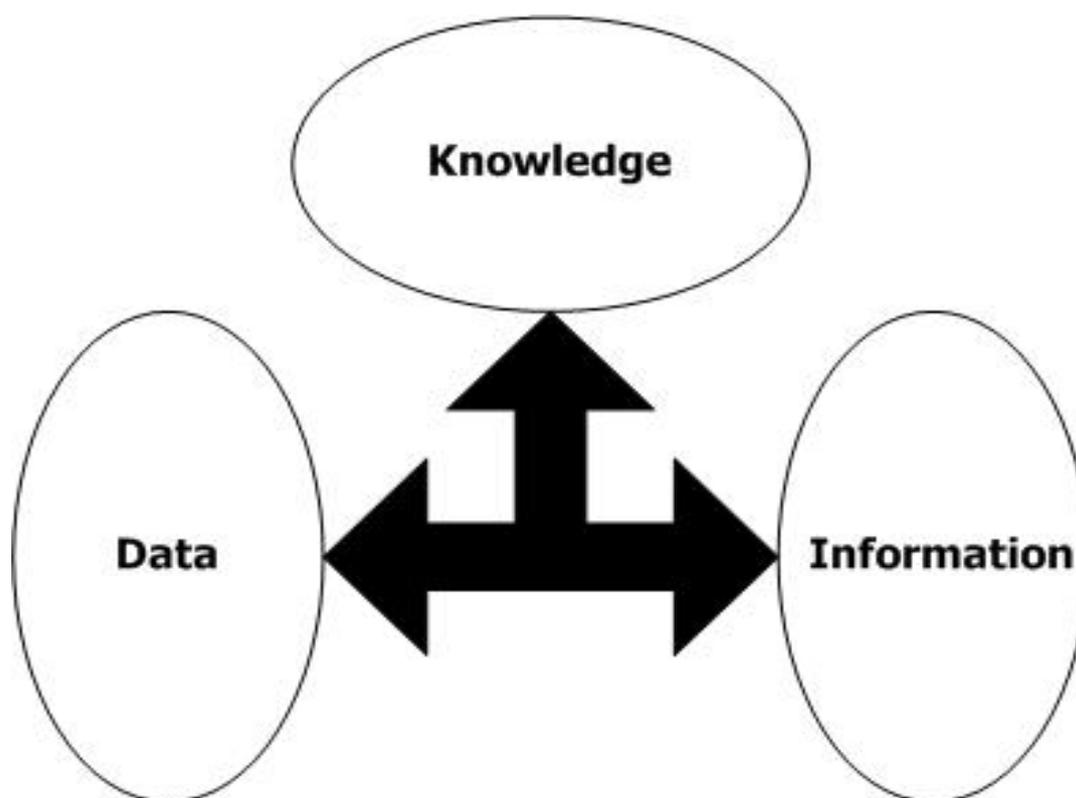


Figure 1: The recursive relations: Data, information, and knowledge (source: Bhatt (2001))

3. Views of culture and trust in knowledge-sharing

Numerous researchers believe that knowledge-sharing is a type of social dealing among individuals due to the fact that effective knowledge-sharing is individual-based, or rather than people-based (Riege 2005). That is why it is crucial for organisations to apprehend the thoughts, minds, and also behaviour of its workforce considering that knowledge-sharing does indeed require a culture that facilitate workers to share knowledge as part of their daily work activities. The major purpose of effective knowledge-sharing as exclaimed by Buckman (1999) is to focus on organisations most critical need; ensuring that the system should support strategy; making sure that organisation build trust by emphasising fundamental virtues rather than values; sharing knowledge and adopt best practices; solving customer's problems speedily; allowing associates to solve the problems they encounter without interference by the management; injecting customer feedback into new product development process (Buckman 1999).

As a result, businesses must create a desire to share as a guiding principle in organisational survival. In doing so, there is still the unresolved issue of 'trust' (Riege 2005), which is arguably one of the most crucial success factor for creating a culture that shares knowledge (Tan, Lim & Ng 2009). Apparently, the 'lack of trust' syndrome, according to Riege (2005), originates from either the trustor or the trustee (knowledge participants). In addition, Riege further exclaimed that lack of trust exists in two separate forms: (1) trustee as a result of misuse knowledge or taking undeserved recognition for it; or (2) accuracy and credibility of knowledge that comes from the trustor. Therefore, the value and encouragement for knowledge-sharing for organisations does indeed require the creation of a culture of trust (Lengnick-Hall & Lengnick-Hall 2003), in which workers will be more willing to share what they know in a trusting culture (Davenport & Prusak 2000; Fairholm & Fairholm 2000; Faraj & Wasko 2001; Leana & van Buren 1999; Robertson & Hammersley 2000; Settoon & Mossholderb 2002). As anticipated, the culture of trust in the workplace does have a strong and robust influence that act as an important force behind the sharing of knowledge (Tan, Lim & Ng 2009). Likewise, both Hsu and Huang (2005) suggested that trust should indeed be established between employee-to-employee interactions in fostering a culture that shares; moving ahead into a 'knowledge-oriented culture'.

4. Culture and trust: Fostering knowledge-sharing

The culture that exist in each organisation is tremendously essential (Ndlela & Toit 2001) seeing that a strong culture that inculcates the sharing of knowledge among workers (including both employers and employees) does facilitate the organisation in increasing its competitive edge (Alam et al. 2009).

