Affect, Trust and Friendship: A Case Study of Chinese and Zambian Relationships at the Workplace

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China's expanding presence in African countries renders opportunities for future business collaborations and friendships formed between Chinese and Zambians a highly likely and mutually beneficial option. This article explores these friendships and other types of relationships formed at the workplace. Using theoretical arguments and studies of relationships from business and management studies as well as anthropology and organizational psychology, this article examines the importance of affective relationships, their numerous benefits and the role of various forms of affect, such as trust, empathy and consideration. Theoretical considerations of affective relationships frames empirical evidence gathered from an examination of Chinese and Zambians working together in two companies, one Chinese-owned and another Zambian-owned. Arguing that business friendships combine both instrumentality and affect, this article looks at how Chinese and Zambian informants at the companies integrate this into their professional lives with ease by expressing and using the explicit benefits of business friendships to their advantage. They also create unlikely spaces of intimacies and affective relationships, which provide us with new ways of thinking about the way social bonds are forged at the workplace in cross-cultural settings. As the article emphasizes, this helps illuminate opportunities and challenges facing Chinese and Zambians as they continue to interact frequently and form more business friendships in the near future.

CHINA AND AFRICA RELATIONS

China's presence in Africa has reached unprecedented heights, with two-way trade standing at $55 billion in 2006 expected to double by 2010, and foreign direct investments for 2000-2006 reaching $6.6 billion (Alden, 2008). The diversity of Chinese investments in Africa extends to state-owned enterprises, small businesses, and private construction companies. Ian Taylor observes that "there are many Chinas and equally, many Africas" and a top-down approach to analyzing Sino-African relations obscures the conflict of interests concerning the myriad of China's state-owned companies, from oil corporations to mining enterprises, to private investments in the telecommunications industry (Taylor, 2009).

Contrary to reports that a unified China is taking over Africa, the micro-processes that occur, especially in daily interactions among Chinese and Africans, reflect less coherence and more

complexity. There are many facets to the Sino-African issue, evidenced by burgeoning literature on China's involvement in growing tourism (Broadman, 2007), the construction of Special Economic Zones (Davies, 2008), and the provision of aid devoid of conditionalities, as well as low-interest loans (Brautigam, 2008). Although recent publications attempt to probe and answer how Chinese differs from former colonial powers in extracting resources and exploiting the labor on the continent, fieldwork data on the complexity of social relations among Chinese and Africans and their everyday lives are seriously lacking (Brautigam, 2009). Furthermore, most contributions discuss the situation from a limited perspective that only takes into perspectives of the state and political and economic elites.

This study aims to s at these micro-processes through the examination of workplace dynamics in two corporations in Zambia. Workplace dynamics encompass myriad relationships with varying degrees of affect and intimacy. This article will attempt to show the different kinds of relationships forged between Chinese and Zambians. Business friendships, one type of workplace relationship, are pervasive in this context and serve crucial functions in contributing to the learning processes shared between both groups. While power dynamics do figure into the relationship, this article will illuminate the more dominant role of affect in the form of trust, empathy, consideration and care, all of which influence work relationships and play a crucial role in the future of increasing Chinese and Zambian engagement.

This study does not seek to minimize the role of structural forces, such as the work conditions and policies set forth by the corporations or the diplomatic relations between national governments, which facilitate the establishment and expansion of Chinese companies in Zambia. However, it does aim to complement research that uses a macro-perspective, asking whether and why micro-relations occurring on the ground converge or diverge from these findings. This study also aims to challenge literature that essentializes the Chinese and reduces them to one unified, homogeneous colonial power. Rather than viewing any one group as the perpetrator, this study seeks to disaggregate them and arrive at a better understanding of their situation through their stories, their motivations for working in Zambia, their experiences and changing perceptions as they adjust to working in a new environment. Therefore, the focus of this study is on these relationships built around dynamic learning processes, which involve sharing, building bridges, communicating and changing perceptions. Since Sino-Africa relations is a new and growing field, it is my belief that a diversity of viewpoints from multiple disciplines can only enhance our understanding of this phenomenon and facilitate possible improvements in relationship building.

Before venturing into the highlight of this paper on business friendships, I turn to the context and introduce the two companies where relationships forged between Chinese and Zambians are common and highly significant.

TWO COMPANIES

I spent a total of 10 months working and conducting research in two companies in Zambia. The first company specializes in telecommunications and is Chinese-owned and operated. The second, a Zambian-owned and operated company, is an engineering firm focused primarily on building infrastructure in the mines.

The first company is located in Lusaka, which is considered the administrative and political center of Zambia, while the second company is located in Kitwe, the country's mining and industrial hub. I interviewed and collected life histories from 16 employees in the first company and 12 in the second company. Half of the participants in the first company were Chinese

nationals, mostly hailing from Henan, Shandong and Hubei provinces. The company is composed of two types of local employees: temporary and formal staff. Included in the local staff are 36 formal employees and 18 temporary employees. Chinese employees comprise approximately 67 total employees, almost all formal staff, excluding those who stay in Lusaka for a few weeks to months temporarily for business. The company organizational chart and a map indicating where the Chinese participants grew up are included in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

FIGURE 1
CORPORATE STRUCTURE OF CHINESE COMPANY
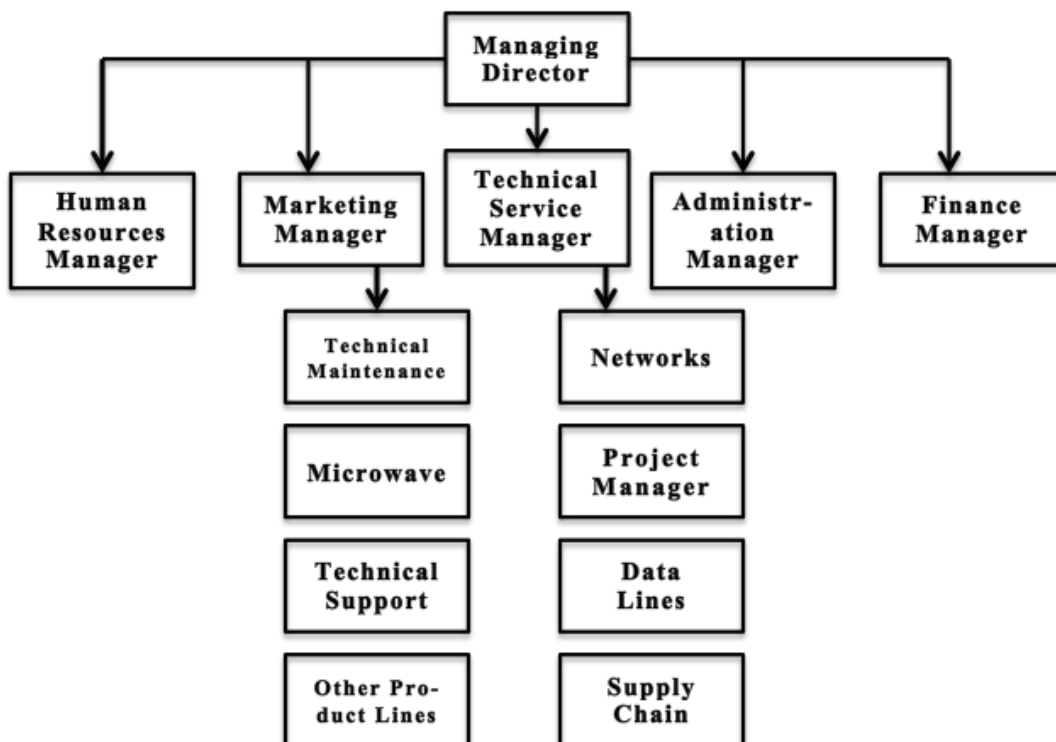
The Chinese company is a multinational corporation with a results-oriented culture and a strong multicultural background, comprised of half Zambian employees and half Chinese employees. The Zambian company, on the other hand, was composed of employees from predominantly Bemba-speaking backgrounds. There are 73 different ethnicities in Zambia and Bemba-speaking groups constitute one of the largest ethnicities in the country. Whereas the Chinese company followed strict patterns of recruitment, typically three rounds of interviews for all potential candidates, the Zambian company often hired without interviews and based on personal connections. The Zambian company also instituted a level of personal care to employees missing in the Chinese company. If an employee was ill at the hospital, it was acceptable for other employees at the company to visit during work hours. During my stint at the Zambian company, two employees, both ill for a long time, died. The Zambian company was responsible for paying for the coffin and employees could attend the funeral. I attended the funeral of one of the employees and watched several members give speeches and console family members of the deceased.

