

STRATEGIES OF UPWARD INFLUENCE: A CROSS-NATIONAL COMPARISON OF HONG KONG AND AMERICAN MANAGERS

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This study compares American and Hong Kong Chinese strategies for advancing in organisations. Evaluated are the likelihood of using a particular strategy, the perceived risk associated with each strategy, and the ethical appropriateness of the strategy. Multivariate analysis of variance was used to determine overall differences. Univariate analysis of variance identified the particular strategies that differentiated the American and Hong Kong respondents. For example, the Hong Kong Chinese were more likely to use informal information networks. The Americans were more likely to employ more individual strategies, such as image management, in order to differentiate themselves from the competition in their organisation.

1. INTRODUCTION

With the steady increase in the number of multinational corporations, the nature of business in today's global marketplace requires people of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds to work together. Because value differences may result in misunderstandings and inaccurate perceptions when the work situation is culturally diverse, it is increasingly important to distinguish among values held in various cultures. (Harris and Moran, 1987; Jackofsky *et al*, 1988; Mendenhall *et al*, 1987; Ralston *et al*, 1993; Tung, 1988; Yukl and Falbe, 1990.)

An important area that has received little attention to date is the effect of Eastern and Western values on the techniques used to gain influence in an organisation (Smith and Peterson, 1988). These strategies may differ dramatically among cultures. Thus, global managers must be proficient at exercising influence in a variety of culturally mixed situations (Ferguson, 1988; Smith and Peterson, 1988). How managers use strategies to influence others is crucial to their development and their future success as managers (Chacko, 1990; Kotter, 1985). In particular, individuals who use tactics that are incongruent with the culture of their superiors could lose rather than gain the influence they seek.

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This paper begins to examine cross-cultural differences, specifically in the upward influence strategies used by American and Hong Kong Chinese managers. While managers from these two countries operate in compatible business environments, they come from, and are influenced by, very different cultures (Bond and Hwang, 1986; Hsu, 1953; Ralston *et al.*, 1993; Smith and Peterson, 1988; Vernon, 1982). The United States is the prime example of an individualistic culture, while Hong Kong is much more collectivist, as are most Asian cultures (Hofstede, 1980). As both countries have a capitalist system and their expatriates are living and working in the other country, they present an interesting and relevant comparison of similarities as well as differences.

2. THE UPWARD INFLUENCE LITERATURE

A reasonable body of single-country, Western culture literature serves as a partial foundation for our study of cross-cultural differences in upward influence strategies (Bierly and Lews, 1989; Fader, 1986; Gattiker and Larwood, 1990; Olsen, 1990). There is far less literature discussing Eastern country strategies, however, and comparably minimal research on cross-cultural comparisons of upward influence strategies.

WESTERN STUDIES

Several major theoretical areas that have been developed and reported in Western literature can be utilised to understand how employees exercise upward influence to succeed at work. A number of studies have examined the type of influence tactics used by managers and the objects of their influence attempts (Giacalone and Rosenfeld, 1991; Kipnis *et al.*, 1980; Mowday, 1978; Ralston, 1985; Schilit and Locke, 1982; Schmidt and Kipnis, 1984; Schreisheim and Hinkin, 1990; Yukl and Falbe, 1990). Strategies identified in these studies include assertiveness, ingratiation, image management and networking.

Other studies on the upward influence process indicate contingencies involved in determining strategy success (Kipnis and Schmidt, 1986). Ansari and Kapoor (1987) report that subordinates use a variety of upward influence strategies and that the leadership style of the manager is important in determining the likelihood of success for a strategy (Ansari and Kapoor, 1987). Assuming that leadership behaviour is culturally influenced, Ansari and Kapoor's findings might also imply that cross-culturally it is important to understand the culture-based values of a superior who comes from a different culture if one is to climb the corporate ladder successfully. The key to getting ahead is knowing what strategies are both successful and acceptable (Goldstein, 1989; Sheridan *et al.*, 1990).

EASTERN STUDIES

In contrast to the research on upward influence strategies in Western cultures, our review identified only two studies that have examined such processes in the Eastern context (Pye, 1985). Lutfy reported that the changing values of younger Japanese are resulting in employees putting increased pressure on companies to provide better opportunities for advancement and respect for employees' desires to have a fulfilling personal life.