Culture in an organisation is a dominating mechanism that limits what is considered desirable, possible and practical to do; affect its KM initiatives and will persuade workers towards particular forms of activities in knowledge-sharing. Karlsen and Gottschalk (2004) argue that "...shaping culture is central for an organisation's ability to manage its knowledge more effectively" (p. 9). Principally, culture can interact with knowledge-sharing in a number of different ways, as it shapes assumptions about what knowledge is worth exchanging; defines the relationship between employee knowledge and organisational knowledge; establishes the context for social interaction that plays a key role in how knowledge will be shared; shapes the processes by how new knowledge is created, validated and disseminated throughout the organisation (Brache 2002; Karlsen & Gottschalk 2004). Besides, culture is alleged to have influence the knowledge-related behaviours of individuals, teams, units and also organisations as a whole because it influences the purpose of workers in terms of identifying which knowledge that is appropriate to share, with whom to share it with and when is the right time to share it (King 2007).

Culture has been defined as "values, rules, practices, rituals and norms through which an organisation conducts business" (Brache 2002, p. 102). While Hofstede (2001) classified culture to be "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (p. 9), Schein (1995) however, looks at culture in knowledge-sharing as "a pattern of basic assumptions invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaption and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceived, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (p. 9).

Ribière (2001) defined culture as the character or identity of an organisation on how things are done in an organisation. He further explains that culture is reflected by artefacts that can be noticed by just visiting a company, such as office spaces, how people are dressed up, jargon used, etc. Therefore, Ribière (2001) further exclaims that to truly understand a culture, the real core elements that shape the culture, such as the history of the company and beliefs and values shared among employees must be understood. In this context, culture guides day-to-day working relationships; determines how people communicate within the organisation; what behaviour is acceptable; how power and status are allocated (Ribière 2001).

In unison, culture is observed by Levin, Cross, Abrams, and Lesser (2004) to encompass the values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviour of an organisation. Regardless of the various definitions provided, the most straightforward description of any culture in any organisation can clearly be captured as 'the way we do things around here' and 'the way we treat one another around here' (McKinlay & Williamson 2010). Eventually, workers will need to share and exchange their ideas and knowledge with others because it is the 'natural' way of doing things, rather than being force to do so (Alam et al. 2009).

Additionally, Schein (1995) exerted that culture sweeps across organisational individuals and units. These common essentials comprise deeply rooted beliefs, values, and artefacts held by organisational workers and work units (groups). Beliefs are accepted as a way of doing things and are passed on to new workers. Consequently, these beliefs are shaped as workers make decisions, cope with problems, and take advantage of opportunities that is faced. Ultimately, culture surfaces when workers in the organisations accept these beliefs (King 2007; Schein 1995). Values, however are underlying beliefs that present a set of social norms that define the 'rules' through which workers interact (DeLong & Fahey 2000; King 2007; Schein 1995). Values is a form of informal social control as it defines the appropriate behaviours for workers (King 2007; Schein 1995). Lastly, artefacts (or symbols) are the most manifest aspects of culture consisting of the constructed physical and social environment of an organisation such as logos, mottos, and mission statements (King 2007; Schein 1995).

To understand culture, both Goffee and Jones (2009) claimed that culture is simply a 'community'. In fact, it is an outcome of how individuals share knowledge with one another. Communities are built on

shared interests and mutual obligations and thrive on cooperation and friendships. In the lens of sociology, Goffee and Jones had dissected and managed to divide community into two separate distinct human relations dimensions: sociability and solidarity. Sociability is the measure of sincere friendliness (e.g. kindness) among workers in a particular organisation whereby workers are more like friends than co-workers (Carneiro 2010; Goffee & Jones 2009). Thus, these workers are inclined to spend most of their time in sharing ideas perhaps via face-to-face communication in sustaining a high level of unarticulated reciprocity. Reciprocity is a trait of friendship in which actions are taken that favours others with no anticipation of instant payback (Rashid, Sambasivan & Rahman 2004). Basically, all these happen on an informal and natural basis, in which there are no strings attached (Carneiro 2010; Goffee & Jones 2009). The benefits of high sociability comprises of informal sharing of knowledge; out-of-the-box thinking; and high esprit de corps (Goffee & Jones 2009). Unfortunately, high sociability does have its limitations, for instance disagreements; criticisms; poor performances that can be avoided or tolerated in the fear of displeasing other friends (Goffee & Jones 2009).

Solidarity, in contrast, is the measure of the workers' ability to pursue shared objectives (e.g. cooperativeness and reliability) quickly and effectively, in spite of their personal ties (Carneiro 2010; Goffee & Jones 2009; Munro 2003) in the best interest of the organisation. At this juncture, a joint sense of purpose is very much essential. Even if the workers don't know each other, a sense of high solidarity will bring them together to act as one. In terms of advantages, they consist of a strong sense of response to competitive encroaches and other organisational crisis; low tolerance of poor performance (Goffee & Jones 2009). Besides, solidarity encourages workers steadfast dedication to the organisation's mission and goals; quick response to changes in the environment; unwillingness to accept poor performance (Rashid, Sambasivan & Rahman 2004). Rashid, et al. (2004) posited that workers in high solidarity organisations often trust their employers to treat them fairly, based on merit, with resulting commitment and loyalty to the firm. Nevertheless, like sociability, high solidarity also has its drawbacks, which includes attitude such as "What's in it for me?" and ruthless turf battles exists (Goffee & Jones 2009).