FIGURE 2
WHERE CHINESE PARTICIPANTS GREW UP
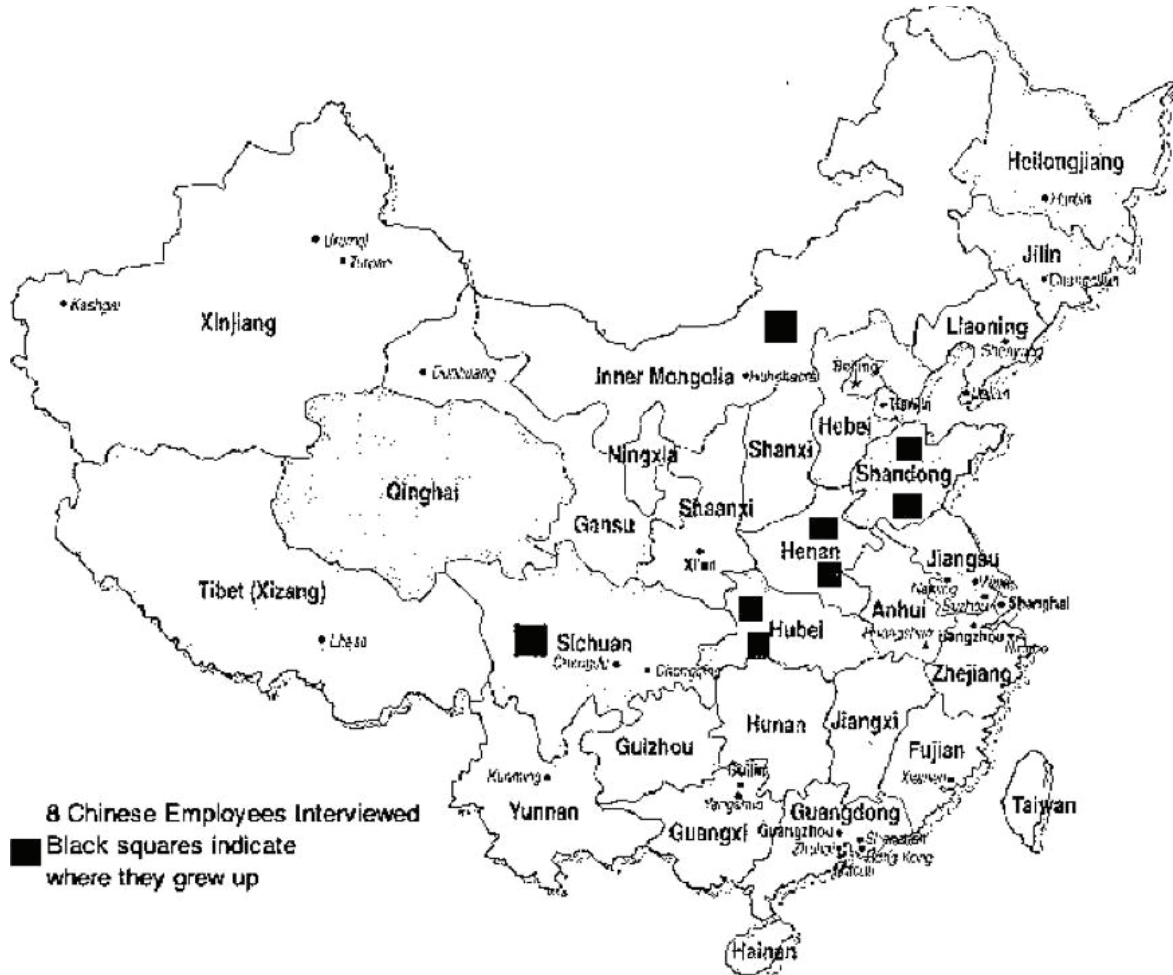
In the Chinese company, most of the Zambian employees had extensive experience working for NGOs and foreign firms or received their education and training abroad. Over 90 percent of the employees at the Chinese company were university-educated. In the Zambian company, most employees were educated up to high school levels. Those who received a university education were mostly educated at the University of Zambia (UNZA) and had personal connections to the CEO, who also graduated from UNZA. Almost all employees at the Zambian company who received a university degree or above occupied managerial positions.
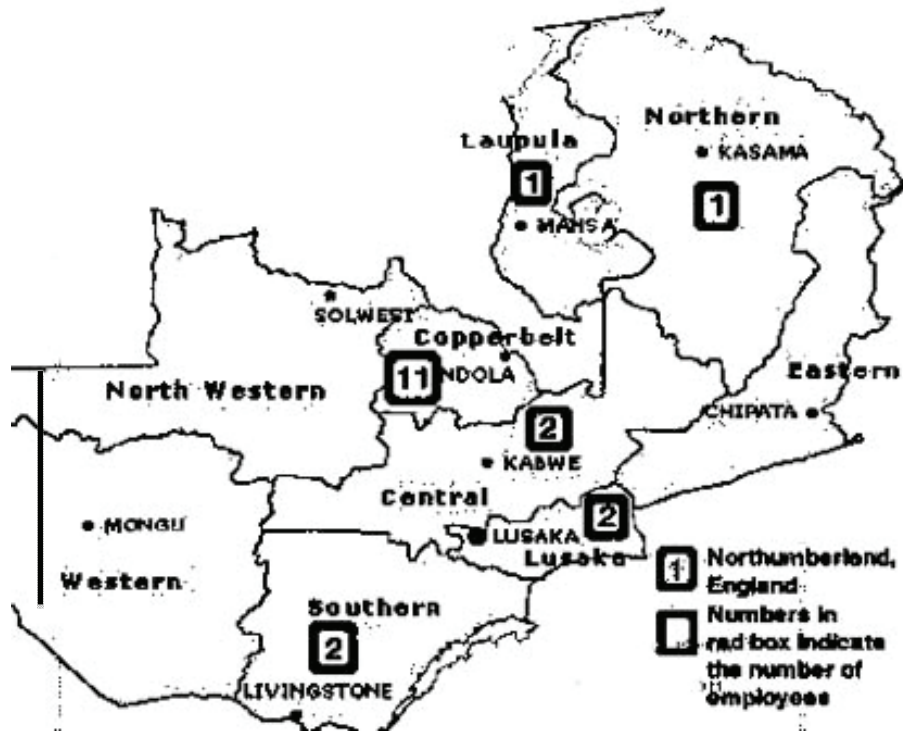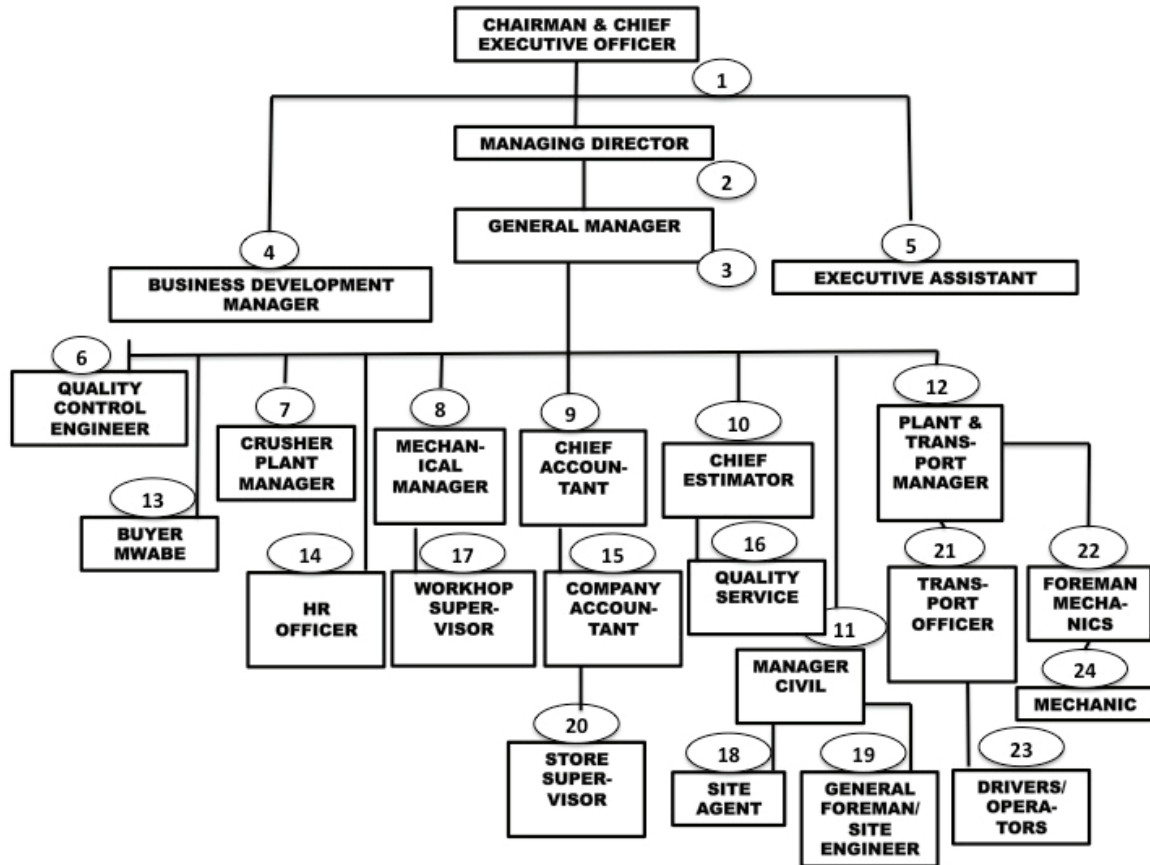
FIGURE 3
WHERE ZAMBIAN PARTICIPANTS GREW UP

