Knowledge-centered culture and knowledge sharing: the moderator role of trust propensity

Carlos Ferreira Peralta and Maria Francisca Saldanha


Carlos Ferreira Peralta is based at Católica-Lisbon School of Business and Economics, Catholic University of Portugal, Lisbon; and Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal.
Maria Francisca Saldanha is based at School of Business and Economics, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.

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Abstract

Purpose – *This research aims to evaluate if knowledge-centered culture (KCC) fosters knowledge sharing equally across employees with different levels of trust propensity, an enduring individual characteristic.*

Design/methodology/approach – *A cross-sectional questionnaire study was conducted with 128 US-based employees.*

Findings – *The authors found that KCC only promoted knowledge sharing in individuals with high levels of trust propensity. For individuals with low levels of trust propensity, KCC had no effect on knowledge sharing.*

Research limitations/implications – *The authors focused exclusively on trust propensity as a moderator. Future research could analyze the role of other enduring individual differences in the relationship between KCC and knowledge sharing.*

Practical implications – *A KCC may be inefficient in promoting knowledge sharing in employees with low propensity to trust. Recruitment and selection of individuals with a high propensity to trust is a possible solution to enhance the association between KCC and knowledge sharing in organizations.*

Originality/value – *By identifying an enduring individual characteristic that shapes the relationship between KCC and knowledge sharing, the authors move toward the development of a contingent view of KCC and show that KCC fosters knowledge sharing differently across employees.*

Keywords *Knowledge sharing, Individual differences, Knowledge-centered culture, Moderation, Trust propensity*

Paper type *Research paper*

Introduction

Knowledge-centered culture (KCC), a set of organizational values, core beliefs, norms and social rules that act as a common reference for workers when they create, share and apply knowledge, is critical for the success of knowledge management practices (Ajmal *et al.*, 2010; Alavi and Leidner, 2001; Davenport and Prusak, 1998; De Long and Fahey, 2000; Janz and Prasarnphanich, 2003). It has been shown to nurture the creation and sharing of knowledge, improve formal and informal knowledge management practices, promote employees' satisfaction and performance, foster continuous organizational learning and increase organizations' innovative ability and effectiveness (Cardoso *et al.*, 2012; Gold *et al.*, 2001; Janz and Prasarnphanich, 2003; Lee and Choi, 2003; Mas-Machuca and Costa, 2012a, 2012b).

However, it is unclear whether KCC fosters desired behaviors equally across employees. Individual behavior, in general and in organizations in particular, is a function of the environment and of each person's characteristics (Chatman and Barsade, 1995; Schneider, 1983). By analyzing, almost exclusively, the effects of KCC (environment) on employees' behaviors related to knowledge sharing (e.g. Cardoso *et al.*, 2012; Janz and Prasarnphanich, 2003), previous research has largely overlooked the role individual characteristics may have in the enactment of those behaviors (Matzler *et al.*, 2008, 2011; Rego *et al.*, 2009; Riege, 2005). In addition, building on the interactional psychology perspective (Schneider, 1983), we need to

analyze not only the role of KCC and of enduring individual differences in individual knowledge sharing but also the interaction between the two. Enduring individual differences may change the way employees cognitively construe and respond to their environment (Govier, 1994). Therefore, analyzing the interplay between KCC and individual differences is critical for a better understanding of knowledge sharing.

Our objectives in this study are to contribute to clarification of the individual characteristics that may affect the association between KCC and knowledge sharing, and to increase our understanding of the predictors of knowledge sharing in organizations. More specifically, we analyze the role of trust propensity, an enduring individual characteristic that shapes the evaluation of others' trustworthiness (Colquitt *et al.*, 2006; Mayer *et al.*, 1995), in the relationship between KCC and knowledge sharing. Given the key role of trust in knowledge sharing (Janz and Prasarnphanich, 2003; Lucas, 2005; von Krogh, 1998), trust propensity stands out as an individual characteristic that could interact with KCC.