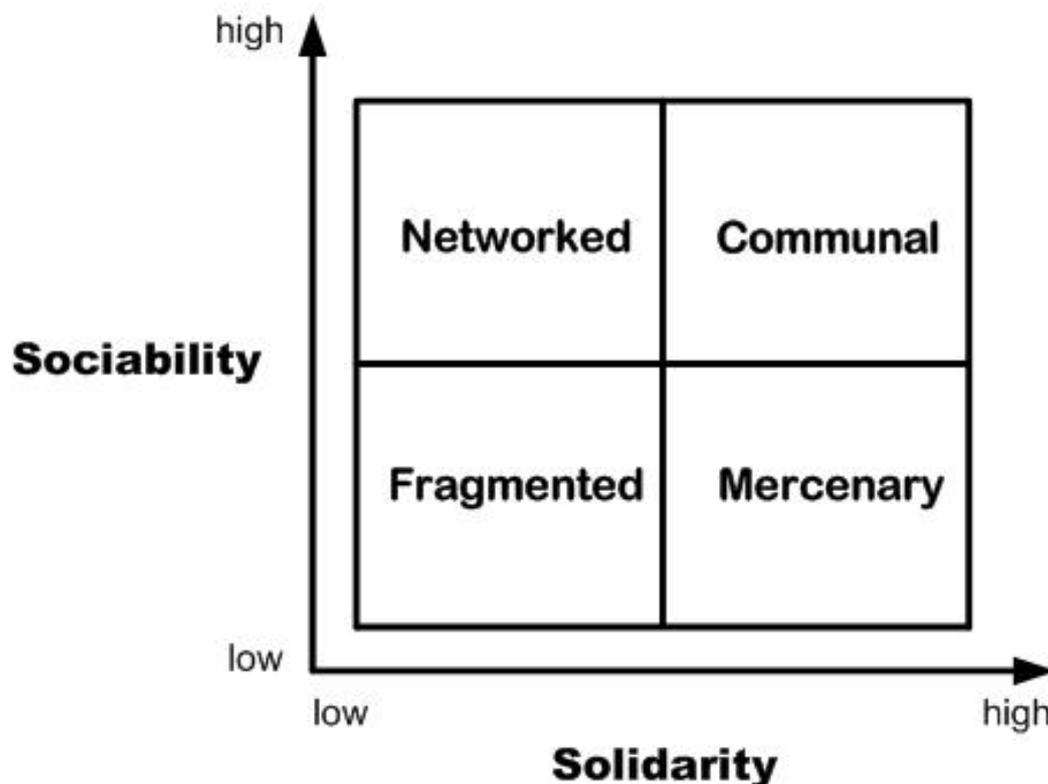


Figure 2: The four dimensions of culture: Networked, communal, fragmented, and mercury (source: Goffee and Jones (2009))

In order to relate both sociability and solidarity with culture, these two dimensions are plot against each other, revealing four different elements of culture, identified as "Two Dimensions, Four Cultures", which consists of: (1) networked culture - high sociability and low solidarity; (2) communal culture - high sociability and high solidarity; (3) fragmented culture - low sociability and low

solidarity; and (4) mercenary culture - low sociability and high solidarity (as shown on Figure 2). As supported by Rashid, et al. (2004), these four elements of culture is similar or comparable to organisations in Malaysia. An organisational culture as further emphasised by Langham (2003), depends on its degree of solidarity and commitment to a common goal; the amount of socialising and trust present among its workers.

In a networked culture, there will be a high degree of trust as workers will be very willing to share information so long as they can be given good reasons for doing so. In a communal culture, the willingness to share will be combined with a very clear focus on what is needed. This can be a perfect condition for the introduction of teamwork in terms of knowledge-sharing amongst workers. In a mercenary culture, workers are focused in ensuring that tasks are performed, as a result having a very utilitarian approach to knowledge. Therefore, in this culture the emphasis will be on the realistic short-term solutions that deliver value and not on vast accumulations of knowledge. Lastly, in a fragmented culture, workers will tend to work as individuals. Hence, organisations introducing cooperation between workers to share knowledge will need to appeal to the self-interest of the individual.

There is no particular culture that can be labelled or identified as ideal or the 'best' because each culture presented is appropriate for different business environments (Goffee & Jones 2009). As a result, top management such as superiors and managers must be able to determine and assess their organisational culture, no matter whether it is networked, communal, fragmented, or mercenary so as to consequently shape it accordingly. Besides, Er-ming, Ping, Xin, and Xin (2006) establishes that top management also play a role in knowledge-sharing since superiors and managers are capable of leading by example, which can have a considerable impact on building trust. These researchers conclude that top management's activities and personal behaviours provide the foundation for trust, and that managers have the responsibilities in taking the initial step to build trusting relationships. Hence, top management will need to first acquire trust of workers, practice what they advocate (in support of a trusting relationship), and to further build a trusting environment throughout their organisation, only then are workers willing to share knowledge mutually. Such a relationship may created a positive psychological contract among workers; build relationship of reciprocal exchange; encourage fulfilment of responsibilities and obligations; consequently increasing knowledge-sharing.

As determined by both Davenport and Prusak (2000), any KM initiatives will fail without trust. If workers are not satisfied by the KM system or practices in their organisation, they will not be likely to get involved in knowledge-sharing activities (Rivière 2001). With this, organisations should emphasise trust among workers, only then will knowledge-sharing become part of the organisational culture. Henceforth, to create an environment conducive to sharing, trust plays a significant role in terms of influencing and inculcating knowledge-sharing in organisations (Alam et al. 2009) as trust is the means and basis of a sharing culture (Hsu & Huang 2005).

In order to intensify and achieve the required level of knowledge-sharing, it is important to create a culture of trust (Buckman 1999). Trust has been found to facilitate knowledge-sharing in a variety of settings involving team member interdependence (Jarvenpaa, Knoll & Leidner 1998; Jarvenpaa & Leidner 1999; Moreland & Myaskovsky 2000; Quigley et al. 2007; Rau 2005). Trust acts as is a predominant enhancer of proactive knowledge-sharing. As a matter of fact, Buckman (1999) argues that a trustee must be able to trust that the knowledge obtained from a trustor is of the best and most accurate, and the trustor in turn must be able to trust that the trustee in using that knowledge in the most appropriate manner. If this condition is not met, workers will abstain themselves from sharing since trust did not appear to be visible. It is therefore essential to extensively stimulate trust in an environment that allows workers to share information with one another.