Chow's study of upward influence strategies used in the People's Republic of China identified, in descending order of popularity, the following strategies: rationality, coalition, assertiveness, upward appeal, exchange of benefits, ingratiation and blocking. However, Chow provided no data or comparative information to evaluate the significance of her results.

CROSS-CULTURAL STUDIES

Suzuki and Narapareddy's study of American and Japanese female executives found that the American subjects put more emphasis upon having a mentor and using the formal evaluation system as a means to attain influence than did their Japanese counterparts.

Schermerhorn and Bond (1993) compared the upward influence tactics of American and Hong Kong subjects. The results showed that the American subjects were more likely to use ingratiation or rationality (*ie*, facts) to influence their superiors than were the Hong Kong subjects. In contrast, Hong Kong Chinese were more likely to select assertiveness as an influence tactic.

Because Eastern and Western cultures are unique from one another in values, norms of behaviour and general management operating philosophies, Eastern and Western managers and subordinates may clash in what is considered to be socially appropriate behaviour when exercising upward influence strategies (Hofstede and Bond, 1984). The purpose of the current study is to compare the tactics used by American and Hong Kong managers, and to determine the perceived risk associated with each tactic as well as the perceived ethical appropriateness of the strategy.

3. HYPOTHESES

The studies cited offer some preliminary insights into upward influence strategies. However, to date, there has not been a sufficiently adequate cross-cultural comparison of influence tactics to provide a research basis for the development of hypotheses on upward influence tactics. Therefore, to develop our hypotheses we fell back upon the general cross-cultural values research (Hofstede, 1980; Ralston *et al*, 1993; Tung, 1988).

The findings of Hofstede and others confirm that the culture in the United States can be described as individualistic with a low power distance, while the Hong Kong culture is collectivist with a high power distance (Ralston *et al*, 1993). Therefore, we shall present two general hypotheses that are descriptions of influence tactics that would fit the particular cultural orientations of each country.

HYPOTHESISED TACTICS OF AMERICAN MANAGERS

We propose that respondents from individualistic cultures, such as the United States, will prefer tactics that will permit them to show off their individual talents. Also, due to the low power distance, they are likely to prefer overt tactics because openly aggressive work behaviour is accepted in a low power distance culture (Porter *et al*, 1981; Smith and Peterson, 1988).

HYPOTHESISED TACTICS OF HONG KONG MANAGERS

Conversely, we believe that the Hong Kong Chinese respondents will prefer tactics that better fit their collectivistic, high power distance culture. Therefore, we propose that the Hong Kong managers will employ more covert tactics that occur behind the scenes and that may involve using their network of family and trusted friends (Porter *et al*, 1981; Smith and Peterson, 1988).

4. METHOD

The study involved two parts. The first part of the study dealt with the development of a cross-cultural instrument to measure behaviours associated with upward influence tactics.¹ The second part of the study involved administering this instrument to groups of American and Hong Kong managers to assess the likelihood, risk, and ethics of the upward influence strategies that were identified in Part 1.

PART 1: INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

To identify the potential tactics used to gain upward influence at work, we sought input from experienced, successful business people who were aware of the actual upward influence strategies that are used in the work environment. We felt that it was important to include both cultures in the development of the instrument to minimise cultural bias – a frequent criticism of survey research based upon Western-developed measures (Hofstede and Bond, 1988). Therefore, Hong Kong Chinese and American managers helped us to identify the spectrum of upward influence strategies that could be used at work. The following discussion details how the process evolved.

Item Development. The items selected for the instrument were identified through a nominal group technique [NGT] process (Delbecq *et al*, 1975). The participants, full-time managers enrolled in part-time MBA programmes in both the United States (n=61) and Hong Kong (n=43), were asked individually to develop a list of strategies that they had observed co-workers use to try to attain personal success at work. Reporting observations of co-workers was used to minimise the socially desirable response problems of self-ratings. These participants also were told to describe all strategies they had observed in the workplace, not just the ones of which they approved.