Trust can be conceptualized as a dispositional and enduring individual characteristic, or as an aspect of the relationship between two persons, a person and a team or a person and an organization (Couch *et al.*, 1996; Yakovleva *et al.*, 2010). Accordingly, by looking at trust as a dispositional factor, we recognize that each person has a relatively stable tendency to trust to a greater or lesser extent in other parties, regardless of the situation or the other person. In contrast, by looking at trust as an aspect of relationships, we recognize that trust is built in the relationship, can evolve over time, change according to the situation and the person(s) involved and can be violated and even subsequently repaired (Colquitt *et al.*, 2007; Mayer *et al.*, 1995; Schoorman *et al.*, 2007).

In the existing literature on knowledge sharing, considerable attention has been paid to trust as an aspect of the relationship. It has been presented as a critical aspect of an effective KCC (Anantatmula and Kanungo, 2010; De Long and Fahey, 2000; Lee and Choi, 2003; Wong, 2005) and as a significant predictor of knowledge sharing (Holste and Fields, 2010; Lucas, 2005). However, the role of trust propensity, the individual characteristic, has received scarce attention in the knowledge management literature (Mooradian *et al.*, 2006; Rego *et al.*, 2009; Riege, 2005). Building on the integrative model of organizational trust (Mayer *et al.*, 1995; Schoorman *et al.*, 2007), the most cited and used theoretical model of organizational trust (McEvily and Tortoriello, 2011), we argue that KCC will be particularly relevant in predicting knowledge sharing for employees with high levels of trust propensity.

Our theoretical perspective and findings offer important contributions to the knowledge management literature. First, by paying close attention to the interplay between organizational culture and a specific individual characteristic of employees (trust propensity), we answer calls for research to identify the role of individual differences in knowledge sharing (Matzler *et al.*, 2008, 2011). Second, we question the prevalent view that emphasizes the main effects of KCC on employees' behaviors and identify a critical condition for its effectiveness. Third, by showing the relevance of trust propensity in the relationship between KCC and knowledge sharing, we show that knowledge sharing in organizations does not rely only on trust built in the relationships.

Theory and hypotheses

Knowledge sharing

Knowledge sharing is defined as the process whereby individuals mutually exchange and discuss their tacit and explicit knowledge about products or procedures, aiming to create new knowledge and expand the utilization value of the exchanged knowledge (Cummings, 2004; Lin *et al.*, 2012; van den Hooff and de Ridder, 2004). Accordingly, knowledge sharing has the potential to increase workers' productivity (Lim *et al.*, 1999), team performance (Cummings, 2004) and capacity to convert diversity into creativity (Gilson *et al.*, 2013) and organizational innovation capacity and effectiveness (Gold *et al.*, 2001; Janz and Prasarnphanich, 2003; Lee and Choi, 2003; Wang and Wang, 2012). If individual

knowledge is shared among employees, it is not lost if a specific worker leaves the organization. Rather, it becomes part of the organization, and therefore estimates of the knowledge the organization holds become more accurate (Gold *et al.*, 2001).

Due to the relevance of knowledge sharing for several important outcomes, organizations strive to create the conditions for employees to share their knowledge (Reychav and Weisberg, 2010). Unfortunately, only a reduced number of organizations manage to achieve the desired levels of knowledge sharing from employees (Bock *et al.*, 2005). Stimulating knowledge sharing effectively is one of the most challenging endeavors of knowledge management (Lin *et al.*, 2012) because knowledge tends to be seen by employees as a source of power and control (Chennamaneni *et al.*, 2012; Gray, 2001) that carries several benefits, including making employees less substitutable (Chennamaneni *et al.*, 2012; Milne, 2007). In addition, employees may hoard knowledge because they may fear criticism from others and may evaluate their knowledge as irrelevant, inaccurate or unimportant to others (Ardichvili *et al.*, 2003).

KCC and trust propensity as predictors of knowledge sharing

Organizational KCC, also called knowledge-friendly culture (Davenport *et al.*, 1998), is at the core of effectively managing employees' knowledge (Alavi and Leidner, 2001; Davenport and Prusak, 1998; De Long and Fahey, 2000). By emphasizing the value of knowledge, KCC governs how work gets done, what knowledge is important and needed in day-to-day decisions and actions and how everyone should behave regarding knowledge sharing (Lee and Choi, 2003; Wong, 2005). This cultural orientation toward knowledge holds a network of formal and informal relationships that nurtures a similar social construction of knowledge and its value, and fosters tacit and explicit knowledge sharing (Cardoso *et al.*, 2012; Cardoso and Peralta, 2010). Therefore, we hypothesize:

H1. KCC relates positively to knowledge sharing.