A culture, according to Rivière (2001) can only measured and assessed through a process of understanding the organisation; its history; through interviews and observations of workers' behaviours; beliefs and values (Rivière 2001). Rivière emphasised that in an organisational culture, the dimension of a culture i.e. 'trust' and 'solidarity' are the main pre-conditions to foster knowledge-sharing. Based on the extensive review, Rivière decided to make use of an organisation's level of trust and the level of solidarity through the tools developed by De Furia (1997) on the variables of trust; and Goffee and Jones (2009) on solidarity. Even though De Furia (1997) emphasised that sociability is an important factor for knowledge-sharing, it should however be a subcomponent of trust based on his findings that affection can be present without trust (e.g., parent-child); trust can be

present without affection (e.g., passenger-pilot) (De Furia 1997). With this, Ribi re had mapped both variables against each other to obtain a matrix of four cultures as illustrated in Figure 3.

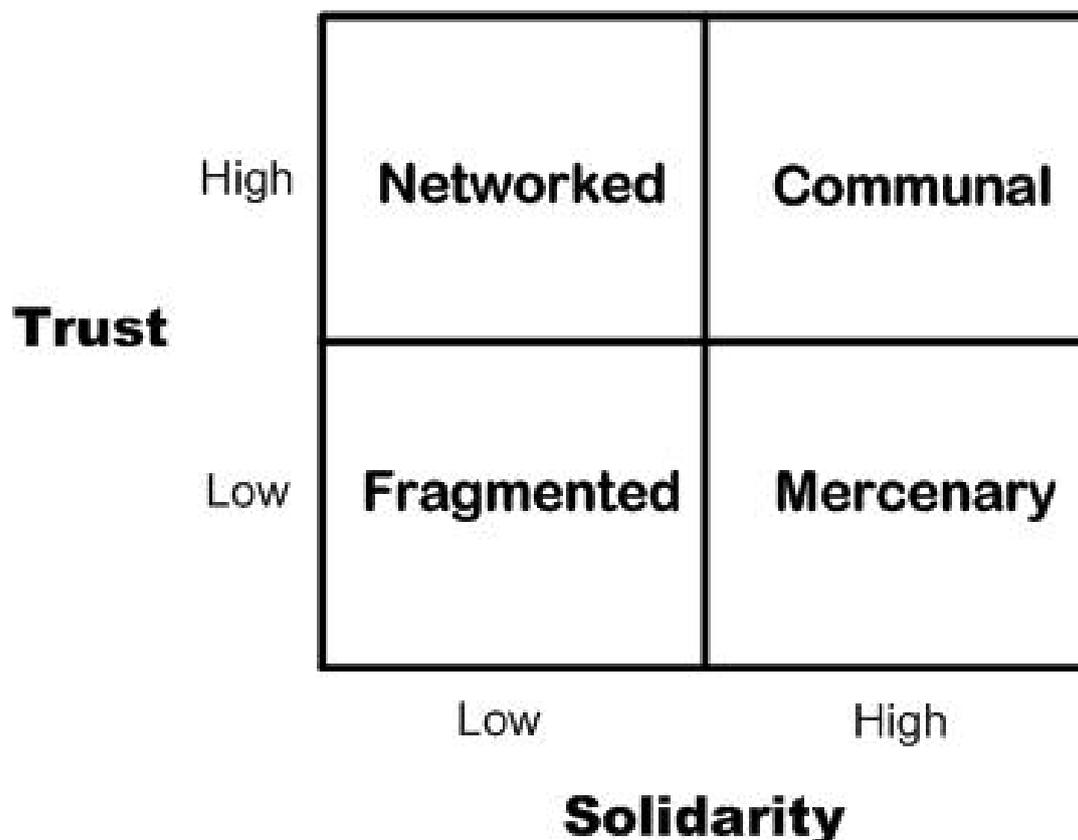


Figure 3: Organisational culture matrix (source: Ribi re (2001))

The four culture types are: (1) networked - high trust and low solidarity; (2) communal - high trust and high solidarity; (3) fragmented - low trust and low solidarity; and (4) mercenary - high trust and high solidarity. The key behaviours of each culture type are depicted in Table 1.

Both researchers and scholars fundamentally agree that trust is a multifaceted phenomenon, which consists of elements such as uncertainty of dependability; vulnerability of dependency (Li 2007); expectations that the trusted parties will not harm the trustors (Gambetta 1988); willingness of trustors to assume risk with the trusted parties (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman 1995); efforts to fulfil commitments, honest; and does not seek to take unfair advantage of opportunities (Cummings & Bromiley 1996; Dirks & Ferrin 2001; Quigley et al. 2007; Zucker 1987). To parsimoniously incorporate these varied components, Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, and Camerer (1998) state that trust is a "psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intention or behaviour of another" (p. 395).