Following the development of the lists, the participants were placed into groups of four or five individuals. As a group, they were instructed to develop a single group list from their individual lists, and from the group list they were told to identify their top 15 choices. We then combined the highly ranked items (strategies) identified by these groups into a single master list.

Instrument Construction. Using our master list of strategies, a 30-item instrument, which was representative of the strategies identified on the master list, was constructed (see Appendix). A random number generator was used to determine the ordering of the items

1 Questionnaire developed by David A Ralston and David J Gustafson.

on the instrument. Each item is a brief scenario describing a strategy one might use for upward influence.

Each of the 30 strategies was followed by three questions:

- (1) What is the likelihood (frequency) that the strategy would be used by co-workers, if the opportunity to use that strategy were present?
- (2) What risk (negative outcomes) does the strategy hold for the individual using it?
- (3) What do you feel are the ethics (morality) of using the strategy?

Each of these three questions could have stood alone and been the basis for a survey instrument. However, we felt that using the three together developed a more complete picture. The likelihood question asks the respondents to reply based upon their observations of those around them. Risk and ethics responses are based upon the respondents' own perceptions. Risk, an evaluation of the negative outcomes, is used as a surrogate for the valence or value attached to a strategy as described in expectancy theory (Garland, 1984). Ethics, the importance of which has recently been acknowledged in the literature, helps to complete the picture by identifying the respondents' perceptions of what are the appropriate means of influence to use (Longenecker *et al*, 1988).

Likert-type ratings responses with four levels were used with each of these questions. Likelihood was rated from highly likely to highly unlikely, where highly likely had a value of 4 and highly unlikely had a value of 1. Risk was rated from highly risky [4] to highly safe [1], and ethics was rated from highly ethical [4] to highly unethical [1]. Intermediate ratings were labelled somewhat (*eg*, somewhat ethical and somewhat unethical). Therefore, the higher the mean score, the more a strategy was seen as likely, risky or ethical.

PART 2: THE COMPARATIVE STUDY

Subjects. The subjects were full-time employees in the United States (n=81) and Hong Kong (n=71) who were attending part-time MBA programmes in their respective countries. The average age of the American subjects was 31.5 years; the average age of the Hong Kong subjects was 28.9 years (see Table 1). Males made up 70% of the American sample and 62% of the Hong Kong sample. The American subjects were employed for an average of 8.6 years while the Hong Kong subjects were employed an average of 6.0 years. These subjects were chosen because we believe that individuals who work full-time and go to graduate school at night exemplify those individuals in an organisation who are interested in getting ahead.

Procedure. Participants were given the survey in person. All subjects completed the survey within 15 to 25 minutes. The questionnaire was administered in English in both locations because the Hong Kong Chinese MBA students were fluent in English. Their entire MBA programme was conducted in English.

The instructions accompanying the survey asked the subjects to think of their experiences at work and to report what they had observed co-workers do, not what they might do themselves. They were also told that there were no right or wrong answers, and that it was their perceptions that were important.

TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FOR THE UNITED STATES (N=81) AND HONG KONG (N=71) SUBJECTS

		United States	Hong Kong
Gender:	Male	69%	61%
	Female	31%	39%
Age:	Mean	31.4	29.0
	SD	5.8	3.8
	Range	23-49	24-40
Marital Status:	Married	64%	28%
	Unmarried	36%	72%
Years Employed:	Mean	8.5	6.0
	SD	5.6	3.5
	Range	1-25	3-17
Company Size: (# of employees)	Less than 100	2%	6%
	100 to 1000	28%	28%
	Over 1000	70%	56%

Analysis. A separate multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used for each of the three measures: Likelihood, Risk and Ethics. The MANOVA was used to compare differences between countries, and had two levels: United States and Hong Kong. If a significant difference was found with a multivariate analysis (Wilks' Lambda), a univariate analysis of variance was run for each of the 30 items to determine specifically where the differences occurred.

5. RESULTS

The results are presented for each of the three areas that were evaluated:

- (1) the likelihood or frequency that each strategy is used;
- (2) the risk the strategy presents to the individual using it; and
- (3) the ethics of using each strategy.