Trust as an aspect of relationships has been found to be a significant predictor of knowledge sharing (Ardichvili *et al.*, 2003; Holste and Fields, 2010; Lucas, 2005; Mooradian *et al.*, 2006) and a critical factor of KCC (Anantatmula and Kanungo, 2010; De Long and Fahey, 2000; Lee and Choi, 2003; Wong, 2005). When employees trust each other they tend to share their knowledge because there is a:

> [. . .] willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party (Mayer *et al.*, 1995, p. 712).

Accordingly, trust as an aspect of relationships will foster knowledge sharing because a trusting interaction was established between two or more employees. This effect of trust on knowledge sharing is, therefore, context-specific and can be stimulated by the organization.

Propensity to trust, a dispositional and enduring individual characteristic, is unrelated to others' behaviors and is not dependent on specific contexts, as it is defined before any data about others' trustworthiness are collected (Mayer *et al.*, 1995; Schoorman *et al.*, 2007). Accordingly, organizations have a limited capacity to manage their employees' trust propensity. Despite being context- and relation-free, and hardly manageable by organizations, this individual trait has been shown to predict organizational citizenship behaviors and performance over the effects of relational trust (Colquitt *et al.*, 2007). Trust propensity creates a filter that changes the way people interpret and respond to the environment (Colquitt *et al.*, 2007; DeNeve and Cooper, 1998; Govier, 1994; Lewis and Weigert, 1985). People low in trust propensity tend to trust other parties less and assess others' motives and behaviors as suspicious, while individuals high on trust propensity tend to trust others more, to see honest intentions in others' behaviors, to believe in people's good nature and to believe that better results will be achieved by trusting others (Colquitt *et al.*, 2006; Gefen, 2000; Mayer *et al.*, 1995; McKnight and Chervany, 2001; Spector and

Jones, 2004; Teo and Liu, 2007). Therefore, we hypothesize that people with high levels of trust propensity will share more knowledge with coworkers, regardless of the situation:

H2. Trust propensity relates positively to knowledge sharing.

KCC and knowledge sharing: the moderator role of trust propensity

Although we have argued for the direct effects of KCC and trust propensity on knowledge sharing, a critical question remains unanswered: how do these two predictors interact? Trust propensity may shape the way people accept the KCC of the organization they work in and may, therefore, change the way they respond to that culture. High levels of trust propensity may enhance the effect of KCC on knowledge sharing because employees with a trusting disposition may see this culture as a way to improve the organization's results and enrich individual and coworkers' knowledge. In addition, individuals with a high disposition to trust may think that sharing knowledge will make them less substitutable because they are aligned with the KCC of the organization, and may not fear criticism because they believe in the goodwill of others.

In contrast, individuals low in trust propensity may interpret KCC differently. They may assess KCC as a way to reduce their power and control in the organization, and dismiss them after owning all their knowledge. Employees with a low disposition to trust may also reason that coworkers may use the shared knowledge exclusively for their own benefit, and fear criticism as they believe people tend to be malicious. Accordingly, we hypothesize that KCC will not have the same effects on knowledge sharing for all employees:

H3. Trust propensity moderates the relationship between KCC and knowledge sharing, such that the relationship becomes more positive when trust propensity is high.

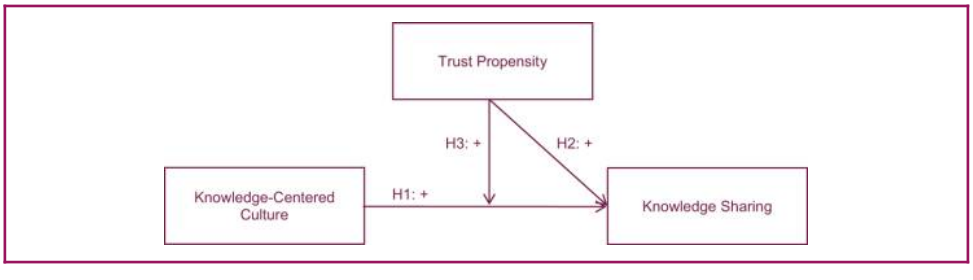
Our conceptual model is depicted in Figure 1.