In a study by Levin, et al. (2004), it is postulated that trust can assist knowledge-sharing by means of two distinct categories: (1) benevolence-based trust and (2) competence-based trust. When it comes to trust, most individuals will relate it to its benevolence-based form. Benevolence-based trust is identified as the belief that an individual will not harm another even when given the opportunity to do so. For instance, if a worker (i.e. trustee) is in urgent need of information, the trustee will then seek help from a co-worker (i.e. trustor) to acquire this information, but in doing so the worker must be able to trust that the co-worker will not intentionally do harm (i.e. by giving the wrong information) even if the co-worker has the opportunity to do so. On the other hand, competence-based trust is the belief in another individual to be knowledgeable or competent in a given subject area. For instance, when a worker is in need of information, the worker will seek and trust only those that he or she thinks have the competence to give him or her information. Hence, trust is increased and decreased by the lack of evidence of these components in the parties' actual behaviour and communication (Blomqvist & Stahle 2004). Consequently, trust is known to be the means of which knowledge flows (Levin et al. 2004) to further support knowledge-sharing.

Table 1: The description of the four organisational culture types

Networked (Low Solidarity, High Trust)	Communal (High Solidarity, High Trust)
<p>A lot of talks => possibility of rapid information exchange.</p> <p>Sharing of relevant information.</p> <p>Opportunities for learning and increased creativity.</p> <p>Discussions, opinions, and suggestions are solicited and are taken in consideration.</p> <p>Little commitment to shared business objectives.</p> <p>Management often has trouble getting functions or operating companies to cooperate.</p> <p>High sociability.</p> <p>People share ideas and information with no immediate expectation of return.</p>	<p>Communication in every channel.</p> <p>Communications flow easily inside between levels.</p> <p>Sharing of relevant information.</p> <p>Discussions, opinions, and suggestions are solicited and are taken in consideration.</p> <p>Equitable sharing of risks and rewards among employees.</p> <p>Teamwork across functions and locations => synergy => opportunity for learning and for creativity.</p> <p>High commitment => low turnover.</p> <p>High consciousness of organisational identity and membership.</p> <p>Members give help and share information with no expectations of getting back.</p>
Fragmented (Low Solidarity, Low Trust)	Mercenary (High Solidarity, Low Trust)
<p>Selectively disseminate information.</p> <p>Members don't share ideas and information with other units.</p> <p>Talk is very limited.</p> <p>Documents might not be read.</p> <p>Little commitment to shared business objectives.</p> <p>Management often has trouble getting functions or operating companies to cooperate.</p> <p>Members try to get help without giving anything in return.</p> <p>Members are secretive about their project and progress.</p> <p>Minimise dependence on others.</p> <p>Few learning opportunities.</p> <p>Individual creativity but not at the group level.</p> <p>Don't identify with their institutions => might easily leave (high turnover).</p> <p>Low sociability.</p>	<p>Communication is swift, direct and work focused.</p> <p>Paper and memo driven.</p> <p>Productivity and performance driven.</p> <p>High level of commitment to a common purpose.</p> <p>Rarely bastions of loyalty.</p> <p>Disinclined of sharing if busy.</p> <p>Cooperation between units with different goals is even less likely.</p> <p>Lack of synergy.</p> <p>Low tolerance of underperformance and even failure => doesn't support learning.</p> <p>Minimise dependence on others.</p> <p>Equitable sharing of risks and rewards among employees.</p> <p>Reciprocity is negotiated.</p> <p>People protect each other.</p> <p>Low sociability.</p>

Source: Ribièrè (2001)

Thereafter, trust should indeed be regarded as a significant factor in contemporary society and should not be taken lightly in view of the fact that trust is by and large coupled with a multitude of advantages not only to organisations but also individuals. Social theorists have argued that, trust is necessary to predominantly handle the increasing complexity and uncertainty of modern society (Giddens 1990; Luhmann 1982); affecting the extent to which an individual believes in the honesty of the shared knowledge; therefore willing to act on it (McEvily, Perrone & Zaheer 2003; Quigley et al. 2007; Szulanski, Cappetta & Jensen 2004). Trust may have a comparable control on what workers judge about the usefulness and occurrence of knowledge-sharing. Even if a worker is highly confident in his or her own capabilities, due to lack of trust, he or she does not believe that critical knowledge and credible information will be shared. Trust typically carries an expectation that an individual worker can therefore rely on his or her co-worker's actions and words and that the co-worker has good intentions toward the individual worker (Dirks & Ferrin 2001; Mayer, Davis & Schoorman 1995; McAllister 1995; Quigley et al. 2007; Robinson 1996).

Trusts are significantly essential since "without trust, a co-operative and collaborative relationship with the others cannot be attained (Scarnati 1997). It is the catalyst that makes it possible for organisations to function and is a bonding agent that holds our personal and business relationships together." (p. 25). In the past decade, many authors inclusive of Wong, Ngo, and Wong (2003) have recognised that when workers trust each other, positive work outcomes will eventually unveil. It is further observed that workers are, for that reason, more willing to provide knowledge to their co-workers to whom they trust and who treat them fairly. Therefore, the prevalence of work teams and the interdependent nature of work tasks that involves workers to collaborate and coordinate with one another to accomplish organizational goals, does ultimately entails workers to trust each other

(Groysberg & Abrahams 2006). With this, trust among workers are considered to be the key component of effective team decision-making and proactive behaviours at work cooperation, organisational citizenship behaviours (McAllister 1995), reduced monitoring (Langfred 2004), enhanced group performance (Dirks & Ferrin 2002) and organisational performance (Davis et al. 2000) both of which are necessary for the effective execution of interdependent work effort (Alge, Wiethoff & Klein 2003; Parker, Williams & Turner 2006).

Besides, since it is common for tasks to be interdependent, reward and penalty systems are often team-oriented. When workers trust their co-workers to do their best, they are more willing to work hard themselves, because they know that their efforts will be rewarded accordingly. Last but not least, trust does indeed also facilitate social exchange relationships (Blau 1964), which can be noticed when workers trust each other, seeing that they are more willing to help each other knowing for a fact that their co-workers are likely to reciprocate their help in the imminent future (Gouldner 1960).