FIGURE 4
CORPORATE STRUCTURE OF ZAMBIAN COMPANY

BACKGROUND OF EMPLOYEES

Most Chinese employees grew up in rural areas in China. The Chinese company's policy dictated that employees would stay in an African country for no more than a maximum of three years. The exception is South Africa. All other African countries are considered hardship posts, so employees receive signing bonuses and additional incentives for working there. In the last couple of years, the Chinese company implemented several key policies aimed at reducing the budget and keeping costs down. Policy implementations included merging positions, departments and country offices and placing more responsibilities on rotating Chinese employees. The consequence was an even more mobile population of Chinese employees than before. Employees were regularly flown out on weekends to finish tasks in Kenya, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Congo Brazaville and other neighboring countries. Due to increased mobility and the overall transient nature of Chinese employees transferring out of Zambia after three to four years, keeping track of them as a researcher was challenging. A substantial number of participants I befriended while visiting Zambia each year since 2007 had been transferred to Europe and other African countries by the time I returned to do long-term fieldwork. In the middle of my fieldwork, nearly all the remaining Chinese employees I befriended and on which most of this

research is based, had left, either returning to China or were transferred elsewhere.

In response to one of the interview questions asking them to describe the house in which they grew up, all Chinese employees described a drastic change when they moved from a village-style house with outside bathrooms to a flat with a few bedrooms and indoor bathroom and kitchen. One of the employees from Henan province described his experiences growing up:

> When I was born in 1980, we didn't have two-story homes in that area. We had flat homes. At first, my father and mother, my grandparents and unmarried aunt lived there with three bedrooms and one small living room. It was all in a line. The bathroom was public shared with neighbors. It was very dirty. Then in 1992, we moved to the third floor. Then it was just me and my parents. Two bedrooms and a living room.

Another employee from Inner Mongolia told a similar story.

> Before 1970s, Chinese people had a difficult time. We did not have enough to eat. Those older than me, my older sister for example, did not receive milk. Inner Mongolia had to supply milk for Beijing and other big cities. This left little milk for those living in our area. So we only ate things like chicken and fish on birthdays or new years.

The significance of witnessing rapid economic development is that it fueled their drive to suffer or "eat bitterness" and furnished some form of coherent meaning to their struggles abroad. For most of my Chinese informants, working abroad was a necessary sacrifice to fulfill previously denied dreams and improve their lives. It was also a symbol for success since working abroad was often associated with wealth. Wealth ensured their chances of getting married. It afforded them the ability to purchase a home in the city, which is now a prerequisite set forth by Chinese women looking for suitable partners. From the Chinese perspective, wealth also ensured and symbolized stability. Confucianism, which underpins this perspective, extols the virtue of stability.

