

**Seniority and Superiority:
A Case Analysis of Decision Making in a Taiwanese Religious Group***

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Abstract

This paper, using participant observation methodology, analyzes a 4-hour meeting held among delegates of a large religious organization in Taiwan. The analysis focuses how a participant wields the social power of seniority in decision-making process. Five components of decision-making proposed by Kume (1985) are used as the framework of analysis. The findings extend Chen and Starosta's (1997-8) argument that although seniority, as the locus of power and authority in Chinese society, is normally used to reinforce and perpetuate Chinese cultural values, it might be abused for gaining personal interests. The abuse of senior power, as this case study shows, leads to the paralysis of decision-making process. Applications and limitations for this kind of research are also discussed.

Introduction

Although age is a universal issue all human societies must face, the way to perceive and handle the issue varies in different cultures. Traditionally, because the elderly were considered as the locus of knowledge, power, and authority, the value of age has been dominant in most cultures (Condon & Yousef, 1975). Overtime, however, human societies gradually developed a different orientation towards the value of age. As Condon and Yousef (1975) indicated, there are three distinct value orientations towards age in modern societies: youth, the middle years, and old age. The United States is an example of youth-valuing culture in which idealism and vigor are emphasized, while many African nations are old age valuing cultures where seniority is highly respected.

Most Asian nations, especially those influenced by Confucianism in East Asia such as China, Japan, and Korea, also highly value seniority, which refers to both age and length of service in an organization. For example, Palmore (1975) pointed out that in Japan the aged enjoy a high status not only in the

family, but also in the work force and community. The practice can be demonstrated by the honorific linguistic codes used to show respect to the elderly, by the special treatment of the elderly in the household, and by the national policy that is designed to protect the elders' welfare (Carmichael, 1991). Nishiyama (1971) also described how seniority is one of the most critical factors in determining a person's authority and status in an organization.

In Chinese societies the Confucian teaching of Five Code of Ethics dictates a rigid hierarchical structure of human relationship in which seniority is accorded a great range of authority, power, and status (Bond & Hwang, 1986; Knutson, Hwang, & Deng, 2000). Senior persons enjoy relative freedom in initiating an idea, a topic, or a decision in personal or social interaction. Seniority not only determines whether the message is considered important, but also commands respect and disarms criticism in Chinese societies. The elderly as well play a very important role in Chinese politics. For example, in his study of the 1990 Taiwanese presidential election Chung (1996) explicated that seniority is one of the most discernible factors for the Taiwan president to recruit mediators for resolving a serious problem in the process of nominating candidates. The age of the eight mediators recruited ranged from 78 to 92.

Chen and Starosta (1997-8) proposed a model of Chinese conflict management and resolution that further reflects the impact of seniority on Chinese decision-making process. They argued that harmony, inter-relation, face, and power are the four major factors dominating the process of Chinese conflict management and resolution.

Harmony is the axis of the wheel of Chinese social interaction. It is the end of human communication. Chinese interactions tend to aim at developing and keeping a harmonious relationship in a transforming process of interdependency among interactants (Chen, 2001a, 2001b).

Inter-relation and face sustain the smooth movement of harmonious social interaction. The Chinese emphasize particularistic relationships or the distinction between ingroup and outgroup members. They use particular relationships to persuade, influence, and control their counterparts in social interaction to avoid or resolve conflicts (Shenkar & Ronen, 1987). For example, Ma (1992) found that in China the unofficial mediation for interpersonal conflict is usually made by a friend or an ingroup member of conflicting parties to avoid embarrassing communication. Face saving is a way to heighten interactants' self-esteem. To the Chinese, losing one's face will immediately lead to an emotional uneasiness or a severe conflict. Thus, to "make face" or "earn face" for one's counterpart in interaction is a prerequisite for establishing a harmonious atmosphere (Chiao, 1981, 1988).

While harmony, inter-relation, and face are closely interrelated, according to Chen and Starosta (1997-8), power is the ultimate determinant in forming the

pattern of Chinese social interaction. In Confucianism-influenced societies seniority is the main source of gaining power. In other words, the power ascribed to seniority gives the elderly authority to control the direction or quality of Chinese social interaction. Although most often the power of seniority is invested in pursuing harmony in Chinese society, harmony may be sacrificed when power is “abused and engenders a negative force that destroys the ethical principle of relationship structure and face saving system” (Chen & Starosta, 1997-8, p.9). Existing literature has described the impact of seniority on Chinese social interaction, however, very few studies have been conducted to investigate the influencing process of seniority on decision-making. It is then the purpose of this study to examine the impact of seniority on Chinese decision-making process by case analyzing a top-level meeting of a large religion organization in Taiwan.