The decision to trust invokes an evaluation of trustworthiness of another party and the risk involved in the trusting behaviours (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman 1995). Information from the surrounding is an important source, especially when trustors do not know or have limited knowledge of the potential trustees. Even when the trustors and the trustees know each other, significant parties may still play an important role in interpreting the meaning and the importance of the trustees' behaviours by drawing from past observations and interactions, especially when uncertainty arises (Salancik & Pfeffer 1978). Such situations may be prevalent given that trustors may simultaneously receive trustworthy and untrustworthy information from the trustees (Lewicki, McAllister & Bies 1998), or they may encounter situations in which trustworthy trustees behave in a seemingly dishonest manner (Robinson 1996). As accounted by Kasperson, Golding, & Tuler (1992), there are four determinants of trust that includes: (1) commitment to a goal, based on perceptions of objectivity, fairness, and information accuracy; (2) competence; (3) caring; (4) predictability, which are key players in a culture that further support knowledge-sharing.

Thus, to create a culture that shares, it is therefore essential to enhance trustworthiness among employees, making it as a part of the social norm that is being practiced on a daily basis (Tan, Lim & Ng 2009). Organisations wanting to support knowledge-sharing, and subsequently at the same time reform its culture, can therefore do so by promoting trust amongst workers. With this, workers would be equipped to disseminate pertinent knowledge. In fact, they would be able to discern the importance of sharing critical knowledge that will lead to the sharing of the right information with the right people at the right time (Smith & Farquhar 2000). With this, Robins (n.d.) insisted that workers must be able to apprehend the importance of knowledge-sharing, especially in terms of discerning how knowledge-sharing has helped their organisation in the past. To achieve this, Robins strongly urged organisations to make use of case studies and best practices report, to train workers on the tools used to share information within the organisation, to provide a 'cause-and-effect analysis' of disseminating information when it is needed, and lastly rewarding workers each time knowledge is shared.

5. Conclusion

Organisations nowadays need to capture and take advantage of their workers most valuable resource – tacit and explicit knowledge, so as to optimise the chances for successful knowledge-sharing. Besides, cultural understanding need to be addressed and should be taken into consideration seeing that the setting-up of an organisational culture that shares knowledge is an important effort not to be taken lightly.

With this paper, the role of both trust and culture are further analysed and examined particularly when it comes to instilling the sharing of valuable knowledge among organisational workers. The aim of this paper is to provide a better understanding of culture (sociability and solidarity) and trust (benevolence and competence) acts as elements that needs to co-exist in facilitating knowledge-sharing. Even though trust has been research in other contexts, it has not been researched together with the cultural dimensions: networked, communal, fragmented, and mercury. Besides, additional attention on both the level of trust and solidarity are further investigated since both are the main pre-conditions in stimulating an environment that allows individual workers to share knowledge together.

While it is not easy to motivate workers in an organisation to share their knowledge, this aspiration can however be achieved through the creation of a culture that inspires trust in the workplace. Thus, it

is vital to support the critical co-existence of both culture and trust in an organisation that instantaneously permits and further support the willingness of workers to share knowledge with the intent through which the organisation can continuously remain competitive.

References

- Alam, S.S., Abdullah, Z., Ishak, N.A. & Zain, Z.M. 2009, 'Assessing knowledge sharing behaviour among employees in SMEs: An empirical study', *International Business Research*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 115-22.
- Alavi, M. & Leidner, D.E. 2001, 'Review: Knowledge management and knowledge management systems: Conceptual foundations and research issues', *MIS Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 107-36.
- Alge, B.J., Wiethoff, C. & Klein, H.J. 2003, 'When does the medium matter? Knowledge-building experiences and opportunities in decision making teams', *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, vol. 91, pp. 26-37.
- Bhatt, G.D. 2001, 'Knowledge management in organizations: examining the interaction between technologies, techniques, and people', *Journal of Knowledge Management*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 68-75.
- Blau, P.M. 1964, *Exchange and power in social life*, Transaction, New Brunswick, NJ.
- Blomqvist, K. & Stahle, P. 2004, Trust in technology partnership, in M.-L. Huotari & M. Iivonen (eds), *Trust in knowledge management and systems in organizations*, Idea Group Inc, pp. 173-99.
- Brache, A.P. 2002, *How organizations work*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc, New York, NY.
- Buckman, R.H. 1999, 'Collaborative knowledge', *Human Resource Planning*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 22-33.
- Carneiro, R. 2010, *Transforming universities* Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Cummings, L.L. & Bromiley, P. 1996, The organization trust inventory (OTI): Development and validation, in R.M. Kramer & T.R. Tyler (eds), *Trust in Organizations: Frontiers of Theory and Research*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Davenport, T.H. & Prusak, L. 2000, *Working knowledge: How organizations manage what they know*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston.
- Davis, J.H., Schoorman, F.D., Mayer, R.C. & Tan, H.H. 2000, 'The trusted general manager and business unit performance: Empirical evidence of a competitive advantage', *Strategic Management Journal*, vol. 21, pp. 563-76.
- De Furia, G.L. 1997, *Facilitator's guide to the interpersonal trust surveys*, Pfeiffer & Co.
- DeLong, D.W. & Fahey, L. 2000, 'Diagnosing cultural barriers to knowledge management', *Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 113-27.
- Dirks, K.T. & Ferrin, D.L. 2001, 'The role of trust in organizational settings', *Organization Science*, vol. 12, pp. 450-67.
- Dirks, K.T. & Ferrin, D.L. 2002, 'Trust in leadership: Meta-analytic findings and implications for research and practice', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 87, pp. 611-28.
- Drucker, P. 1995, *Managing in a time of great change*, Truman Talley Books/Dutton.
- Earl, M.J. 2001, 'Knowledge management strategies: Toward a taxonomy', *Journal of Management Information Systems*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 215-33.
- Er-ming, X., Ping, Z., Xin, W. & Xin, Z. 2006, 'The effects of organizational factors on knowledge sharing', 2006 International Conference on Management Science and Engineering (ICMSE) 06.
- Fairholm, M.R. & Fairholm, G. 2000, 'Leadership amid the constraints of trust', *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 102-9.
- Faraj, S. & Wasko, M.M. 2001, 'The web of knowledge: An investigation of knowledge exchange in networks of practice', unpublished, Florida State University.
- Friesl, M., Sackmann, S.A. & Kremser, S. 2011, 'Knowledge sharing in new organizational entities: The impact of hierarchy, organizational context, micro-politics and suspicion', *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 71 - 86.
- Gambetta, D. 1988, *Trust: Making and breaking cooperative relations*, New York: Blackwell.
- Giddens, A. 1990, *The consequence of modernity*, Oxford Polity, Oxford, UK.
- Goffee, R. & Jones, G. 2009, *What holds the modern company together?*, Harvard Business Review.
- Gouldner, A.W. 1960, 'The norm of reciprocity: A preliminary statement', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 25, pp. 161-78.
- Greiner, M.E., Bohmann, T. & Krcmar, H. 2007, 'A strategy for knowledge management', *Journal of Knowledge Management*, vol. 11, no. 6, pp. 3-15.
- Groysberg, B. & Abrahams, R. 2006, 'Lift outs: How to acquire a high functioning team', *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 84, no. 12, pp. 133-40.
- Gurteen, D. 1999, 'Creating a knowledge sharing culture', *Knowledge Management Magazine*, <<http://www.gurteen.com/gurteen/gurteen.nsf/id/ksculture>>.
- Handzic, M. 2004, *Knowledge management: Through the technology glass*, World Scientific.
- Hendriks, P. 1999, 'Why share knowledge? The influence of ICT on the motivation for knowledge sharing', *Knowledge and Process Management*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 91-100.
- Hofstede, G. 2001, *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations*, 2nd edn, Sage Publications, Inc.
- Holsapple, C.W. & Joshi, K.D. 2002, 'Knowledge management: A threefold framework', *The Information Society: An International Journal*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 47-64.