LIKELIHOOD

The MANOVA analysis indicated a significant effect for differences between the American managers and the Hong Kong managers ($\lambda=.301$, $df=30,1,148$, $p<.001$). Since the multivariate effect was significant for the likelihood measure, univariate ANOVAs were used to determine which of the 30 items identified the differences between the American and Hong Kong managers.

The ANOVAs showed a significant effect for ten of the 30 items. Table 2 presents a description of these items, the means and standard deviations for the American and Hong Kong managers, and the F-values and levels of significance for the differences.

TABLE 2
ITEMS FOUND TO BE SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT FOR THE
LIKELIHOOD STRATEGIES OF UPWARD INFLUENCE USING
UNIVARIATE F-VALUES (DF=1,148) OF THE MANOVA

Items	Means			
	Description	US	Hong Kong	F
3	Dress the way successful business people dress.	3.7 (.54)	3.0 (.66)	34.3**
4	Try to develop contacts who might be able to provide detrimental information about one of his/her competitors for a promotion.	1.8 (.71)	3.0 (.64)	114.8**
5	Threaten to leave the company if his/her demands are not met.	2.4 (.95)	2.9 (.90)	8.9*
13	Spread rumours about someone or something that stands in the way of his/her advancement.	2.3 (.92)	2.8 (.89)	9.2*
19	Threaten to give valuable company information to someone outside the organisation if his/her demands are not met.	1.5 (.71)	2.0 (.68)	13.5**
21	Attempt to act in a manner that he/she believes will result in others' admiration of him/her.	3.4 (.70)	2.9 (.73)	9.9*
23	Make another person look bad by supplying this other person with inaccurate information.	1.9 (.88)	2.4 (.91)	9.4*
27	Ask to be given the responsibility for an important project.	3.6 (.59)	3.2 (.62)	12.4**
28	Withhold information to make someone else look bad.	2.4 (.90)	2.9 (.88)	9.5*
29	Use detrimental information to blackmail a person who is in a position to help him/her get ahead in the organisation.	1.6 (.82)	2.3 (.88)	19.7**

* $p > .01$; ** $p > .001$

Note: Standard deviations are presented in parentheses under the means.

TABLE 3
ITEMS FOUND TO BE SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT FOR THE RISK
OF UPWARD INFLUENCE USING UNIVARIATE F-VALUES (DF=1,148)
OF THE MANOVA

Items		Means		
	Description	US	Hong Kong	F
2	Offer sexual favours to a superior.	3.9 (.28)	3.6 (.46)	11.3**
3	Dress the way successful business people dress.	1.1 (.37)	1.7 (.68)	29.7**
4	Try to develop contacts who might be able to provide detrimental information about one of his/her competitors for a promotion.	3.5 (.71)	2.7 (.77)	42.3**
13	Spread rumours about someone or something that stands in the way of his/her advancement.	2.7 (.48)	2.3 (.57)	15.0**
16	Volunteer for undesirable tasks to make him/herself appreciated by the superior.	2.3 (.80)	2.8 (.79)	12.8**
18	Demonstrate the ability to get the job done.	1.4 (.82)	1.9 (.81)	10.6**
19	Threaten to give valuable company information to someone outside the organisation if his/her demands are not met.	3.9 (.16)	3.6 (.29)	10.3*
22	Help subordinates to develop their skills so that the subordinates, in turn, will be in a position to help this individual attain his/her objectives.	1.6 (.86)	2.4 (.89)	30.4**
23	Make another person look bad by supplying this other person with inaccurate information	3.8 (.55)	3.3 (.61)	26.9**
26	Blame another for his/her own mistake.	3.7 (.53)	3.1 (.57)	43.7**
28	Withhold information to make someone else look bad.	3.6 (.59)	2.8 (.68)	55.9**
29	Use detrimental information to blackmail a person who is in a position to help him/her get ahead in the organisation.	3.9 (.46)	3.6 (.56)	17.9**

*p>.01; **p>.001

RISK

The MANOVA analysis indicated a significant effect for differences between the American managers and the Hong Kong managers ($\lambda=.253$, $df=30,1,148$, $p<.001$). Since the multivariate effect was significant for the risk measure, univariate ANOVAs were used to determine which of the 30 items identified the differences between the American and Hong Kong managers.