Method

Data collection

A cross-sectional study was conducted. One hundred and twenty eight US-based employees were recruited online through Amazon's Mechanical Turk. To participate in the study, workers needed to be full-time employees and interact frequently with coworkers. Mechanical Turk is a web application developed by Amazon giving access to people (usually with high technology adoption) potentially available to participate in survey-based studies (Sprouse, 2011). Previous research has shown that samples collected via Mechanical Turk are frequently more representative of the US population than convenience samples, and replicate previous published research, therefore being appropriate for research purposes (Berinsky *et al.*, 2012; Mason and Suri, 2012; Sprouse, 2011). Fifty seven per cent of the sample was female, with an average age of 31 years (SD = 9.63). Forty one per cent had a high school diploma, and 38 per cent had a college degree. The average tenure with the current employer was five years (SD = 4.29). A variety of occupations was represented, including sales (13 per cent), office and administrative support (12 per cent); education, training and library (10 per cent); business and financial

Figure 1 Conceptual model



operations (9 per cent); computer and mathematical (9 per cent); food preparation (9 per cent); and healthcare (5 per cent).

Measures

All measures used in this study were tested and validated in previous research.

KCC was measured with the seven-item version of Cardoso *et al.*'s (2012) KCC scale developed by Brito and Cardoso (2012) using a 5-point response scale (from 1 = Almost never applies, to 5 = Almost always applies). Sample items include "In my organization, we are all responsible for what we must know to work with quality" and "In my organization, what we know is seen in the way we do our work". This scale has been subjected to extensive validation studies, revealing appropriate construct validity. Previous research has found that the factorial structure of the scale was stable for employees working in several sectors (e.g. industries, municipalities, social economy organizations); reliabilities were always above 0.70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994); and the pattern of correlations with theoretically related constructs have the expected direction and magnitude (Brito and Cardoso, 2008, 2012; Cardoso *et al.*, 2007; Cardoso and Peralta, 2010). In addition, the scale has been found to relate significantly with, for example, formal and informal knowledge management practices (Cardoso and Peralta, 2010), work-related training and training management procedures (Cardoso *et al.*, 2012).

Colquitt *et al.*'s (2006) 5-item scale was used to measure trust propensity (e.g. "I trust what people say" and "I suspect hidden motives in others" – reverse-coded). A 5-point response scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree) was used.

Knowledge sharing was measured with the six-item scale developed by Chennamaneni *et al.* (2012) using a 5-point response scale (from 1 = Very infrequently to 5 = Very frequently). Sample items are "During the last year, I shared factual knowledge (know-what) from work with my co-workers" and "During the last year, I shared work experiences with my coworkers". This scale was developed based mainly on the work of Bock *et al.* (2005). Although this knowledge sharing scale is recent, the studies testing its validity have presented promising results, including stable factorial structure, high reliabilities and relationships with theoretically related constructs in the expected direction and magnitude (Chennamaneni and Teng, 2012; Chennamaneni *et al.*, 2012). In addition, the established nomological network of this scale includes psychological, organizational and technological antecedents of knowledge sharing (Chennamaneni *et al.*, 2012).

Control variables

Because sex, age and organizational tenure could affect knowledge sharing (Miller and Karakowsky, 2005; Mooradian *et al.*, 2006), we included them as control variables in the analyses.

Results

Preliminary analyses

Means, standard deviations, correlations and internal consistency reliabilities (α) are reported in Table I. Alpha coefficients ranged from 0.89 to 0.91, exceeding the minimum 0.70 threshold suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994).