- Hsu, F.-M. & Huang, C.-C. 2005, 'Determinants of knowledge transfer performance from cultural perspective in high-tech industry', The Ninth Pacific Asia Conference on Information Systems (PACIS): I.T. and Value Creation, Bangkok, Thailand, <<http://www.pacis-net.org/file/2005/182.pdf>>.
- Jain, K.K., Sandhu, M.S. & Sidhu, G.K. 2007, 'Knowledge sharing among academic staff: A case study of business schools in Klang Valley, Malaysia', *JASA*, vol. 2, pp. 23-9.
- Jarvenpaa, S.L., Knoll, K. & Leidner, D.E. 1998, 'Is anybody out there? Antecedents of trust in global virtual teams', *Journal of Management Information Systems* vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 29-64.
- Jarvenpaa, S.L. & Leidner, D. 1999, 'Communication and trust in global virtual teams', *Organization Science*, vol. 10, pp. 791-815.
- Karlsen, J.T. & Gottschalk, P. 2004, 'Factors affecting knowledge transfer in IT projects.', *Engineering Management Journal*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 3-10.
- Kasperson, R.E., Golding, D. & Tuler, S. 1992, 'Social distrust as a factor in siting hazardous facilities and communicating risks', *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 48, no. 4, pp. 161-87.
- King, W.R. 2007, 'A research agenda for the relationships between culture and knowledge management', *Knowledge and Process Management*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 226-36.
- Kuo, F.-Y. & Young, M.-L. 2008, 'A study of the intention- action gap in knowledge sharing practices', *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, vol. 59, no. 8, pp. 1224-37.
- Langfred, C.W. 2004, 'Too much of a good thing? Negative effects of high trust and individual autonomy in self-managing teams', *Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 47, pp. 385-99.
- Langham, M. 2003, 'Ten steps to productive collaboration', <<http://www.it-director.com/content.php?cid=6159>>.
- Leana, C.R. & van Buren, H.J. 1999, 'Organizational social capital and employment practices', *The Academy of Management Review*, vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 538-55
- Lengnick-Hall, M. & Lengnick-Hall, C. 2003, *Human resource management in the knowledge economy: New challenges, new roles, new capabilities*, Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco.
- Levin, D.Z., Cross, R., Abrams, L.C. & Lesser, E.L. 2004, 'Creating value with knowledge: Insights from the IBM Institute for business value', in E.L. Lesser & L. Prusak (eds), *Trust and knowledge sharing: A critical combination*, Oxford University Press US, pp. 36-41.
- Lewicki, R.J., McAllister, D.J. & Bies, R.J. 1998, 'Trust and distrust: New relationships and realities', *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 23, pp. 438-58.
- Li, P.P. 2007, 'Towards an interdisciplinary conceptualization of trust: A typological approach', *Management and Organization Review*, vol. 3, pp. 421- 45.
- Luhmann, N. 1982, *Trust and power*, John Wiley & Sons Inc, Chichester, UK.
- Mackay, G. 2001, 'ICL's café culture', *Inside Knowledge: The original knowledge-management publication*, vol. 4, no. 5, <http://www.ikmagazine.com/xq/asp/sid.0/articleid.91E38171-C606-41B3-937F-5C6E91988264/eTitle.ICLs_caf_culture/qx/display.htm>.
- Marakas, G.M. 1999, *Decision support systems in the twenty-first century*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
- Mayer, R.C., Davis, J.H. & Schoorman, D.F. 1995, 'An integration model of organizational trust', *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 20, no. 3, pp. 709-34.
- McAllister, D.J. 1995, 'Affect- and cognition-based trust as foundations for interpersonal cooperation in organizations', *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 38, no. 1, pp. 24-59.
- McDermott, R. 1999, 'Why information technology inspired but cannot deliver knowledge management', *California Management Review*, vol. 41, no. 4, pp. 103-17.
- McEvily, B., Perrone, V. & Zaheer, A. 2003, 'Trust as an organizing principle', *Organization Science*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 91-103.
- McKinlay, J. & Williamson, V. 2010, 'Creating an ideal workplace culture : the keys to unlocking people talent', paper presented to the Academic Librarian 2: Singing in the Rain Conference, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 11-12 March, 2010.
- Moreland, R.L. & Myaskovsky, L. 2000, 'Exploring the performance benefits of group training: Transactive memory or improved communication? ', *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, vol. 82, no. 1, pp. 117-33.
- Munro, M.J. 2003, 'A primer on accent discrimination in the Canadian context', *TESL Canada Journal*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 38-51.
- Ndlela, L.T. & Toit, A.S.A.d. 2001, 'Establishing a knowledge management programme for competitive advantage in an enterprise', *International Journal of Information Management*, vol. 21, pp. 151-65.
- Nonaka, I. & Takeuchi, H. 1995, *The knowledge-creating company: How Japanese companies create the dynamics of innovation*, Oxford University Press, New York, USA.
- Parker, S.K., Williams, H.M. & Turner, N. 2006, 'Modeling the antecedents of proactive behavior at work', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 91, pp. 636-52.
- Quigley, N.R., Tesluk, P.E., Locke, E.A. & Bartol, K.M. 2007, 'A multilevel investigation of the motivational mechanisms underlying knowledge sharing and performance', *Organization Science*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 71-88.
- Rashid, M.Z.A., Sambasivan, M. & Rahman, A.A. 2004, 'The influence of organizational culture on attitudes toward organizational change', *The Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 161-79.
- Rau, D. 2005, 'The influence of relationship conflict and trust on the transactive memory: Performance relationships in top management teams', *Small Group Research*, vol. 36, no. 6, pp. 746-71.