The ANOVAs showed a significant effect for 12 of the 30 items. Table 3 presents a description of the items, the means and standard deviations for the American and Hong Kong managers, and the F-values and levels of significance for the differences.

ETHICS

The MANOVA analysis indicated a significant effect for differences between the American managers and the Hong Kong managers ($\lambda=.215$, $df=30,1,147$, $p<.001$). Since the multivariate effect was significant for the Ethics measure, univariate ANOVAs were used to determine which of the 30 items identified the differences between the American and Hong Kong managers.

The ANOVAs showed a significant effect for 12 of the 30 items. Table 4 presents a description of the items, the means and standard deviations for the American and Hong Kong managers, and the F-values and levels of significance for the differences.

A POSTERIORI ANALYSIS

An *a posteriori* analysis was run to investigate whether the Risk and Ethics measures could be used to predict Likelihood. As such, regressions on all items, using Risk and Ethics to predict Likelihood, were run for both the American and Hong Kong data. A variety of significant relationships was found, but no systematic pattern was identified in the prediction of either the American or Hong Kong data (see Tables 5 and 6). This potentially interesting relationship between Risk and Ethics with Likelihood deserved investigation. However, it is not completely surprising that no systematic pattern was identified since the Likelihood measure asked respondents to report their observations of the behaviours of others, while the Risk and Ethics measures asked the respondents to provide their own personal opinions.

6. DISCUSSION

The items that identified differences between these two cultures were similar but not identical in all three analyses. This suggests that Likelihood, Risk and Ethics are not surrogate measures for one another. More importantly, however, the significantly different items cluster in clear sets that indicate the influence strategies preferred by both the American and Hong Kong managers. Our findings showed that Hong Kong managers were more likely to employ tactics that involved controlling information within their network of work relationships than were their American counterparts. In contrast, the American managers reported the use of image management tactics. These findings are consistent with the general hypotheses proposed in this study.

TABLE 4
ITEMS FOUND TO BE SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT FOR THE ETHICS
OF UPWARD INFLUENCE USING UNIVARIATE F-VALUES (DF=1,147)
OF THE MANOVA

Items	Means			
	Description	US	Hong Kong	F
1	Identify and work for an influential superior who can help him/her get an advancement.	2.7 (.48)	2.2 (.66)	22.0**
2	Offer sexual favours to a superior.	1.0 (.00)	1.3 (.42)	12.1**
3	Dress the way successful business people dress.	2.9 (.33)	2.6 (.44)	8.4*
4	Try to develop contacts who might be able to provide detrimental information about one of his/her competitors for a promotion.	1.3 (.60)	2.3 (.83)	64.8**
10	Become well known within the organisation by volunteering for high profile projects.	3.9 (.41)	3.5 (.48)	11.3**
13	Spread rumours about someone or something that stands in the way of his/her advancement.	1.1 (.32)	1.7 (.64)	25.6**
16	Volunteer for undesirable tasks to make him/herself appreciated by the superior.	3.5 (.64)	3.1 (.66)	16.2**
24	Seek to build a relationship with a senior person who can serve as a mentor.	3.7 (.58)	3.1 (.64)	29.2**
26	Blame another for his/her own mistake.	1.1 (.24)	1.6 (.51)	49.4**
27	Ask to be given the responsibility for an important project.	3.9 (.36)	3.4 (.48)	46.2**
28	Withhold information to make someone else look bad.	1.2 (.38)	1.8 (.42)	60.1**
29	Use detrimental information to blackmail a person who is in a position to help him/her get ahead in the organisation.	1.1 (.31)	1.4 (.54)	14.5**