More valued than freedom, stability guarantees the harmony and well being of collectives, including the family and the nation. The desire to be stable through the accumulation of wealth is not only rooted in Confucianism, but is also a consequence of experiencing over a century of historical and fiscal instability. Even though my Chinese informants did not experience this directly, the powerful narratives of major wars, poverty, famine, and political unrest in China passed down by their grandparents and parents, who did directly experience these hardships, greatly affected their decisions to take advantage of the opportunities now, even if it meant making tremendous sacrifices (Fong, 2004). Furthermore, the lack of social security and other safety nets also proved to be urgent impetus for the Chinese to work abroad and save money. Thus, my Chinese informants faced immense pressures to accumulate capital for the security of their futures or else they faced downward mobility. Garnering six to seven times more than the amount of average salaries in China made the sacrifices worthwhile.

While most Chinese employees grew up in rural areas, the majority of Zambian employees grew up in central hubs, either in the Copperbelt or in the capital city of Lusaka. Among Zambian employees in both companies, 11 out of the 20 interviewed grew up in the Copperbelt Province, also known as the mining capital. A map showing the provinces where Zambian

employees grew up is shown in Figure 3. An accompanying organizational chart for the Zambian company is also in Figure 4. Out of the 11 who grew up in the Copperbelt, eight had fathers whose primary occupation was supported by mining. Among the eight, half were underground miners or supervisors and the other half supplied mining equipment or worked in security for ZCCM (formerly Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines, Ltd), which used to hold a government monopoly on all the mines. Since privatizing in the 1990s, ZCCM sold the mines to the Chinese, Indians and South Africans yet still retains a share of the profits. Given a substantial number of Zambian employees whose fathers worked for the mines, it is fair to say that ZCCM during the nationalist era under former President Kenneth Kaunda provided educational and employment opportunities for subsequent generations.

From the Zambian perspective, working for a Chinese firm represented opportunities for career advancement. Its orientation towards performance results rather than race, gender or personal relationships made allowances for the establishment of trust. One employee, Justine, summed it up well:

> What I noticed here [in Zambia] is that a white person gets a higher position than you even if they're not that much qualified than just because of their color especially in a company, which is controlled by whites. There's that racial issue. For Chinese, getting into the inner circle, it's strictly business. They don't look at color, they trust you first. You have to prove yourself first.

As someone who worked for many years in the Zambian government sector, she made this comparison:

> Compared to where I am now, in a Zambian environment, it's mostly on who you know, the relationships that you have with the boss, and how long you've worked in that place for you to be recognized at that place accordingly. I don't think being a woman plays a factor in being at [the Chinese company]. One thing about my own perception of the Chinese is that they won't look at your color and gender. They just look at results. So whether you're woman, man, if you give good results, then you could be recognized. Positive results [meaning] if you're able to meet and exceed your KPI [key performance indicators].

In contrast to work culture in the Chinese company, in the Zambian company, using personal connections was the most effective means to accomplishing tasks. Policies at the Zambian company instituted care for employees on a personal level, providing for funeral expenses and transport for visits to sick employees and provided more opportunities for employees to interact on a personal and even intimate level. These personal relationships, sometimes evolving to friendship, served as an instrumental, even necessary means to get jobs done.

Due to an emphasis on personal connections and relationships, the Zambian company was perceived by employees to be less meritocratic. Opportunities for career advancement were slim and depended heavily on whether friends at the workplace would reciprocate favors. Relationships with Chinese suppliers, contractors and firms were forged only at the management levels, usually through the CEO's personal connections. This reduced the chance for knowledge and skills transfer and collaboration at the employee level. Consequently, opportunities for innovation were also limited. Chances for upward mobility were greater in the Chinese company.

For an ambitious and talented professional like Justine, working at the Chinese company provides the optimal path to an enriching and successful career.

While many Zambian employees at the Chinese company perceived Chinese investments favorably, they also shared concerns about cultural differences, communication barriers and relations with supervisors. Most of the Zambian informants worked extensively with Westerners and this work experience, combined with a history of British colonialism, made them more familiar with "Western ways." They expressed that "Western ways" included greeting each other in a friendly manner, drinking tea with milk and sugar, and attending Christian churches. With the Chinese, they had to learn to adjust to foreign styles and manners of communication. Additionally, some Zambian employees expressed dissatisfaction with relationships with Chinese supervisors and often lamented the lack of encouraging comments by the Chinese showing appreciating for Zambian employees. At the same time, Zambian employees were preoccupied with retaining their jobs in an economy where most of their friends and families were unemployed. Compared to the general population, their salaries were two to three times the average salary and they benefited from company perks such as sending them abroad to workshops and training sessions. For most Zambian employees, working at the Chinese company was a steppingstone to either starting their own companies in the future or using the prestige of working at a Chinese multinational firm to transfer to another firm.

The desire to develop their skills and talents as professionals resonates strongly among both Chinese and Zambians at the companies. Although Chinese and Zambian employees come from different backgrounds and have varied motivational stories, they share similar ambitions to advance in their careers. Some of the key similarities and differences are captured in Figure 5. Understanding their backgrounds, experiences and goals at work lays the groundwork for analyzing social dynamics at the workplace. Moreover, situating their experiences within specific corporate structures and policies further helps us arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the role of affective relationships and business friendships in their lives. Now that a general context of the situation has been provided, I turn to a review of theory and research on affect, intimacy and friendships at the workplace.

FIGURE 5
GENERAL PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

		Frequency	Percent
Nationality	**Zambian**	20	71.4
	Chinese	8	28.6
	Total	28	100.0

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	**Male**	22	78.6
	Female	6	21.4
	Total	28	100.0

		Frequency	Percent
Age	**Under 35**	24	85.7
	Over 35	4	14.3
	Total	28	100.0

		Frequency	Percent
Company Employees	**Zambian Co.**	12	42.9
	Chinese Co.	16	57.1
	Total	28	100.0

		Frequency			Percent		
		Total	**C**	**Z**			
Grew Up In (C = Chinese Z =Zambian)	**Urban/peri-urban**	15	2	13	53.5	7.1	46.4
	Rural/Town/Boma	13	6	7	46.4	21.4	25.0
	Total	28	8	20	100.0	28.5	71.4

RELATIONSHIPS

The study of relationships has been pursued from multiple angles. Social science finds its roots in Durkheimian questions of what holds a society together, to which he responds with the notion that the growing division of labor in the early 19th century would give rise first to mechanical and later, organic solidarity based on the reciprocal duties in relationships. There are two types of positive solidarity, or what sociologists term "integration." The first kind of solidarity is characterized by shared beliefs, collectivity, and substantial number of members, whereas the second kind consists of differing components that operate as one, and elevates that which is individual and unique in us (Durkheim [1893] 1933). In the "lower" societies, the first type of solidarity, which Durkheim calls mechanical solidarity, is maintained by the collective conscience. As societies become more advanced, and the division of labor increases, organic solidarity replaces mechanical solidarity, and "it is the division of labor which, more and more,

fills the role that was formerly filled by the common conscience" (ibid). Anthropologists have expanded on these Durkheimian questions by focusing their studies on the structure and functions of different kinds of relationships, ranging from kinship (Bond, 1972; Cohen, 2005; Epstein, 1981) to patron-client relations (Scott, 1972, 1985) and more recently to philosophical questions of the self in relation to others (Giddens, 1991; Jackson, 1996).