Confirmatory factor analyses were used to evaluate measurement model fit. The theoretical three-factor model (KCC, trust propensity and knowledge sharing) was compared to a one-factor model, and to the three possible two-factor models (items representing one of the three scales loaded on each of the other two possible latent variables). We evaluated model fit with three indices: chi-square (χ^2), the comparative fit index (CFI) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). According to Marsh *et al.* (2004), the three-factor solution yielded acceptable fit ($\chi^2_{(127\ df)} = 232.05$, $p < 0.01$; CFI = 0.93; RMSEA = 0.08). All items loaded significantly ($p < 0.01$) and above 0.60 on their respective

Table I Descriptive statistics, correlations and reliability coefficients

Variables	*Mean*	*SD*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*
Sex	–	–	–					
Age	30.99	9.63	0.05	–				
Organizational tenure	4.88	4.29	−0.03	0.54**	–			
KCC	3.91	0.74	−0.02	0.04	0.09	(0.89)		
Trust propensity	2.92	0.90	−0.12	0.01	−0.01	0.15***	(0.91)	
Knowledge sharing	3.88	0.85	0.07	0.11	0.05	0.32**	0.08	(0.90)

Notes: Internal consistency reliabilities (α) are in parentheses; Sex: 0 = Male, 1 = Female; $N = 128$; *** $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

latent variables. Chi-squared differences revealed that our hypothesized model fitted the data better than the one-factor model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 530.11$, df = 3, $p < 0.01$), and the three possible two-factor solutions ($217.65 \leq \Delta\chi^2 \leq 312.86$, df = 2, $p < 0.01$). These results support empirically that the scales are measuring three different constructs.

Common method bias tends to deflate interaction effects, making their statistical detection difficult (Siemsen *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, we tested whether common method bias was a serious threat to accurate testing of our hypotheses. We used a single common method factor approach, where all the items were loaded on their respective theoretical factor and on a single-method factor (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). On average, items were loaded at 0.75 on their respective latent variables (KCC, trust propensity and knowledge sharing) and at 0.01 on the method factor. Considering that the method factor had loadings close to zero, common method is unlikely to cause a bias in the conclusions of our study.

Hypothesis testing

Moderation hypotheses were tested with multiple moderated regression, following the recommendations of Aiken and West (1991). KCC and trust propensity were mean centered before being entered in the analyses. Three steps were followed. First, demographic variables were entered (sex, age, and tenure in organization). Second, we entered KCC and trust propensity. Third, we added the interaction term between KCC and trust propensity. Moderation results are displayed in Table II. Figure 2 displays the interaction effects. Low and high values of the predictor and moderator variables represent values one standard deviation below and above the mean, respectively.

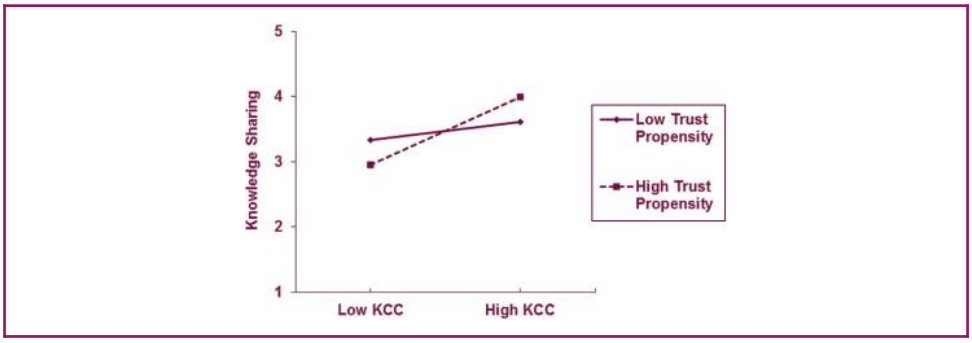
Knowledge sharing was explained by KCC, over and above our three control variables ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.01$; Step 2). This supports *H1*. Contrary to our expectations, trust propensity did not explain significant variance of knowledge sharing ($\beta = 0.04$, $p > 0.05$; Step 2). Therefore, *H2* was not supported. The interaction between KCC and trust propensity was significant ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$; Step 3). Simple slope analysis (Figure 2) revealed that KCC was positively related to knowledge sharing when there was high trust propensity ($\beta =$

Table II Results of moderation analysis predicting knowledge sharing

Predictors	*Criterion: knowledge sharing*		
	Step 1: βs	*Step 2: βs*	*Step 3: βs*
Sex	0.07	0.08	0.06
Age	0.11	0.11	0.13
Organizational tenure	−0.01	−0.03	−0.03
Knowledge-centered culture (KCC)		0.31***	0.39***
Trust propensity (TP)		0.04	−0.01
KCC* TP			0.27**
R^2	0.02	0.12	0.18
R^2 change	0.02	0.10**	0.06**

Notes: Sex: 0 = Male, 1 = Female; $N = 128$; *** $p < 0.001$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Figure 2 Trust propensity moderates the effect of KCC on knowledge sharing



0.52, $p < 0.01$). When there was low trust propensity, the relationship between KCC and knowledge sharing was not significant ($\beta = 0.14$, $p > 0.05$). These results support *H3*.