*p>.01; **p>.001

TABLE 5
REGRESSION ANALYSES OF THE 30 ITEMS OF THE UPWARD
INFLUENCE INSTRUMENT FOR THE UNITED STATES MANAGERS

Item #	Multiple R	Signif. of F	Partial Correlations			
			RISK		ETHICS	
			Part. Corr.	Signif. of T	Part. Corr.	Signif. of T
01	.09	-ns-				
02	.20	-ns-				
03	.37	.004	-.23	.029	.26	.014
04	.43	.001	.07	-ns-	.37	.001
05	.39	.002	-.22	.036	.34	.002
06	.37	.004	-.04	-ns-	.33	.003
07	.72	.001	-.044	.001	.14	-ns-
08	.29	.034	-.24	.027	.06	-ns-
09	.23	-ns-				
10	.33	.011	-.10	-ns-	-.31	.005
11	.27	.049	-.11	-ns-	.18	-ns-
12	.20	-ns-				
13	.43	.001	-.43	.001	-.18	-ns-
14	.32	.017	-.11	-ns-	.17	-ns-
15	.57	.001	-.50	.001	.09	-ns-
16	.41	.001	-.15	-ns-	.32	-ns-
17	.22	-ns-				
18	.06	-ns-				
19	.52	.001	-.35	.001	.39	.001
20	.42	.001	-.42	.001	-.12	-ns-
21	.48	.001	-.14	-ns-	.28	-ns-
22	.46	.001	-.41	-ns-	.08	-ns-
23	.34	.007	-.34	.002	-.12	-ns-
24	.10	-ns-				
25	.27	.050	-.05	-ns-	.23	.038
26	.35	.005	-.35	.002	-.01	-ns-
27	.27	.045	-.14	-ns-	.25	.026
28	.32	.015	-.17	-ns-	.12	-ns-
29	.38	.002	-.29	.010	.02	-ns-
30	.35	.001	-.35	.001	.06	-ns-

TABLE 6
REGRESSION ANALYSES OF THE 30 ITEMS OF THE UPWARD
INFLUENCE INSTRUMENT FOR THE HONG KONG MANAGERS

Item #	Multiple R	Signif. of F	Partial Correlations			
			RISK		ETHICS	
			Part. Corr.	Signif. of T	Part. Corr.	Signif. of T
01	.21	-ns-				
02	.16	-ns-				
03	.54	.001	-.45	.001	.11	-ns-
04	.25	-ns-				
05	.37	.006	-.14	-ns-	.33	.004
06	.26	-ns-				
07	.58	.001	-.50	.001	.01	-ns-
08	.35	.010	-.03	-ns-	.34	.004
09	.41	.002	-.26	.020	.25	.030
10	.20	-ns-				
11	.13	-ns-				
12	.18	-ns-				
13	.17	-ns-				
14	.07	-ns-				
15	.35	.010	-.05	-ns-	.30	.009
16	.12	-ns-				
17	.38	.004	-.07	-ns-	.36	.002
18	.43	.001	-.33	.004	.09	-ns-
19	.32	.028	-.04	-ns-	.30	.010
20	.48	.001	-.46	.001	-.07	-ns-
21	.61	.001	-.19	-ns-	.41	.001
22	.33	.022	-.16	-ns-	.20	-ns-
23	.50	.001	-.29	.007	.35	.001
24	.08	-ns-				
25	.64	.001	-.24	.012	.41	.001
26	.39	.004	-.31	.010	.05	-ns-
27	.38	.006	.26	.025	.26	.022
28	.44	.001	-.17	-ns-	.24	.030
29	.35	.013	-.29	.016	.05	-ns-
30	.17	-ns-				

Information control through networking involves restricting the flow of accurate information to others, who may be competitors for an advancement, in order to benefit oneself. To accomplish this end, friends in one's informal social structure are typically called upon to assist. In contrast, image management implies the active presentation of oneself in a positive manner to all members of the organisation, but most notably to those in a superior position.

A check of divergences between the male and female responses from each country identified extremely few differences in upward influence strategies. In the American sample, on the measure of Likelihood, the only significantly different item dealt with seeking a mentor relationship. In the Hong Kong sample, on the measure of Likelihood, there were two significantly different Likelihood items. As with the American sample, seeking a mentor relationship was different. In both countries females saw this tactic as more likely to be used than did the males. The other different item dealt with supporting the views of important people in the organisation, even when he/she did not agree with these views. Here again females scored this item more highly. For both the Hong Kong and American samples, there were no differences for any of the Risk or Ethics items.