Five components of decision-making proposed by Kume (1985) were adopted in this study for the purpose of analysis. The components were originally used to compare the differences between US and Japanese cultures. It was assumed that due to different cultural value orientations, each culture would have its unique way to make decisions regarding the components. For example, Americans were found to be more rational, direct, confrontational, and the leader tends to direct and take personal responsibility in the process of decision-making, whereas the Chinese and Japanese are more intuitive, indirect, emphasizing harmony, and the leader tends to facilitate and share responsibility (Chen & Chung, 1994; Kume, 1985).

The five components include locus of decision, initiation and coordination, mode of reaching decision, decision criterion, and communication style. Locus of decision refers to the location where final decisions are made. Initiation and coordination imply how the information or ideas leading towards a decision are first expressed and negotiated among those involving in the decision-making process. Mode of reaching decision refers to how the final decision is reached. Decision criterion refers to bases with which a decision is made. Finally, communication style refers to patterns of communication among persons involving in the decision-making process. This case study, instead of comparing differences of decision-making between the Chinese and other cultures, focuses on the analysis of how seniority affects the five components in Chinese decision-making process.

The Case

Background

On December 31, 1996, the president of Shanjiao¹ called for a delegates' meeting to discuss minutes from the last meeting. On the agenda were ten items

that needed to be approved by the delegates in order to fulfill the requirement by the Taiwanese Interior Ministry so that the plan could be implemented for a three hundred million dollars investment in central Taiwan. The official religious law in Taiwan dictates that all religious groups should register as a "corporate body" with a board of directors for the convenience of management and administration. As a religion, Shanjiao has registered as a corporate body. However, the governing of Shanjiao's internal affairs, including the inheritance process and all kinds of activities, is regulated by its own Clan Law (*zhong fa*). To avoid confrontation between the official and its own governing systems, most of the members of the board of directors of the corporate body of Shanjiao also held high-ranking positions in the Clan Law system. Eight of the members of the board of directors were nominated in the last meeting. In addition, the board of directors of the corporate body was assumed to have executive power regarding Shanjiao's external business investment. This led to the problem that some of the delegates, not nominated as members of the board of directors of the corporate body, disagreed with the proposal that the director board should be an executive unit probably due to the fear of losing power. The meeting lasted almost four hours.

The Event

The meeting was held in a special guest room of a Chinese restaurant in Taipei. K. Lin first asked participants to sign their names and explained that the president of Shanjiao asked him to chair the meeting. However, he insisted that he was not qualified enough for serving as the chair because he was the youngest member at the meeting. Consequently, W. Cheng was elected as the chair because his stance tends to be relatively neutral in the power politics of Shanjiao. Before the meeting officially started, T. Lee suddenly interrupted the conversation:

I am 84 years old now, I have been in this religion for almost 40 years, and now I am approaching the end of my life. I want to let you know that I am going to play the "black face" (i.e., bad person) role in this meeting. If we have "love" in our heart, we should know how to peacefully handle today's discussion. Let us not get too emotional.

K. Lin explained that the meeting should follow the usual procedure and told the chair that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss how to implement the ten items about the management of cooperate body approved in the last meeting. He then tried to read the ten items. But right after he finished the first item about the approval of the eight candidates for the board of director, T. Lee (who is not one of the candidates) immediately jumped in:

Hold it. What do you mean by saying "to follow the formal procedure?" We must first decide that the board of director should only function as a

supervisory rather than an executive unit, or the discussion will be futile and very unpleasant.

T. Lee then continued to state what he has done and what kind of hardship he ever experienced in his 39-year service in Shanjiao. After about 18 minutes of talking, he emotionally concluded:

We don't need any kind of law (i.e., corporate body) to confine our behaviors. Any one who likes and has the ability to do things should just go ahead and do it for Shanjiao. The ten items are not the key issue we should focus on. What we need is to discuss how to develop the business of Shanjiao based on individual willingness and ability. I am very old now, but I will continue to preach the doctrines of Shanjiao. I have no strength left to fight with any person, but I believe it will be totally meaningless if you insist to follow the formal procedure to discuss how to implement the ten items.

