

**VIETNAM:**

**A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON OF UPWARD INFLUENCE ETHICS**

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**Abstract**

We explore the ethical facets of within-company upward influence behavior. Our focus is Vietnam, where only minimal research has been conducted, with comparison data from China, France, and the U.S.—countries that have had both past and present relationships with Vietnam. Our hypotheses are developed within the contexts of the historical, business ideology, and socio-cultural relationships that Vietnam has shared with these countries. The findings indicate that Vietnam is a country that is largely unique unto itself regarding the perspective on upward influence ethics that is held by its professional workforce.

An effective manager is one who successfully “manages” the upward influence relationship with superiors, as well as the downward influence relationship (i.e., leadership) with subordinates (Ansari & Kapoor, 1987; Schermerhorn & Bond, 1991; Schilit & Locke, 1982). Thus, leadership and upward influence might be viewed as the opposite sides of the same coin. Moreover, upward influence, like leadership, is a critical aspect of ethics (Connerley & Pedersen, 2005). While upward influence behavior obviously represents only a part of the totality of ethics in organizations, we believe that the degree of acceptance of the various upward influence strategies is pertinent, because the upward influence used within organizations by its members is an ethics issue that permeates all areas of organizational life (Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988; Porter, Allen & Angle, 1981). Understanding this pervasive organizational issue can be crucial to the success, or the failure, of the day-to-day operations in terms of employee motivation, communication and team activities, as well as the implications that these organizational activities have upon the success or failure of the organization as a whole (Fu & Yukl, 2000; Ralston et al., 2001). For example, since upward influence behavior may affect the personal success of a manager, managers oftentimes face ethical challenges when deciding what strategies to apply in balancing personal growth with the well-being of the organization.

Further, studying upward influence from a cross-cultural perspective is of particular relevance because it assists us in understanding employees’ ethicality and resultant management behavior in international joint ventures or subsidiaries of MNCs. This appears to be especially true in transition economies where, oftentimes, superiors are from one cultural background (e.g., Western) and subordinates are from a very different one (e.g., Asian, Central-East European). Moreover, recent empirical research (Egri et al., 2000; Fu & Yukl, 2000; Fu et al. 2004; Ralston et al., 1993, 1994 & 1995; Xin & Tsui, 1996) has shown that there are significantly different influence preferences between managers from developed

Western economies (e.g., France and the U.S.) and those from transition economies (e.g., Vietnam and China). By being more aware of subordinates' differences in their ethics and values and by understanding the reasons behind these differences, managers will become more effective and less frustrated in a mixed-culture work setting (Butler, Kohls & Anderson, 2000; Donaldson, 1996).

In this study, we chose to focus our attention on Vietnam because it is becoming economically significant, attracting both FDI and MNCs. Furthermore, previous research has not systematically examined Vietnam's modern, managerial ethics, even though understanding the Vietnamese managerial dynamics may provide greater insights into the behavior of other transition economies, as well as Vietnam's (Borton, 2000; Hiebert, 1995; Hung & Kalleberg, 1999). Since the true impact of individuals' perceptions regarding the ethicality of the various influence behaviors becomes more palpable when placed in a context of comparison with the perceptions of individuals from other cultures, we applied a comparative approach by examining managers from Vietnam with three other countries—China, France and the United States—that have played a significant role in shaping Vietnam's past, as well as its present. Furthermore, in this study, we utilized an etic set of upward influence strategies that range from organizationally positive, legal and socially desirable to negative, illegal and ethically questionable (Ralston & Gustafson, 1993) in order to cover the spectrum of ethicality. Therefore, our primary research question in this study is: How does the prevalence of the various upward influence behaviors used in Vietnam compare with those used in China, France, and the U.S.?

### **Cross-Cultural Research on Upward Influence Ethics**

Part of the foundation for our hypotheses is developed from a review of the cross-cultural literature on interpersonal political influence. Additionally, using the Terpstra-Tong and Ralston (2002) cross-cultural model of upward influence, we explore three relevant societal

influences—historical, business ideology and socio-cultural—across the three comparison countries and Vietnam. Using the perspective gleaned from the integration of these influences, in conjunction with the previous upward influence literature, we develop our hypotheses for this empirical investigation of the ethics of intra-organizational upward influence behavior.