While anthropologists and sociologists conceptualize the existence of relationships within a socialized and institutionalized context, psychologists tend to examine them divorced from the social order (Blumstein and Kollock, 1988). Despite disciplinary boundaries revealing the strengths and weaknesses of each approach to studying relationships, a general definition can be proffered. Using social psychologist Robert Hinde's definition, we can define relationships as a series of related, interdependent interactions. A series of interactions constitute a relationship only if the interactions are interrelated and affect each other (Blumstein & Kollock, 1988). It is no wonder that much of the literature on relationships in psychology focus on romantic ones. Interdependent, related interactions based on a common history are evinced in romantic dyadic affairs. Boundaries are clearly drawn and therefore, easily studied.

In more complicated relationships, assigning a simple label may be challenging, especially with regards to workplace relationships. Research on relationships tend to categorize them into different types: 1) Communal relationship, in which those involved are responsible for fulfilling reciprocal needs without expectation of return, 2) Exchange relationship, whereby exchanges are social or economic and instrumental and 3) Exploitive, in which one party attempts to gain individual benefit without consideration of the other party's interest (Allen and Eby, 2012). It is important to note, as Zelizer (2007) astutely observes, and which I mention in this paper, relationships often involve multiple and coexisting ties, ranging from the intimate to impersonal to personal. They are also dynamic and evolving, so a workplace relationship that starts as collegial may become intimate at one point and then hostile by the end.

While this might seem to confound our exploration of friendship and intimate byproducts among Chinese and Zambians working together since it categorizing their relationship may be challenging, I submit that this challenge is a good thing. In fact, it opens up vast spaces in which we can explore the different types of relationships forged, how they evolve, and how the meaning attached to these relationships change in the process. These spaces extricate us from simple dichotomies of colonizer and colonized and compel us to look at unexpected affects that can arise from power-laden and seemingly purely instrumental relations. Perceptions of mutual interests ebb and flow, as do different forms of affect manifested in trust, care, consideration, and compassion to differing degrees. Most Chinese and Zambian relationships are not easily categorized, but they are often characterized by high interdependence.

INTERDEPENDENCE, INTIMACY AND AFFECT

Great degrees of interdependence can manifest itself in various ways and can be predictors of success in organizations. Interdependence theory is prevalent in both positive and negative workplace experiences. Simply put, it focuses on the costs and benefits of interactions (Campbell and Campbell, 2012). The prisoner's dilemma is an example of a highly interdependent situation, in which the optimality of the outcome depends on both individuals cooperating. However, even if one defects, leaving the other in a worse-off situation, their relationship is still characterized by high interdependence. And it is the type of benefits and costs resulting from interdependent relations, which can contribute to a more positive or negative work environment. While prisoner

dilemma situations do occur in work settings, more likely the consequences of not cooperating are less severe. However, the accumulation of interactions that enacts greater costs than benefits can chip away at trust among and between employees and negatively impact motivation, trust, and morale and overall work performance.[1]

Positive experiences at the workplace is not only positively correlated with employee motivation and performance (Cardador and Rupp, 2012; Roberson, 1990), but it is also perceived by employees to be equally, if not more important than compensation (Cardador and Rupp, 2012; O'Brien, 1992). Beyond the theoretical arguments for workplace experiences as a means to improving employee and employer performance, positive work experiences have also been deemed an inherently desirable quality linked to overall human flourishing.

Although positive work experiences usually hinge on numerous variables including meaningful tasks, relationships, goals and values (Cardador and Rupp, 2012), the relational aspect plays a particularly significant role. The influence is most evident in decisions made by potential retirees to continue working because of positive relationship formed at the workplace. To this end, positive psychology research emphasizes the increasing role relationships play in the well being of the elderly and retirees (Halbesleben, 2012).

Assuming a variety of relationships, the level of affect is what determines where they fall on the wide spectrum. Affect in relationships tends to have positive connotations. Certainly, a negative coworker relationship can have affect, perhaps trust is broken and anger ensues. It signals a level of intimacy, although intimacy itself may be negative or positive. One can certainly have an affective relationship without intimacy or an intimate relationship without any affect. Here, affective relationship is meant to reflect a level of care, intimacy and emotion involved (Ingram and Zou, 2008). Intimacy is a bit more challenging to define. Though commonly associated with sexual intercourse or physical closeness, it encompasses a far greater range of meanings. We will follow the definition used by Zelizer (2007) that what characterizes relations as intimate has to do with "particularized knowledge received, and attention provided by, at least one person – knowledge and attention that are not widely available to third parties."

Friendship contains a greater degree of affect than collegial relationships. Friendship also has a greater degree of intimacy, or particularized knowledge available only to the parties involved (Zelizer, 2007). However, even collegial relationships that might be deemed "purely" instrumental may have affective elements of care, trust and empathy in individual interactions or in passing moments.

Trust, a multidimensional concept, has been studied in various ways. The kind of trust expressed by my informants suggests that trust it is both cognition and affect-based, and relies upon a certain familiarity in how others will behave. This familiarity is also imbued with positive perceptions about the other party's motives (Gibbons, 2004; McAllister, 1995).

Since work occupies the majority of people's lives, it becomes a crucial space for the development and maintenance of these relationships. Determining the mode and levels of intimacy embedded in workplace relationships is an imperative step to understanding these relationships. Intimacy, like affect, draws attention to care and trust. Within this realm, it has been categorized into different kinds, including physical, informational and emotional intimacy (Zelizer, 2007). Intimacy has been described by some scholars as the "knowing, loving and caring for a person" (Jamieson, 1989; Valentine, 2006). Others emphasize the distinction between "close" and "intimate" – the latter encapsulating a limited type of interaction that may or may not be fused with affect (Blumstein & Kollock, 1988). The unifying feature of myriad definitions and approaches to studying relationships is the degree of interdependence. Though

levels of durability may differ, both "close" and "intimate" relationships have significant degrees of interdependence.

However, unlike significantly affective relationships, intimate relationships can mostly rely on obligation and duty or even an economic transaction (Zelizer, 2007). This is exemplified by a long-time married couple that grows apart, rendering the relationship primarily based on intimacy without affect or affect with little intimacy. Therefore, affect and intimacy can be mutually exclusive, depending on the type and intensity of the relationship. Now that we have reviewed research on relationships in general and the role of affect and intimacy, we now turn to a discussion of the role of affect in the professional setting and why it has traditionally been treated with skepticism due to theoretical arguments forming "pillars of the public-private divide" (Rezende, 1999).

AFFECT IN THE WORKPLACE

In the corporate environment, especially in the Western world, mixing affect with business is often discouraged. The idea is that rational behavior must not be "tainted" with sentimentality and thus, the two spheres must be kept separate. Rooted in organizational theory, "separation logic" is a cautionary tale against "contaminating" rational economic behavior and possibly generating inefficiency, nepotism and various forms of corruption (Ingram and Zou, 2008; Zelizer, 2007).