While the chair and K. Lin tried to explain the necessity of forming the board of directors, T. Lee interrupted again:

We should just discuss what we should do. There is no need to make any decision regarding the last meeting's minutes, because I doubt the legitimacy of the minutes. We should let all persons here express their opinions. We then can draw conclusions from all the opinions. I suggest to have our two elders (refers to C. Chen and L. Chiang) talk first.

The chair seemed to have no choice but following T. Lee's strong suggestion. Participants then began to raise their opinions. During this period, T. Lee often interrupted the speaker by making comments or correcting what they said. Almost all participants emphasized the importance of harmony in the process of meeting and in handling the Shanjiao's affairs. After all participants expressed their opinions, K. Lin continued to remind the chair that the meeting should focus on the discussion of the ten items and reach an agreement among participants, because, he said, "we can't legally do anything unless these items are approved by us." However, T. Lee, acting as if he were the chair, opposed K Lin's opinion:

Those items are useless. We should have no more discussion about them. The report from every participant should be the records of today's meeting. In conclusion, "peacefully united" is the theme of today's gathering. The records should show that the board of directors is only a supervision unit. The headquarter of Shanjiao (based on the Clan Law) should be in charge of all decisions.

He then threatened to openly against the decision if the records won't show the conclusions he just mentioned. Finally, he said:

Yes, we need to have a conclusion. And "peace" and "unity" are the conclusions. I hope we all have a warm and peaceful New Year's Eve tonight.

The meeting was then ended after almost 4 hours with no decision made concerning the original agenda of the meeting. Before participants began to enjoy a fine dinner together they agreed that a meeting should be arranged to continue the discussion.

Method

Participants

Eleven Shanjiao's delegates from the headquarter and its branches attended the meeting:

- * C. Chang: A local representative. He is 72 years old and has been in Shanjiao for 28 years. He is the current director of the preaching center.
- * C. Chen: He is 76 years old and has been in Shanjiao for 31 years. He is Shanjiao's accountant.
- * P. Chen: A regional representative. He is 71 years old and has been in Shanjiao for 25 years.
- * W. Cheng: A regional representative. He is 68 years old and has been in Shanjiao for 26 years.
- * L. Chiang: A regional representative. He is 75 years old and has been in Shanjiao for 31 years.
- * D. Jian: A regional representative. He is 52 years old and has been in Shanjiao for 22 years.
- * T. Lee: A preacher of Shanjiao. He is 84 years old and has been in Shanjiao for 39 years. He is the previous secretary-in-general and director of preaching center. He is the key figure in this case analysis.
- * K. Lin: The secretary-in-general of Shanjiao. He is 43 years old and has been in Shanjiao for 22 years. In this meeting he represented the president of Shanjiao (the president is 94 years old and is hospitalized due to sickness) to preside over the meeting.
- * N. Tsen: The vice president of Shanjiao. He is 74 years old and has been in Shanjiao for 29 years. Because of the entitlement of his vice president position, he is the person who nominated the eight direct board members.
- * S. Tsen: A regional representative. She is 70 years old and has been in Shanjiao for 29 years.
- * L. Wang: The PR representative. She is 54 years old and has been in Shanjiao for 18 years.

Procedure and Data Collection

The first author of this study attended the meeting as an observer. Based on Gold's (1958) classification on the role of observation, the first author played a complete observer in this study by which the researcher avoids influencing the

participants in order to gather more objective data about their behaviors. However, because the first author of this study is a long-time member of Shanjiao, the role he played is also similar to the "complete-member-researcher" specified by Adler and Adler's (1987). His knowledge about the group and connection with most of the executive members brought him a great advantage in collecting deep information in the follow-up conversations with some of the participants after the meeting. In addition to field notes taken by the observer, with the participants' permission the meeting was tape-recorded. For the purpose of analysis, the tape was transcribed and translated from Chinese into English by the first author, who also had informal conversations with several participants in the next morning to clarify and collect more information about the meeting.

The Analysis

The event provides context-rich illustrations of the impact of seniority on Chinese decision making process.² In this case, the 84-year-old T. Lee was the most senior person in the group. He did not occupy a high-ranking position even though he did have the longest membership in the religion of any member present at this meeting, however, using his seniority he successfully blocked the progress of the meeting. Judging from the observer's perspective the 4-hour meeting was fruitless because no item in the original agenda was discussed. The power and authority originated from seniority were obviously abused in this case.