## **The Cross-Cultural Influence Literature**

Empirical research indicates that there are cultural differences in managers' preference and acceptance of influence tactics. The findings of the 12-country influence study by Fu et al. (2004) identified differences in perceived effectiveness of influence strategies across cultures. Schermerhorn and Bond (1991), using the instrument developed by Kipnis, Schmidt and Wilkinson (1980), examined upward and downward influence of American and Hong Kong Chinese managers. Their findings, while dated, suggested that American managers' upward influence strategies were more likely to focus on ingratiation and exchange tactics while assertiveness was more likely to be used by Hong Kong Chinese. In those studies that employed the Strategy of Upward Influence (SUI) measure (Ralston et al., 1993 & 2001), the upward influence strategies of managers from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, the U.S., Canada, the Netherlands, Germany, France, Portugal and Mexico were investigated (Egri et al. 2000; Ralston et al. 1994 & 2001; Terpstra et al., 2002). Compared with American managers, Hong Kong Chinese managers were found more likely to use behind-the-scene tactics such as personal network and information control in their effort to advance in the organization. In contrast, American managers preferred using image management tactics to exert influence (Ralston et al. 1993, 1994 & 1995). These findings are substantially consistent with a later study by Fu & Yukl (2000) that indicated that U.S. managers rated rational persuasion and exchange tactics as being more effective, while Chinese managers rated coalition, upward appeals, and giving gifts as the more effective means of influence.

In the Ralston et al. (2001) six-country study, Dutch together with American managers showed the highest acceptance of "soft" strategies (good soldier and image management). They also reported the "hard" strategies (information control and strong-arm coercion) as having the lowest level of acceptance and actually viewed them as a negative type of influence. Likewise, German and Indian managers viewed soft strategies as a positive way to exert

influence but they gave these significantly less importance, relative to the Americans and Dutch. Furthermore, the Germans and Indians viewed hard strategies negatively but the acceptability was significantly higher than it was for the Americans and the Dutch.

Additionally, the Hong Kong Chinese and Mexican managers viewed good soldier as a positive means of influence, but Hong Kong managers perceived image management as a slightly negative tactic. Although Hong Kong managers also expressed negative views toward the hard strategies, their acceptance of these strategies was the highest among all groups. In sum, these latter findings, which can be presented in terms of the subjects' acceptance of the soft and hard strategies, are the precursor to the ethics hierarchy of influence behavior.

We summarize our review of the literature with two points. First, it has shown that, for Vietnam, there has been very little empirical investigation of management practices in general, and no previous research conducted on upward influence ethics, which does seem interesting given that Vietnam is viewed as one of the most promising economies in East Asia (Business Asia, 2002; Scheela & Nguyen, 2001). Its GDP growth from 1988 to 1997 averaged 7.2 percent (EIU, 2002) with a peak reaching 9.3 percent the year before the Asian Currency Crisis. Even after the Crisis, its growth between 1998 and 2003 has averaged 5.4 percent, second only to China across all of the developing economies in East Asia (World Bank, 2004). It provides high-quality, low-cost labor with a workforce that has a literacy rate of over 91% and annual per capita GDP under US\$500. Further, its education level helps to explain why half of the foreign direct investment flowing into Vietnam could be channeled into industries that produced export-quality products for the international markets. (Pham, 2001). In sum, Vietnam's improved investment environment and its recent political stability have increasingly attracted foreign investors (Cohen, 2003; Sesser, 2000; Schultz, Ardrey & Pecotich, 1995). Thus, there clearly is a need to better understand the Vietnamese work culture.

Second, this review showed that different instruments have been used in the cross-cultural study of upward influence. And, with the exception of the studies using the SUI, the instruments employed in these other cross-cultural studies included only positively or neutrally-oriented tactics to the exclusion of illegal, damaging and ethically-doubtful tactics, although the latter truly are part of organizational reality (see Terpstra-Tong & Ralston, 2002 for a review). As such, these non-SUI studies did not capture the full ethicality spectrum of upward influence behaviors. Thus, we see our study contributing to the upward influence literature by filling the gap in the management literature related to Vietnamese managers, and by expanding the breadth of the literature on the degree of cross-cultural consistency regarding the ethicality of upward influence behavior.

### **Upward Influence Style Dimensions**

Since we base our subsequent discussion and hypotheses upon the three dimensions of the Strategies of Upward Influence (SUI) Ethics Hierarchy, we will briefly introduce them here to help clarify that discussion. A more complete discussion of the development of the SUI can be found in Egri et al. (2000). Additionally, following the Egri et al. (2000) study, the four-dimension ethics model presented in that paper has evolved into a three-dimension model based on a recent cross-cultural instrument development assessment of the SUI that included twenty-five countries (Ralston & Pearson, 2003). Nonetheless, this evolved structure is consistent with the Egri et al. (2000) findings, because the non-destructive/legal dimension, which was non-significant across different cultural groups in the Egri et al. (2000) study, in essence, has been eliminated from the current analyses. Thus, the three dimensions of the SUI Ethics Hierarchy are: Organizationally Beneficial Behaviors, Self-Indulgent Behaviors and Destructive Behaviors. Previous research has established that there is a hierarchy of ethicality for the three SUI dimensions across twenty-five cultures, with Organizationally Beneficial Behavior being viewed as most ethical, Self-Indulgent Behavior being identified as the next

most ethical, and Destructive Behavior being the least ethical (Ralston & Pearson, 2003). Prior to this 25-country study, other research that used the SUI reported similar findings (Egri et al, 2000; Ralston et al., 2001; Terpstra, Ralston & Jesuino, 2002).