Going back even further than the roots of organizational theory, we can trace suspicion of affect to Aristotle, who distinguishes between reason and emotions or passion and exhorts against satisfying one's "appetite."[2] This idea permeates much of Western philosophy and consequently, formed the basis for justifying discrimination against women because they were considered the more "emotional" and therefore weaker sex (Barrett et al, 1998; Chodorow, 1987; Risman, 1987). Invariably, the fundamental assumption behind separation logic is that emotion is separate from reason – an assumption that is thoughtfully challenged by Martha Nussbaum (2001) in her treatment of emotion as cognition or thoughts. This definition of emotion undermines separation logic and harbors implications for the divide between personal and public domains in the professional setting.

For our purposes in examining affective workplace relationships, Nussbaum's analysis raises intriguing questions of affect that is difficult to categorize, such as compassion and mercy (Cates, 2003). Why is it important to examine the different kinds of affect and their varying levels? We discuss this at length because we want to arrive at an understanding of the multiplicity of affective relationships formed between Chinese and Zambians. As our theoretical and empirical evidence show, these relationships are not easily categorized or reduced to binaries. In fact, each interaction has degrees of affect and intimacy and over time, these repeated interactions form the basis of affective relationships, such as business friendships. These relationships may have temporary or enduring moments of affect, such as compassion, empathy and trust.

From the Buddhist perspective, compassion is thought, emotion and action for *all* sentient beings. At the very basic level, having compassion for someone is to "suffer" with that person, placing oneself in his or her situation without judgment or feelings of superiority. One can have compassion for a stranger on the television without any personal encounter. While this situation might be relatable, ascertaining whether affect can exist in power-laden relationships becomes challenging. For example, can a colonial master have compassion for his slave? From the Buddhist perspective and perhaps going farther than Nussbaum's rendition as well as traditional

concepts of affect, compassion necessarily translates to action. For what does it mean to "suffer with" if one does not practice the very act? A colonial master can have moments of compassion for his slave, implying measures of affect and perhaps even intimacy often overlooked in portrayals of power-laden relationships from a macro perspective. Ultimately, however, it is action that determines whether compassion is genuine or merely rhetoric.

This is not to say, of course, that other kinds of affect cannot exist in power-laden relationships. The colonial master may have deep concern and care for his slaves, which may instigate him to treat them well and look after them. One way to evaluate the situation is to look at the actions that derive from personal affects. Another way to evaluate the situation, assuming his actions are only ameliorative and not revolutionary, is to acknowledge the presence of affect and the changed nature of an otherwise exploitative relationship. While both examinations may be faulted for not being adequately transformative for either the activist or the revolutionary thinker, it certainly does alter the way we typically think of relationships between individual "colonizers" and "colonized." Along these lines, it also begs the question of whether alienation as conceived by Marx could be diminished or eradicated by strong affect among workers and between factory owners and workers, with varying degrees of change to the structure and condition of work.[3]

Bringing affect to the fore, where does it belong in the workplace and does it undermine boundaries demarcating personal and public domains? Employees at both the Chinese and Zambian companies often expressed compassion for each other, albeit from varying perspectives. Due to differences in religious backgrounds, compassion from the Zambian side was often discussed in terms of the unconditional love they received from Jesus. Some Chinese employees subscribed to Buddhism, but even the ones who did not, appealed to compassion from having undergone similar experiences. When a fellow colleague's mother passed away, people from the company gathered to offer their condolences, care and concern for his bereavement. The expression may have been culturally situated, but the understanding of pain and suffering was universal. Further gestures, such as pooling together some money to give to the grieving colleague and giving small gifts such as Chinese tea and a plastic canteen, demonstrated the role of affect in workplace relationships. Tragedies such as the passing of the colleague's mother weakened the boundaries which marked groups and cliques and brought different people together in identifying with universal suffering.

Celebrations also had the effect of strengthening or blurring these lines between the intimate and non-intimate and affective and non-affective component of relationships. For example, one of the accountants was getting married and invited his boss, the financial manager, to his wedding. Inviting mere acquaintances or anyone who wants to attend has become a relic of the past due to the rising costs of weddings. Modern day brides in the cities of Zambia expend effort to whittle down their lists to the close and intimate. So being invited to the wedding of someone at work is quite a big deal. When I asked the financial manager about the wedding, he said that it was unlike anything he had ever experienced, coming from a more reserved culture whereby weddings consist of dinner and maybe light dancing. He made the joke that there was so much dancing at the wedding that he thought guests' hips were going to fall off. He had been exposed to some of the most intimate details of his colleague's personal life, from meeting his entire family to celebrating and rejoicing in this major rite of passage. Although their relationship as superior to subordinate was still infused with power dynamics, the nature had clearly changed. As an instantiation of reciprocity, it paved the way for future invitations into each other's personal lives, blurring the boundaries between professional and private spheres.

While they came from different cultural backgrounds, their interactions had conspicuously changed. I frequently visited their office and discovered differences in their manner of expression in the two years I had gotten to know them. First, the manager, who had rarely joked before, except when he was out with close friends, began to joke in English with his colleague. His colleague, usually effusive, applied mannerisms of polite restraint, which mirrored the gestures of his Chinese counterparts. Although the interactions were reserved and subtle, they were an indication to me that they were meeting each other halfway in communication exchanges and that this process could only occur with some degree of trust.

Second, when I asked the manager about his relations with his Zambian counterparts, he said that the ones who worked for him, with whom he had seen intimate details of their lives, were good workers. This was a common compliment given by Chinese employees to people they respected. Rather than speak about personal character, they spoke about professional performance. In fact, professional performance was often equated with personal character. As one Chinese employee explained to me, "how you conduct yourself in the workplace is how you conduct yourself at home and in your life. If someone does a good job, I know I can trust that person." It was clear that opening up intimate aspects of their lives to each other and repeated work interactions that involved achieving the same goals strengthened the affective components in their relationships such as trust.

To this end, it is important to note that multiple kinds of intimacy can occur simultaneously. A most interesting example is the kind of intimate moments smokers share and perhaps this is not unique to the Chinese corporate setting. At the company, coworker relations were often predicated on shared professional tasks, similar hobbies or perceptions of cultural similarities. Then there was the group that met several times a day to go smoke outside. The group cut across ethnic, national, cultural and departmental ties and united differences based on the habit of smoking. As a non-smoker who often joined them, I can say for certain that their relations were highly intimate, as the same group of diverse individuals, consistently, day in and day out, smoked together and revealed details about their relationships with their wives, family members and other coworkers. There was an implicit agreement that what they revealed in this smoking space remained confidential.

This space disrupts simplistic notions of what constitutes a professional relationship, especially one that is tinged by inequality and power. New and provisional identities as well as relationships of a highly intimate nature could take place in these unconventional spaces because they allowed for constant trespassing of boundaries which marked public and private domains and made room for social transgressions such as gossip, complaints about spouses, bosses and coworkers, and even discussion of sexual acts.