Throughout the meeting process we found that seniority-related vocabularies were used very often when participants were expressing their opinions. Younger participants would say "*I know that I am not old enough, but...*" and older participants would say "*I am so old that...*" This was apparently a compliance-gaining strategy T. Lee used to place pressures on K. Lin and the chair. For example, when the 72-year-old C. Chang expressed his opinions, he said: "*I am only 72 years old, and he (T. Lee) is 84. I know I am not supposed to compete with him because he is more senior...*" C. Chang is superior to T. Lee in the official position, but he knew T. Lee is more powerful because he was older and has served Shanjiao much longer than he. T. Lee interrupted C. Chang, "*Both of us are old. Let's have the young one (refers to the 52-year-old D. Jian) say something.*" D. Jian accepted the invitation with a disclaimer, "*I am still so young, but I want to raise a very practical issue...*"

The influence of seniority characterized the comments, and the age of participants clearly indicated the important role seniority plays in the process of decision-making. Most of them are over 68 years old, and they are to make important decisions about the future of Shanjiao.

Using the foregoing five components of decision making to analyze the case, we could envision seniority as a double-edge knife that can either facilitate or paralyze a decision-making process. In most cases (e.g., Chung, 1996) seniority in Chinese societies is the lubricant used to establish a harmonious atmosphere by smoothing down the conflict within or between groups. In this case, however, T. Lee employed his power embedded in the value of seniority to stall the discussion. In the meeting he strategically used terms such as “peace” and “unity” to create an impression of being a pacifier in the group. Actually, as informants pointed out, he obviously was to prevent group members from discussing the agenda items, which, when implemented, would restructure the board and thus exclude him from the power circle. T. Lee’s action represents a case of abusing power of seniority for personal purpose which is not uncommon in Chinese society. We now use the five components to examine the influence of seniority on the decision-making process at the meeting.

In regard to the locus of control in the decision-making process, the emphasis of Chinese culture on collectivism, interdependence, group-orientation, cooperation, harmony, circular thinking, group loyalty, conformity, holistic thinking, and indirect communication (Chang & Holt, 1991; Chen, 1997, 1998, 2001b; Chen & Chung, 1994; Chu, 1991; Hwang, 1988; Jacobs, 1979; Ma, 1992; Peng, Zhou, & Zhu, 2000; Pye, 1982; Yum, 1988) has led the Chinese tend to attribute the power of decision making to the group by sharing the responsibility in which the leader only functions to facilitate the process of decision making. In this case, nevertheless, T. Lee manipulated the meeting from the beginning to the end. He arbitrarily interrupted whenever he wanted to. He even mentioned that he would take all the responsibilities for the decisions made in that meeting. He claimed:

We don’t need to discuss the minutes. We just need to have every one here to have a report. These reports will be the records of today’s meeting. If there is anything wrong with this, I will take the full responsibility.

In regard to initiation and coordination, T. Lee ignored the Chinese emphasis on frequent discussion and prior consultation for initiating ideas in decision-making process. He jumped into the discussion very often during the meeting. For example, as quoted above, he jumped in when K. Lin said that the meeting would follow a formal procedure by initiating that the group should first decide the function of the board of directors. He also insisted that no discussion on implementation of the ten items should be made, and “peace” and “unity” should be the conclusions of the meeting. Interestingly, by this way he acted as if he were the chair trying to coordinate the progress of the meeting. For example, he stopped one of the participants by saying, “*that’s enough, let’s have the next speaker.*” The first author’s observation showed that it was T. Lee, rather than the chair, who controlled the progress of the meeting.

Consensus is the most common mode in Chinese decision-making process. Individual or split decision is not encouraged. In this case the influence of seniority made it impossible to reach a real consensus in the meeting. From the beginning to the end of the meeting T. Lee tried to arbitrarily make decisions for the group. Examples include: *"Let's all know this, we need no collective leadership. Let those who are willing to take the responsibility do the job."* *"You will not serve as the accountant of the director board"* (He interrupted C. Chen when he was speaking). *"Let's express our opinions and see if we can come to a conclusion."* *"Let's turn to the other speaker"* (He stopped C. Chen when he was speaking). And *"Don't worry about time, I'll call a taxi carrying you home tonight"* (He interrupted when the chair, W. Chen, mentioned that the meeting couldn't take too long because he had to take the last train back home that was about 5 hours' driving distance). Every suggestion made by T. Lee immediately became a decision, as the following discussion always moved to the direction T. Lee suggested.³ Consensus in this situation was only a false image disguised by the silence of group members.