Discussion and conclusions

In this research, we tested whether KCC fosters knowledge sharing equally across employees. Specifically, we investigated the moderator role of trust propensity, an enduring individual difference, in the relationship between KCC and knowledge sharing. We found that KCC only promoted knowledge sharing in individuals with high levels of trust propensity. For individuals with low propensity to trust, KCC had no effect on knowledge sharing. In addition, the interaction effect observed was significant even after controlling statistically for relevant demographics, namely, age, sex and tenure in the organization.

Contrary to our expectations, only KCC related directly to knowledge sharing, while trust propensity did not. According to our results, trust propensity does not directly shape knowledge sharing, but it influences the way people accept and respond to the culture of the organization. Previous theory and research (Colquitt *et al.*, 2007; DeNeve and Cooper, 1998; Govier, 1994; Lewis and Weigert, 1985) have suggested that trust propensity creates a filter that activates different interpretations of and responses to messages sent from the environment. Accordingly, trust propensity influences the positive and negative attributions that people make of others' actions (Mooradian *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, trust propensity may activate different interpretations of and responses to the environment, nullifying the overall effect on knowledge sharing. These results reinforce the need to consider not only the environment and the individual characteristics of the employee but also their interaction (Chatman and Barsade, 1995; Govier, 1994; Schneider, 1983). If we had not conducted an interaction between KCC and trust propensity, we would erroneously conclude that trust propensity has no role in knowledge sharing.

Theoretical contributions

This research is one of the first efforts toward identifying a stable individual characteristic that changes the association between KCC and knowledge sharing. Previous research has emphasized, almost exclusively, environmental influences on knowledge sharing (Ajmal *et al.*, 2010; Alavi and Leidner, 2001; Davenport and Prusak, 1998; De Long and Fahey, 2000; Janz and Prasarnphanich, 2003). Our findings contribute to the literature on knowledge management by demonstrating that an enduring individual difference influences the way individuals react to KCC and by moving beyond main effects. By identifying an enduring individual characteristic that enhances or reduces the relationship between KCC and knowledge sharing, we move toward the development of a contingent view of KCC and show that this culture fosters behaviors differently across employees.

Previous research has already analyzed the effect of relational trust on knowledge sharing (Ardichvili *et al.*, 2003; Holste and Fields, 2010; Lucas, 2005; Mooradian *et al.*, 2006). We depart from this research by analyzing the interplay between the cultural environment and

an enduring individual characteristic. Trust propensity is not built on the relationship between two persons or between a person and an organization, but it is a stable individual characteristic that colors how employees view the environment (DeNeve and Cooper, 1998; Govier, 1994). Depending on an employee's propensity to trust, he or she may interpret the available organizational information differently and behave accordingly, sharing more or less knowledge.

This research also contributes to the person–organization fit theory. This theory posits that people and organizations are compatible when:

- at least one entity provides what the other needs; or
- they share similar fundamental characteristics; or
- both (Kristof, 1996, p. 4).

According to the graphic display of the interaction between KCC and trust propensity (Figure 2), the employees who shared more knowledge were those who scored high on trust propensity and worked for an organization with a high KCC. In these cases, the organization nurtures the sharing of knowledge, and the employees' personality fits that culture. Interestingly, those who share less knowledge had a high propensity to trust and were working in an organization with low levels of KCC. A misfit between the individual characteristics of a person and the cultural orientation toward knowledge may therefore have detrimental effects on knowledge sharing.

Finally, our findings contribute to the literature on personality and individual differences by extending the nomological network of trust propensity. The role of trust propensity in knowledge sharing has been largely unexplored. Previous research has found that trust propensity was a significant predictor of some important behaviors in organizations, such as organizational citizenship behaviors and job performance (Colquitt *et al.*, 2007). According to our results, knowledge sharing does not appear to be one of those behaviors predicted directly by trust propensity.