This section illustrates that affect may be situational and differs in degree. However, they are ever present in workplace relationships, particularly among Chinese and Zambians in the professional setting. Affect and intimacy make their way into workplace interactions and often form the basis for developing affective relationships such as friendship. Understanding the significance of affect in these friendships have larger implications in seeing Chinese and Zambian relations as dynamic, evolving and complicated. Now that I have discussed the importance of relationships and affect in the workplace, I turn to one type of affective relationship, friendship and its cultural norms, among Chinese and Zambians working together.

CULTURAL NORMS IN THE BUSINESS WORLD

In the Western context, as previously mentioned, friendship at the workplace tends to have negative connotations because it is perceived to cloud objective, rational judgment. As I will illustrate, this is not the case in other cultural contexts.

In both Chinese and Zambian contexts, friendship at the workplace is seen as a favorable because of the emphasis on the benefits derived from personal connections. Robert Hefner (1998) observes that Chinese capitalism was built from the ground up from personal relationships of trust and not on the basis of legal contract. This system is encapsulated in the notion and practice of *guanxi*, which dictates norms of reciprocity in relationships. Mayfair Yang (1994) distinguishes between *guanxi* as practice and *guanxi* as institution, defining the former as a system of personal connections and the latter as the "instrumental manipulation" of these relations. This distinction is key because studies that highlight the diminishing importance of *guanxi* (Guthrie, 1998) or the convergence of the norms governing Chinese companies and American companies (Denison, et al., 2011) point to *guanxi* as institution. *Guanxi* in practice is alive and well in Chinese companies in Zambia, though to differing degrees, with privately-owned enterprises (POEs) emphasizing performance measures more than state-owned enterprises (SOEs). Although nearly all Chinese employees denied the existence of *guanxi* at this POE, often juxtaposing it against SOEs, which are reputed to be filled with nepotistic and corrupt practices, it was clear that promotions and transfers out of country at the upper levels were contingent upon personal connections back home. This was evidenced by another one of my good friends whose transfer to Europe was made possible because his fiancée's father was a government official in the mainland and pulled some strings to get his future son-in-law out of Africa.

In Zambia, most people acknowledged the importance of personal connections, relationships and friendships in providing professional benefits, even if they did not agree with the outcome. It was commonly known that hiring practices centered on personal connections. People often used their friends to get jobs and this was viewed as an acceptable strategy to use. Jobs in the formal sector were often allocated based on personal connections, most likely family members. In the Chinese company, hiring tasks, which were delegated to a Tonga woman, were deemed by some of the Zambian employees to be based on ethnicity, since she purportedly hired fellow Tongas and Lozis, their "tribal cousins." In the Zambian company, hiring practices were even more predicated on personal connections. Most of the employees I interviewed got the job through a family member or good friend and bypassed formal applications and the entire interview process. In upper levels of management, employees had personal relations with the CEO or knew him from their university days and were immediately hired without undergoing a formal recruitment process. The benefits of strong personal connections and friendships have also been emphasized in ethnographies of transnational networks illustrated by Paul Stoller (2002) through his study of West African traders in New York City. Similar to the Chinese and Zambian employees I interviewed, the West African traders used their personal connections and took full advantage of belonging to multiple networks to expand their businesses.

This section highlights the function of friendship in both Chinese and Zambian contexts. It also illustrates that the instrumental benefits from friendship in the professional setting is not viewed as negatively as it is in the Western world. In fact, friendship ensures reciprocity through "incompletely specified rights and obligations" (Ingram and Zou, 2008). The benefits derived from ongoing relationships as distinct from a purely economic exchange is elucidated here:

In economic exchange the values of the items to be exchanged are stipulated with precision – even if a tangible good is traded for a promise to pay something in the future, the something is identified. In contrast, goods go back and forth in relational exchange according to a fuzzy sense of worth. A favor is associated with a debt of type, but the repayment terms are left vague. The role of affect here is critical, as it is affect that is the basis of the necessary trust that the recipient of the favor will recognize it and repay it. Because relational exchange is not simultaneous it also has the reciprocal effect of reinforcing the relationships on which it is based, as the practices become cemented to each other through incompletely specified rights and obligations that can only be exercised in the ongoing relationship, and never completely satisfied (there is no terminal value to a friendship) (ibid).

Further benefits derived from ongoing relationships, such as advice networks, friendships or mentorships include access to tacit information and access to resources and career advancement opportunities (Coleman, 1990; Granovetter, 1982; Podolny & Baron, 1997; Siebert et al, 2001). In the business context, these relational exchanges also have the added effect of lowering risk. As Ingram and Zou (2008) emphasize in the aforementioned quote, affect that forms the basis of trust ensures that both parties will fulfill their obligations. Greater degrees of affect gives rise to stronger trust, which greatly enhances the relationship. Therefore, friendship, which automatically implies a great degree of affect and trust, proffers myriad social and professional benefits.

The benefits from friendship also extend into the business world. Business friendships, which contain a strong affective component, have been shown to positively influence economic outcomes. This, in turn, strengthens the affective component (Ingram and Zou, 2008; Uzzi, 1996). Moreover, business friendships have the added benefit of lowering transaction costs by making transferring knowledge easy and facilitating efficient exchanges through the transmission of tacit information.

BUSINESS FRIENDSHIPS

The definition of business friendship combines affect with instrumentality. Some studies in the field of organizational studies draw rigid lines between instrumental relationships based on utility and friendships based on affect. Earlier we attributed the rise of this dichotomy to the notion of emotion as separate from reason and the accompanying division between personal and public domains that have achieved dominance in Western thought and is commonly applied in the corporate world. Recent ethnographies (Bell and Coleman, 1999; Rezende, 1999; Smart 1999) and research in business and management studies (Ingram and Zou, 2008; Ingram and Lifschitz, 2006) challenge this divide.

Building on their studies, I submit that business friendships, combining a mixture of affect and instrumentality to varying degrees, were prevalent among Chinese and Zambian relations. Moreover, these business friendships were the key mechanisms through which skills and knowledge transfer and mutually beneficial learning processes take place. The development of these friendships presents endless opportunities for future business collaborations among Chinese and Zambian entrepreneurs and technology workers. Among numerous outcomes, one potential outcome is a rise in the living standard of the average Zambian and the expansion of the

middle class.

Theoretically, the affect and instrumental divide is weakened by a few counterarguments. First, relationships are rarely purely dependent on one over the other. Even close relationships with high intimacy and affect have strong instrumental dimensions. One might refer to a marriage as a business partnership in domestic tasks that involve daily coordination, management, and accounting. Even in what might be considered a purely instrumental, economic exchange with the store clerk, repeated interactions with doses of personal revelations may result in the development of affect over time. Attachments may form where least expected. Indeed, there are cases of purely instrumental, non-affective exchanges. This tends to take place in temporal and fleeting situations, such as an engineer at the company brought in to do some consulting work for a few days. Likely, this relationship will be entirely or mostly collegial.

With respect to Chinese and Zambian interactions in a company and in business networks, the divide becomes less relevant. Chinese and Zambian relationships were not pure friendships, because they worked together and were professionally dependent on each other. Their relationships were also not purely instrumental because they socialized together, to different degrees, both within and outside the workplace. They also adopted affective styles of communication and "face" at the workplace. As shown in the examples of the smoking group and one of the managers attending the wedding of his subordinate, these spaces for personalized interactions fostered affect. This level of affect could be found in Confucianistic management styles and the emulation of a family environment (Chunxia, 2010). Furthermore, it could be argued that people who work together for years cannot help but develop some level of affect, even if it is minimal and situational.