"Group harmony" tends to be the main goal people aim to achieve in Chinese decision-making process. In this case it is no doubt that harmony was emphasized by all group members in the meeting. However, the first author found that most of them advocated harmony with a disturbed mind (i.e., they were uneasy with their own stance). Harmony in this sense is only a superficial product that sacrifices effectiveness and efficiency of the group decision-making. For example, although T. Lee kept using terms such as "love," "brotherhood," "peace," "unity," and "cooperation," he actually used them to cover his unhappy feelings that were occasionally revealed in his expressions. It was only about 20 minutes from the beginning of the meeting, he stated, *"Let's harmoniously discuss this... Be cooperative and united. (Became emotionally) Collective leadership? That's not the way we should do. If you insist this, then it becomes meaningless to continue the meeting."* On one occasion, T. Lee even said:

Oh, God! We have been here for over two and half hours... What's the usefulness of those articles... (angrily) Do we after all have to pull out the dying president from the hospital and put him to death here for deciding what we are supposed to do?

Finally, although indirect and non-confrontational communication style dominates Chinese decision-making process, in this case this principle was not applied to T. Lee, who is the most senior person in the group. The first author observed that the chair and other members younger than T. Lee made great efforts to avoid confronting others or directly putting negative words on other members. Nevertheless, T. Lee always directly expressed his mind and confronted others by interrupting their speaking. Obviously, based on the observation, we assumed that T. Lee took the advantage of the inherent authority

and power embedded in seniority.

Seniority is Not the Absolute Superiority

In view of the success of T. Lee's stalling the decision-making engine, seniority ostensibly was the supreme value over all other cultural values such as harmony and face. An examination of the decision-making process through the five criteria also indicates that honoring seniority defied all characteristics of typical Chinese approach to decision-making. In addition, blocked by Lee, the group did not even try to seek a compromise. However, even though seniority appeared to be an antecedent influence in this group, it did not always lead to absolute power. The fact that the group failed to make a decision at the conclusion of the four-hour meeting signifies that the power of seniority was not supreme. Other participants at the meeting did not, in fact, go along with his suggestion. Instead, they decided to table the items on the agenda. This was indicative that no decision was the decision.

Employing Chung's (1996) model of multi-level system environments in decision-making, we can handily explain this decision-making progress. In the present study, the value of respecting seniority apparently dominated the decision-making process in the group, i.e., the delegate meeting. But the group has to bear in mind the cultural values of the religious organization as a whole. For example, the current organizational value may be opting for going toward mainstream in the religious community instead of remaining as a law-ignoring cult. Or the organizational members may be embracing the value of profit-making to fund the organization. Therefore, they would rather see the items on the agenda passed and implemented to meet the government requirement and to bring the organization in the same footing as other religious organizations. They apparently even had to consider the values of law-abiding in yet another outer circle of the decision-making's group's environment, i.e., the general society. Following T. Lee's argument in making the decision might be in conflict with the values in those levels of environment. In other words, the power of seniority would be eroding when other participants in the meeting took into consideration other value exigencies.

In addition to the analysis from the vertical (spatial) point of view discussed above, we can also examine the erosion of the respectability for seniority from the horizontal (temporal) perspective. That the group failed to comply with T. Lee's opinions is indicative that the value of seniority is weakening notwithstanding its current vigor. This study revealed that if the meeting had been held fifty years before when seniority was strictly revered, or if the government had not been regulating the religious organizations, Lee's authoritarian style might prevail. As the complexity of society, the

diversification of power sources, and the interactions with the decision-making environment increase, the utility and thus locus of seniority power would naturally decline. After growing in the Chinese culture for thousands of years, the seniority value has gained its own seniority, but the concept may be losing its superiority.

Overlooking the vertical and horizontal perspectives in the decision-making process would oversimplify the concept of seniority and its functions. These conclusions, therefore, would expand in another dimension Chung's (1996) model of multi-level cultures in decision-making with regard to seniority. In a nutshell, seniority as a cultural value in decision-making may be constrained in two dimensions: First, it may be challenged at different levels of cultures in the decision-making environment. Second, it may be tested over-time by the evolutions of the culture itself.