LIKELIHOOD

Referring to Table 2, we see that items 4, 13, 19, 23, 28, and 29 can be categorised as information control/networking tactics. On all of these items, the Hong Kong managers reported significantly higher likelihood that the strategy would be used than did the American managers. Conversely, items 3, 21, and 27 deal with issues of image management. For each of these items the American managers scored significantly higher.

The Hong Kong managers' emphasis upon tactics involving information control/networking implies the utilisation of a network of contacts who can assist in the acquisition and distribution of crucial information. This finding is consistent with the collectivist nature of Chinese culture (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede and Bond, 1988; Redding and Wong, 1986). Networking and the controlling of who receives relevant information is perceived to be much more important in cultures where contacts and relationships are valued so highly. These types of activities are known as "face-work" (Bond and Hwang, 1986). Enhancing one's influence over others is a source of power, status, and face.

In addition, these informal information control networks that function "behind-the-scenes" may be related to the concept of *guanxi*, special ties that are developed for mutual benefits and favours (Pye, 1985). *Guanxi* relationships are a source of power and are seen to work either for or against one's personal interests. They work for us when we can obtain information that will be useful to our superiors and make us look good. They work against us when they are used to discredit us or our superiors.

In contrast to the Chinese, the American managers were likely to pursue more individually-oriented strategies, such as managing others' impressions of them and getting placed in a position where they can publicly show off their talents and abilities. These more individualistic strategies are consistent with Hofstede's findings of Americans (Hofstede, 1980).

Of all the items found to show significant differences, only one – item 5: threatening to leave the company if his/her demands are not met – did not clearly fit into the categories of information control/networking or image management. The higher score of the Hong Kong managers on this item may reflect the impatience and uncertainty of Hong Kong workers due to the run up to 1997 when Hong Kong will revert back to China.

RISK

Consistent with the findings for Likelihood, the Hong Kong managers found information control strategies (items 4, 13, 19, 23, 26, 28, and 29) to be less risky than did the American managers (see Table 3). Also consistent with the Likelihood findings, the American managers found image management strategies (items 3 and 16) to be less risky than did the Hong Kong managers.

This might be explained by the “Post-Confucian Hypothesis” which proposes that the Confucian values surrounding family and complementary relationships carry into modern organisations (Kahn, 1979; Redding and Wong, 1986). For example, withholding information to make yourself look good or taking advantage of information about competitors does nothing to harm the reciprocal relationship with your boss. If the strategy works, then the boss will look good and you may be rewarded with a promotion.

Another factor related to risk results from the high power distance in the Hong Kong Chinese culture (Hofstede, 1980). Any attempts by a subordinate to influence a superior must be done very carefully to avoid any loss of face for the superior. In such a high power distance society, embarrassing the boss could be quite fatal to one’s promotion opportunities. Thus, public compliance and strategies that do not call attention to one’s self are important for maintaining one’s place in the promotion hierarchy.

There were three remaining items that, while significantly different on the issue of Risk, did not fit cleanly into the categories of information control/networking or image management. Of these three, two items (18 and 22) dealt with the individual demonstrating the ability to get the job done and helping subordinates improve their job skills. While neither group of managers saw these strategies as highly risky, the American managers found both of these strategies to be less risky than did the Hong Kong managers. This finding is consistent with the overall proposition that American managers will pursue more individualistic, public-oriented strategies in order to be recognised for advancement.

ETHICS

There were similar differences in perceptions regarding the ethics of various influence tactics (Belleville, 1991). From Table 4, we see that items 4, 13, 26, 28, and 29 fit the description of information control/networking tactics, and that the Hong Kong managers found these tactics to be more ethical than their American counterparts. Likewise, the American managers found the items that dealt with image management (items 3, 10, 16, and 27) to be more ethical.

The Chinese were more likely to use strategies that were perceived to be less ethical by Americans, such as developing contacts to try to obtain detrimental information about

the personal behaviours of their competitors for a promotion. They would also consider the political tactic of withholding information to make someone else look bad to be much more ethical than the American group.