Additionally, the majority of interactions among Chinese and Zambians in both companies took place outside the workplace; Chinese employees often familiarized themselves with family members of their clients and assisted with personal affairs, including helping their children apply for universities in China, accompanying them on trips to China and South Africa, and sharing hobbies together. They knew each other on a friendly level, having played golf together, served as drinking buddies and frequented bars and clubs together. They also knew each other on an intimate level, having multiple social interactions with their spouses, girlfriends and mistresses. In other words, the byproducts of these business friendships are supported by the view that "people who deal with others frequently may not be able to help developing affection and attachment to one another," even if it is acknowledged later in time (Dulsrud and Gronhaug, 2007; Granovetter, 1993).

Second, and perhaps most importantly, concern the cultural norms that govern the business setting. For most Asians, socializing is intertwined with economic relations. Business deals are often made over dinner and personal matters discussed beforehand at length. Socializing often gives rise to friendships and other affective relationships. *Guanxi*, explored earlier in this essay, exemplifies the blending of instrumentality and affect. Instrumental favors carried out between business partners or colleagues help strengthen affective closeness. In fact, most of the Chinese employees I interviewed expressed explicitly that their motive for forming friendships with particular colleagues or with me was primarily based on instrumental benefits. Unlike in perhaps other settings where this might be taboo, they were not at all reticent to express preference for a tit-for-tat exchange. This did not conflict with their perception of friendship, for instrumentality in friendship extended both ways, so they were bound to reciprocate.

Similar cultural norms also governed the way Zambians do business. Socializing with each other is a critical component to cementing business deals. In the corporate context, Zambian

employees socialize with each other by joking and discussing their personal lives. However, friendly relations at the workplace do not necessarily translate to business friendships. Affective displays and mannerisms ran rampant through their interactions, but close interviews revealed that many did not trust each other. Friendship and business seemed to mix better among structural equivalents at the upper levels. Socializing took place far more often among and between managers than employees in regular positions. Thus, business friendships among Zambian employees were more common among the upper levels.

This conclusion aligns well with findings from interviews that suggest trust between Zambian employees remains a major issue. Coping with scarce resources at the lower levels may explain the discrepancy in friendship formation in the lower and upper structural levels. It's also important to note that a deteriorating economy further contributes to distrust among workers. High levels of distrust among Zambian employees might be a more contemporary phenomenon, as older generations expressed having experienced greater workplace trust in the past. For example, the two older employees at the Zambian company who remembered a time when the Copperbelt was economically thriving talked most about the frequency of business friendships forming at the workplace. Both referred to high levels of instrumentality, affect and intimacy in these friendships, and pointed to the frequency with which colleagues visited each other's homes, knew their home villages and gave each other professional advice.

In this section, we have emphasized the ways in which the personal and professional divide in both Chinese and Zambian contexts are less rigid than in other corporate environments. Socializing both in and outside the workplace with colleagues and clients is the norm and is viewed favorably as a means to achieve a professional end.

Expressed distrust between Zambian employees has broad implications for Chinese and Zambian work relationships. First, it paves the way for Chinese and Zambians to form friendships at the workplace. Because the Chinese are seen as outsiders, they are not privy to witchcraft accusations or other forms of practices which arise from increasing levels of distrust among Zambian employees. They may not trust each other, but they are willing to collaborate with their Chinese counterparts. Second, spillover effects from learning to trust each other, accompanied by increasing economic opportunities brought by Chinese capital may change the way relationships and friendships are formed on both sides.

CONCLUSIONS AND LOOKING FORWARD

Zelizer (2007) and Ingram and Zou (2008) emphasize the ways in which our social and economic lives are deeply intertwined. They awaken us to possibilities of new kinds of affective relationships formed in different spaces, whether in an office setting, in a coffee shop, or on the golf course.

As shown in this article, affective relationships are prevalent and significant among Chinese and Zambians. By affective relationships, we referred to varying degrees of instrumentality and affect, such as trust, empathy, consideration, and care, among others forms of affect.

Through review of the theoretical literature on relationships, we noted a variety of approaches to defining and studying relationships and the benefits derived from them. Most pertinent to our research of companies in Zambia, we alluded to the importance of workplace relationships and the role of affect in helping provide employees with support systems and the proper tools for career advancements. We also pointed to examples of Chinese and Zambians facilitating career advancements through mutually beneficial learning processes that took place

at work. From theoretical and empirical evidence, we deduced that Chinese and Zambians frequently formed business friendships to succeed at work. These business friendships, contrary to some Western models, combined varying degrees of instrumentality and affect. Among other affects, trust still remains one of the most important affective components of business friendships. These business friendships, though not without communication conflict or problems, proved to be mutually beneficial through the transmission of knowledge and skills.

This learning process has significant implications for the future of economic development in Zambian as more opportunities to collaborate and innovate between Chinese and Zambians arise and may facilitate the growth of the Zambian middle class. Spaces for these opportunities rest not only on policies and structural forces, but as this article stresses, they hinge on affective components of workplace relationships, such as trust and care. Without the fostering of these affective components, relationships may turn sour, and the instrumental benefits may dissipate. From both Chinese and Zambian perspectives, trust remains a crucial element of working together and doing business with each other.

While stereotypes, prejudices and misunderstandings occur, this is an inevitable part of the learning process of individuals from different backgrounds striving to work together toward common goals. Since Chinese presence is already significant in Zambia and other African countries, the chances for affective relationships loom large. Ever increasing Chinese presence will inevitably open up even more opportunities for the formation of myriad relationships, including business friendships, advice and mentor networks, and romantic relationships between Chinese and Zambian professionals.

ENDNOTES

[1] For clear summary of interdependency and workplace relationships from multiple dimensions, see *Personal Relationships: The Effect on Employee Attitudes, Behavior and Well-Being*.

[2] In *Nichomean Ethics,* Aristotle argues that emotions must be well integrated into living the good life. Integrating it means using reason to tame it. He considers an appetite for anger or other emotions to be an internal disorder of sorts. This fits well into his doctrine of the mean, a doctrine that also emerges in Eastern philosophy. In line with this doctrine, Aristotle's view is that emotions can be exercised to the right degree appropriate for the situation. Pertinent to our research is to trace the beginning of this assumption that reason is separate from emotion.

[3] An interesting question that arises is whether affect resides in the superstructure for Marx. Is a change in the base supposed to yield positive affects? Certainly, in the case of China, changes in the base, along with Mao's commanding rule, eroded affect among citizens, as they were often encouraged to spy on each other and turn each other in if they disobeyed. Conversely, ethnographies on factories in modern day China illustrate the intimate bonds suffused with strong affect among workers. This does not at all justify horrendous working conditions. It merely brings the role of affect and relationships at the workplace to the fore and asks whether they can offset the negative effects of working in these kinds of conditions.

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