Conclusion

Traditionally, seniority was valued by most human societies. Those Confucianism-influenced societies, especially in East Asian nations, continue to show their respect to seniors. Seniors enjoy authority and power not only in the household but also in private or public organizations. People use honorific linguistic codes and government instituted laws to require people to show their respect to the elderly. Most high-ranking national leaders and organizational executives tend to be old and their influence extends to after their retirement and until their death. Thus, seniority plays a critical role in these societies to reinforce and perpetuate their cultural values and traditions. However, like in this case, seniority can be used for personal gains or other inappropriate purposes. This situation usually leads to an anomaly of social behaviors that run into the opposite direction from those dictated by social or cultural norms.

The present study illustrates this anomaly in the process of Chinese decision-making by case-analyzing a meeting of high-ranking delegates of a large religion group in Taiwan. The findings demonstrate the dynamic and complex nature of decision-making in terms of its dialectic relationship with culture. Human behaviors mirror the culture which provides us a set of thinking patterns that leads to a specific way of action. However, in certain situations culture may lose its power of regulating members' behaviors. To understand this kind of deviation from the perspective of cultural value orientations is crucial for reaching an authentic awareness of a culture. Unfortunately, most intercultural communication scholars overlook this kind of research. This study provides an example for the direction of future research.

The dynamic and complex nature of decision-making explicated in this study suggests that Chinese decision-making is a multi-faceted process in which

a prominent cultural value can be consciously or unconsciously used as a tool to implicitly or explicitly shake other core values. The findings reinforce the importance of Chinese communication specified by Chung (1996) and Hwang (1997-8). Chung proposed a model of multilevel systems for Chinese decision-making. The model stipulates three levels of Chinese decision-making from the perspective of political conflict resolution, and the impact of cultural values on decision-making within each level and between the levels may vary immensely. Hwang proposed a model of conflict resolution in Chinese society. A matrix of Chinese conflict resolution, based on the interaction between the three levels of Chinese interpersonal relationship types (i.e., vertical in-group, horizontal in-group, and horizontal out-group) and four behavioral variables (i.e., harmony maintenance, personal goal attainment, coordination strategies, and dominant responses), was developed to explain possible strategies the Chinese select to use, including those which are contrary to the Chinese cultural values such as confrontation, direct communication, and defiance. The two models deserve a further examination in future research.

Finally, a potential limitation of data collection method employed in this study needs to be mentioned. While participant observation method is a useful way for collecting in-depth data, it may also jeopardize validity of the data. One example in this study is that in the middle of the meeting T. Lee suddenly said to the first author, "*Mr. Chen, you are a Ph.D., you are much more knowledgeable than we here. In your opinion what should we do in this situation...*" As an observer, the first author kindly declined his invitation to express his opinions. However, it was detected that occasionally participants said something only because the first author was there. In other words, we suspected that some of the opinions expressed by group members might be different if the first author was absent or did not tape-record the discussion. To avoid this kind of inherent methodology problem would always be a challenge for scholars conducting participant observation research.

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Notes

1. Shanjiao, as the pseudo name of the religious group (pseudo names were also used for the delegates attending the meeting), is used in this study for confidentiality. The founder of Shanjiao claimed that the religion resurrected the authentic Chinese religion practiced before the Han dynasty (202 B.C. – 8 A.D.), thus its doctrine is completely embedded in the traditional Chinese culture, especially based on Confucian, Taoistic, and Mohistic teachings. The religion has about ten thousand followers in Taiwan.
2. The first author talked with several participants in the next morning about this issue. They mentioned that T. Lee's authoritarian behavior in the meeting might be caused by the fact that he is not one of the eight candidates for the board of director. However, they all agreed that it is T. Lee's seniority that led him to influence the decision making process. Unfortunately, the power embedded in seniority was used to vent his unhappy feeling for not being nominated. Although T. Lee kept emphasizing that "peace" and "unity" are the goal of the meeting, the negative impact of seniority on decision making is clearly exemplified in this case.
3. The first author asked three participants in the next morning whether they feel satisfied with those suggestions (made by T. Lee) that became decisions. In other words, the author wanted to know whether they were really consensual with T. Lee. They all answered that they didn't like it, but they had no choice, because T. Lee is much older than them and they didn't want to offend him.

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