*Organizationally Beneficial Behaviors.* These are the standard prescribed and sanctioned behaviors for employees in organizations. They may be viewed as the “organizational person” approach to upward influence because these behaviors tend to be directly beneficial to the organization. Organizationally beneficial behaviors include: helping subordinates and behaving in a manner seen as appropriate by the organization.

*Self-Indulgent Behaviors.* These are self-serving for the individual within the organization. They epitomize the “it’s *me* first” approach in that these behaviors show self-interest being above the interests of others or the organization. Whether they help or harm the organization is subject to interpretation and may be determined by the situation. Self-indulgent behaviors include: identifying and working for an influential superior and using technical expertise to make the superior dependent on them.

*Destructive Behaviors.* These are behaviors that are extremely self-serving and that directly hurt others, and oftentimes the organization. Some of these behaviors would also be considered illegal in many industrialized societies. They may be described as a “burn, pillage, and plunder” approach to gaining influence because of the harm these behaviors can bring to others and the organization. Destructive behaviors include: blaming others for their mistakes and offering sexual favors to a superior.

### **Three Perspectives for Predicting Cross-Cultural Relationships**

Having identified the three measures that will be the focus of this study, we will now start to lay a foundation for our hypotheses. To do so, we begin by investigating the relationships that Vietnam has had with China, France and the U.S. from the historical, business ideological and socio-cultural perspectives. As the Terpstra-Tong and Ralston (2002) cross-cultural model

of upward influence shows, the belief system of the agent—the one who attempts to exert influence—determines the selection and implementation of an upward influence strategy. This agent belief system is shaped by environmental factors that can be summarized under the historical, business ideological (i.e., political-economic orientation), and socio-cultural perspectives (Ashkanasy, Wilderom & Peterson, 2000; Bond & King, 1985; Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart, Basanez, Diez-Medrano, Halman & Luijkx, 2004; Ralston, Holt, Terpstra & Yu, 1997; Tan, 1999). Thus, we use these three perspectives as the basis for our comparisons of upward influence behavior because their synthesis identifies the environmental determinants that underlie the ethics of managerial practices, and as such they provide a foundation to hypothesize differences and similarities between Vietnam and the three comparison countries. Therefore, we will integrate these perspectives with the relevant upward influence literature to develop the directional hypotheses that will be tested in this study.

### **Historical Perspective**

Vietnam has been under the control or influence of other sovereigns for much of its history. Therefore, a historical perspective of its relationships with these countries seems particularly relevant when studying Vietnam (Jamieson, 1993; Taylor, 1998). As such, the question becomes: How do we translate the impact of a country's historical experience and other environmental factors into a discussion of managerial behavior? While there certainly may be other ways to approach this issue, we will view these influences in the context of level of convergence-divergence, as proposed by Webber (1969). He stated that there were convergence factors working on societies that made organizational systems, management, and ultimately the behavior of the work forces within these societies more similar to the source of the external force. Technology, education, pragmatic business value and philosophies have been identified as primary forces for convergence (Kelley, Whatley & Worthley, 1987; Ralston et al., 1997). If these forces do not play a role, then societal divergence remains. Following

Webber's logic, colonization can be described as a "catalyst" for convergence. In several past sovereign-colony relationships—for example, the former British - Hong Kong relationship—the western sovereigns implanted their own government and other institutions, including legal, education and even language systems in the colonies, for easy of control (Endacott, 1973). However, research has shown that Hong Kong values did not converge with British values, but instead Hong Kong Chinese integrated some of the British values with their traditional Chinese values to develop a new, unique set of Hong Kong values that has been described by Ralston et al. (1993) as a "crossvergent" set of values. Thus, we will describe the historical relationships and then, based on these descriptions, assess whether convergence, crossvergence or divergence appears to best capture the impact of the relationship on Vietnam.