Differences in ethic variables between samples may also be related to the Post-Confucian Hypothesis. A subordinate's obligation is to support the boss, who in turn is expected to take care of (promote) the subordinate. Thus, many of the strategies, such as the ones cited above, may be considered quite ethical as long as they promote this superior-subordinate relationship. On the other hand, tactics viewed as ethical from a Western perspective, such as seeking influential superiors and job responsibilities, were less ethically appropriate for the Chinese sample. A possible reason for considering individual-oriented strategies to be less ethical may be linked to the Chinese proverb, "The nail that sticks out gets hammered down." It is perceived to be inappropriate and even unethical to "show off" in the Chinese culture (Bond *et al*, 1982).

Significant ethics differences were found on three other items. Two of these items (1 and 24), which dealt with overtly linking oneself to an individual at a higher level in the organisation, were closely related to image management strategies. Consistent with the previous findings, the American managers found these behaviours to be more ethical than did the Chinese managers.

7. CONCLUSION

These results highlight a number of important differences between American and Chinese approaches to climbing the corporate ladder. Americans see individually-oriented strategies that make one stand out as an excellent performer and that make one visible to one's bosses, as the way to progress. The Hong Kong Chinese, on the other hand, see low-key approaches that create competitive advantages and make the boss look good as the way to succeed personally at work. An American manager in Hong Kong might misread the true capabilities and motivations of his or her staff, believing them to be passive and unmotivated, if the Chinese differences are not considered. On the other hand, a Chinese manager in America might see his or her employees as too self-centred, outwardly aggressive, and with too little loyalty.

Managers must understand the road map for promotion and success of their employees from other cultures. Even if a manager desires to reshape a subordinate's perception of the path to success, the manager needs, as a starting point, an understanding of the views held by employees from the other culture.

In this age of multicultural, global organisations, West often meets East, and the bosses are increasingly from the East. Thus, it is important that we understand the differing expectations and behaviour patterns of superiors, as well as subordinates, from other cultures. While this study only begins to explore these behaviours in two cultures, it is a step towards understanding the differences that may exist in strategies employees may use for upward influence.

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APPENDIX

STRATEGIES OF UPWARD INFLUENCE

1. Identify and work for an influential superior who can help him/her gain promotion.
2. Offer sexual favours to a superior.
3. Dress the way successful business people dress.
4. Try to develop contacts who might be able to provide detrimental information about one of his/her competitors for a promotion.
5. Threaten to leave the company if his/her demands are not met.
6. Use his/her technical expertise to make the superior dependent upon him/her.
7. Do not make an enemy of the superior by bypassing the superior and going to someone at a higher level in the organisational chain of command.
8. Learn the likes and dislikes of important people in the organisation in order to avoid offending these people.
9. Increase his/her credibility by obtaining an advanced degree, such as an MBA.
10. Become well known within the organisation by volunteering for high profile projects.
11. Support the views of important people in the organisation, even when he/she does not agree with these views.
12. Behave in the same manner as his/her boss, for example, wear similar clothes.
13. Spread rumours about someone or something that stands in the way of his/her advancement.
14. Use his/her network of friends to discredit a person competing with him/her for a possible promotion.
15. Maintain good working relationships with other employees, even if he/she dislikes them.
16. Volunteer for undesirable tasks to make him/herself appreciated by the superior.
17. Leave the company and take a job with a new company.
18. Demonstrate the ability to get the job done.
19. Threaten to give valuable company information to someone outside the organisation if his/her demands are not met.
20. Work overtime, if necessary, to get the job done.
21. Attempt to act in a manner that he/she believes will result in others' admiration of him/her.
22. Help subordinates to develop their skills so that the subordinates, in turn, will be in a position to help this individual attain his/her objectives.
23. Make another person look bad by supplying this other person with inaccurate information.
24. Seek to build a relationship with a senior person who can serve as a mentor.
25. Make sure that the important people in the organisation hear of his/her accomplishments.
26. Blame another for his/her own mistake.
27. Ask to be given the responsibility for an important project.
28. Withhold information to make someone else look bad.
29. Use detrimental information to blackmail a person who is in a position to help him/her get ahead in the organisation.
30. Develop an in-depth knowledge of the work assignments.