- Rivière, V. 2001, 'Assessing knowledge management initiative successes as a function of organizational culture', The George Washington University.
- Rivière, V., Arntzen, A.A.B. & Worasinchai, L. 2007, 'The influence of trust on the success of codification and personalization KM approaches', paper presented to the 5th International Conference on ICT and Higher Education: Knowledge Management 2007, Siam University, Bangkok, Thailand, November 21-23.
- Riege, A. 2005, 'Three-dozen knowledge-sharing barriers managers must consider', *Journal of Knowledge Management*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 18-35.
- Robertson, M. & Hammersley, G.O.M. 2000, 'Knowledge management practices within a knowledge-intensive firm: The significance of the people management dimension', *Journal of European Industrial Training*, vol. 24, no. 2/3/4, pp. 241-53.
- Robins, M. n.d., 'Improving your knowledge-sharing culture', no. 42, <<http://www.eg2km.org/articles/Improving%20Your%20Knowledge-Sharing%20Culture2.doc>>.
- Robinson, S.L. 1996, 'Trust and breach of the psychological contract', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 41, pp. 574-99.
- Rousseau, D.M., Sitkin, S.B., Burt, R.S. & Camerer, C. 1998, 'Not so different after all: A cross-discipline view of trust', *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 393-404.
- Salancik, G.R. & Pfeffer, J. 1978, 'A social information processing approach to job attitudes and task design', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 23, pp. 224-53.
- Scarnati, J.T. 1997, 'Beyond technical competence: honesty and integrity', *Career Development International*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 24-7.
- Schein, E.H. 1995, *Organisational culture and leadership*, San Francisco, CA.
- Settoon, R.P. & Mossholderb, K.W. 2002, 'Relationship quality and relationship context as antecedents of person- and task-focused interpersonal citizenship behavior', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 87, no. 2, pp. 255-67.
- Smith, R.G. & Farquhar, A. 2000, 'The road ahead for knowledge management: An AI perspective', *AI Magazine*, pp. 17-40.
- Spiegler, I. 2000, 'Knowledge management: A new idea or a recycled concept?', *Communications of AIS*, vol. 3, no. 14, pp. 1-24.
- Swan, J. & Scarbrough, H. 2001, 'Knowledge, purpose and process: Linking knowledge management and innovation', *Proceeding of the 34th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, Hawaii.
- Syed-Ikhsan, S.O.S. & Rowland, F. 2004, 'Knowledge management in a public organisations in Malaysia: Do people really share?', *Journal of Knowledge Management*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 95-111.
- Szulanski, G., Cappetta, R. & Jensen, R.J. 2004, 'When and how trustworthiness matters: Knowledge transfer and moderating effect of causal ambiguity', *Organization Science*, vol. 15, no. 5, pp. 600-13.
- Tan, N.-L., Lim, Y.-S. & Ng, T.-H. 2009, 'Trust: Facilitator of knowledge-sharing culture', *Journal of Communications of the IBIMA (CIBIMA)*, vol. 7, no. 15, pp. 137-42.
- Wong, Y.-T., Ngo, H.-Y. & Wong, C.-S. 2003, 'Antecedents and outcomes of employees' trust in Chinese joint ventures', *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 481-99.
- Zucker, L.G. 1987, 'Institutional theories of organization', *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 13, pp. 443-64.