Limitations and future directions

As with all field studies, this study has limitations that need to be addressed in future research. First, data were cross-sectional and collected via self-administered questionnaires. Consequently, we cannot establish causality between the variables. Moreover, our measures captured respondent-reported (and not the actual) knowledge centered-culture, propensity to trust and knowledge sharing. However, we built upon solid theory and research, indicating that knowledge-sharing culture and trust propensity might interact in predicting knowledge sharing, which increases our confidence in our interpretation of the results. Second, data were collected from a single source – the employee. This raises common method bias concerns. However, our results could not be explained by common method bias because:

- we took all the necessary precautions during data collection to avoid common method bias (e.g. anonymity of participants, inclusion of reverse-coded items);
- we empirically found, after data were collected, that common method bias was not a relevant threat to our conclusions (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003); and
- previous research has found that interaction effects are deflated due to common method bias (Siemsen *et al.*, 2010).

"For individuals with low propensity to trust, KCC had no effect on knowledge sharing."

> **"Contrary to our expectations, only KCC related directly to knowledge sharing, while trust propensity did not."**

Third, we focused exclusively on trust propensity as a moderator. Future research could analyze the role of other enduring individual differences in the relationship between KCC and knowledge sharing. For example, the personality trait of openness to experience could also enhance the association between KCC and knowledge sharing because people high on this trait are more willing to explore new ideas and ways of doing things (McCrae and Sutin, 2009). Fourth, the data were collected only from US-based employees and, consequently, we cannot generalize our findings to other cultures without further research. However, previous research has indicated that national culture has a limited influence on personality traits and individual differences (Terracciano and McCrae, 2006). For example, according to McCrae and Terracciano (2008), there is about 95 per cent of variation in personality traits within national cultures and about 5 per cent across cultures. Accordingly, we would expect our results to generalize to other countries. Nonetheless, an interesting avenue for further research would be to examine the influence of trust propensity, and of other enduring individual differences, on the relationship between KCC and knowledge sharing in different cultural contexts. Finally, we measured knowledge sharing as a single variable and in a single direction (transmission of knowledge). Future research should test if the moderation results that we found hold equally for tacit and explicit knowledge sharing, and for transmission (willingness to share) and absorption (willingness to use) of knowledge.

Practical implications

These findings have important practical implications for organizations and managers willing to nurture knowledge sharing. Although knowledge sharing can be encouraged (Riege, 2005), some initiatives may fail because of a lack of awareness of individual characteristics that affect, directly or in an interactive fashion, knowledge sharing. For that reason, managers and organizations that evaluate their employees' levels of trust propensity may be better positioned to effectively enhance knowledge sharing via KCC. In addition, according to the attraction–selection–attrition framework (Schneider, 1987), people with similar individual characteristics tend to be attracted to, selected by and remain in specific work environments. Mapping the levels of individual trust propensity within an organization may be beneficial because it helps the organization to recruit and select new employees that fit their current or desired culture. Recruiting and selecting individuals with a high propensity to trust, if they are to be included in a KCC, might prove beneficial for both the organization and the employee.

Although trust propensity tends to be fairly stable over time, there is still some opportunity for change (Dweck, 2008). To promote that change, supervisors and other team members may play a key role because they can affect, actively and intentionally, the experiences of a person low in trust propensity (Costa and Anderson, 2011). Through time, these experiences may shape a person's level of trust propensity (Costa and Anderson, 2011; Mayer *et al.*, 1995), making him/her more prone to share knowledge in a KCC. Psychotherapy may also be used to increase individuals' level of trust propensity (Grønnerød, 2004; Mayer, 2004). It may not only enhance the relationship between KCC and knowledge sharing but also nurture employees' well-being (Ashleigh *et al.*, 2012).

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About the authors

Carlos Ferreira Peralta is based at the Católica-Lisbon School of Business and Economics, Catholic University of Portugal; and at the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Coimbra, Portugal. His main research interests include knowledge management, team creativity and team innovation. Carlos Ferreira Peralta can be contacted at: cfp@ucp.pt

Maria Francisca Saldanha is a PhD Student at the School of Business and Economics, Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada. Her main research interests include organizational justice, emotions, trust, and delivery of bad news.

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