**China.** Vietnam was under China's rule for almost one thousand years between 111.B.C. and A.D.939 (Kamoche 2001; Taylor, 1976). During those thousand years, the Chinese provided Vietnam with technology and knowledge, as well as Chinese institutions and systems, including an appreciation for education. However, perhaps more importantly, the Chinese code of conduct, Confucianism, was also exported to Vietnam. Chinese influence on Vietnam was not only passed through its ruling system and officials but also by the migration of Chinese people, even to the present day. Thus, most of the present-day Vietnamese, particularly the northerners, have Chinese ancestors. This ethnic connection reinforced, among other Chinese influences, the popularity of the Chinese language. Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese ideographic forms of characters were used as written Vietnamese. Given this millennium-long rule and influence, and the continuing economic activities with China, we expect that the convergence perspective of cultural values best explains this relationship (Kelley, Whatley & Worthley, 1987).

**France.** French influence in Vietnam started in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when French Jesuit priests transcribed the Vietnamese scripts into "quoc ngu", a Romanized language with a 27-letter

alphabet. Quoc ngu started gaining popularity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and today, it is the prevailing language in Vietnam. Also, between 1862 and 1954, France was the colonial sovereign of Vietnam. Over that period, the French, like other colonial sovereigns, changed the administrative systems as well as the school systems in Vietnam, albeit the latter only gained limited success in popularizing the learning of the French language (Duiker, 1976; Fforde & Vylder, 1996; Truong, Phan, & Nguyen, 1997). Nevertheless, the French had successfully created a group of elites, mostly Catholics, to help rule and defend France's colonial presence in Vietnam and to promulgate the French style of living, which is still found today in some Vietnamese architecture. Although one might argue for a backlash response against these Western colonizers, anecdotal evidence suggests that no longstanding animosity against the French exists today. At the same time, with their absence for the past half century, French influence appears to be more of a memory than a force.

**United States.** The U.S., although not a sovereign, did play a sovereign-like role in influencing Vietnam's history only a few decades ago. In 1965-75, the U.S. supported the South Vietnamese government in its fight against the communist government in the North. Despite the U.S. war efforts, the Vietnamese of today do not dislike Americans, even if some animosity towards the U.S. government might remain (Flagg, 2000). In fact, Vietnamese seem to embrace the American lifestyle. This fascination might be attributed to the advancements in telecommunication technology—satellite television and the Internet—and marketing campaigns conducted by American MNCs wanting to develop business relationships in Vietnam. In addition, American pop culture, including its music, MTV and movies, has gained popularity with the young Vietnamese that make up over half of the country's population. To those 40 million young Vietnamese that were born after the war, the U.S. projects a very positive image. Because of the liking for American pop culture, we may suggest that Vietnamese have also assimilated some American values. Thus, while China has had the

longest and most enduring influence, the U.S. has had the most controversial and radical influence. Nonetheless, we would expect that the level of influence of the U.S. on Vietnam will not be as great as is China's, but neither would it be as minimal as our expectations for French influence.

### **Business Ideology Perspective**

Countries may also be categorized according to their business ideologies (i.e., political, economic and technological orientations). Within this context, the political orientation (government) may be discussed as a contrast between single-party, non-democratic rule and multi-party, democratic rule. Economic orientation may be discussed as a contrast between centrally planned and market economies. France and the U.S. have long-established democratic, multi-party governments with market economic orientations. Both Vietnam and China are transitioning from the centrally planned economic philosophy typical of communist régimes toward becoming market economies, while maintaining single-party governments. They both also follow similar reform strategy – a gradual and pragmatic approach (Kolko, 2001). A country's level of technological sophistication correlates positively with level of GDP per capita. Using GDP as a surrogate measure, we see that France and the U.S. have highly sophisticated levels of technology, with Vietnam and China lagging presently behind, although rapidly advancing. Thus, Vietnam's overall business ideology is very similar to China's, while being very different from those of France and the U.S.

### **Socio-Cultural Perspective**

Ronen and Shenkar's (1985) review of previous empirical research on work value resulted in the development of a set of cultural clusters. They also noted that countries of similar cultural traits shared commonalities that could be substantially explained by three factors—geography, language and religion. Following this model, China and Vietnam should be culturally similar and fall into their Far East cluster. Schwartz's (1999) assessment of 49

countries identifies a comparable Asian grouping. Additionally, Schwartz acknowledged the importance of proximity, language and religion, as well as political and economic systems in determining how countries cluster. Looking geographically at Vietnam and China, we see that they share a common border and the Confucian mode of conduct. Language, however, is where we find a difference between Vietnam and China today.

Furthermore, according to the Ronen & Shenkar (1985) review, countries in the Far East cluster were typically high power distance and high collectivism. Likewise, Schwartz (1999) found the Asian group to emphasize conservatism and hierarchy (approximations of collectivism and power distance, respectively). In other recent studies, China has been shown to be a high power distance and high collectivism country (see Cheung & Chow, 1999). Additionally, Ralston, Nguyen & Napier (1999) found that both North and South Vietnamese, albeit different, reported sharing more similar scores on individualism and collectivism with Chinese than with American managers.

In contrast, Vietnam is geographically separated from France and the U.S. and philosophically different since both France and the U.S. are Christian-based countries. Likewise, linguistically, there are substantial differences as well. Nevertheless, the religious similarity does not imply that the French and the U.S. cultures are alike, and in fact, they have also shown stark cultural differences, as illustrated in a study of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998). In essence, Vietnam's socio-cultural orientation is substantially different from either of these two Western cultures.

### **Integration of the Three Perspectives**

Vietnam and China have much in common from the historical, business ideology, and socio-cultural perspectives. They have had close historical ties and their economic ties continue to be strong today. They both are communist countries undergoing transitions to market economies, and both share the cultural roots of Confucianism. Until the last century,

they still shared the same language base. In contrast, Vietnam has been a country occupied by foreign powers for much of its recent past, while China has not. Thus, given this set of marked similarities, with some relevant differences, we conclude that Vietnam has experienced convergence with China, and therefore, we expect that Vietnam and China will not be significantly different from one another across the three upward influence ethics dimensions.

While Vietnam and France had a strong historic linkage, those ties were severed fifty years ago. Additionally, despite this century-long rule over Vietnam, today France does not share with Vietnam the same political and economic systems. Moreover, France has a marked socio-cultural difference with Vietnam. Thus, Vietnam and France appear substantially different from all three perspectives. Therefore, we conclude that Vietnam has not experienced convergence with France. That is, they remain divergent from one another, and therefore, it is expected that Vietnam and France will be significantly different from one another across the three dimensions of upward influence ethics.

Likewise, Vietnam and the U.S. have a historical connection and more recent economic and cultural connection, given the U.S. influence on Vietnam's pop culture and consumption behavior. However, as with France, Vietnam and the U.S. are dissimilar on both the political and economic dimensions, and as such they do not share a similar business ideology with one another. They also are very different socio-culturally. Thus, there are more differences between Vietnam and the U.S. than there are similarities between them in terms of these three perspectives. Based on the integration of these three perspectives, we conclude that Vietnam has not experienced convergence with the U.S. However, the occurrence of a crossvergence effect today is a possibility, with indications of it being likely in the future. Nonetheless, it is expected that Vietnam and the U.S. will be significantly different from one another across the three dimensions of upward influence ethics.

### **Hypotheses**

Predicated on the conclusions developed from the historical, business ideology, and socio-cultural perspectives, along with the limited existing upward influence literature, we now develop a set of hypotheses. Based upon longevity of relationships, geographic proximity, degree of cultural similarity, level of current economic ties, level of technological sophistication, and political systems in place, the foundational perspectives project that Vietnam will not be significantly different from China, but that it will be significantly different from France and the U.S. Thus, it logically follows that these differences and similarities should translate consistently across all upward influence ethics dimensions. Therefore, we present our initial hypothesis as:

**Hypothesis 1:** *Vietnam and China will score significantly different from France and the U.S. on all upward influence ethics dimensions.*

Next, to develop directional hypotheses for each of the three dimensions, we use the upward influence research of Fu and Yukl (2000) and Ralston et al. (1995) as our foundation. The combined works of these researchers suggest the U.S. will score higher than China on the Organizationally Beneficial Behaviors and the U.S. will score lower than China on the Destructive Behaviors. Thus, for these two cultures, Organizationally Beneficial Behaviors and Destructive Behaviors appear to have some degree of inverse relationship, as the hierarchy proposes. Although very tentative because of the paucity of research, we will predict that the outcomes for Vietnam will be similar to those of China based on the values research of Ralston et al. (1999) that found Vietnam being more similar to China than the U.S. Moreover, the more limited cross-cultural influence research on France makes locating it on these two dimensions even more problematic. Even though France and the U.S. clearly are not the same, the values research of Inglehart et al. (2004) found that both of these countries do appear to be substantially different from Vietnam. Therefore, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 2a:** *For Organizationally Beneficial Behavior, Vietnam and China will score significantly lower than France and the U.S.*

**Hypothesis 2b: *For Destructive Behavior, Vietnam and China will score significantly higher than France and the U.S.***

For the dimension of Self-Indulgent Behavior, the key issue appears to be the self-serving orientation of the individual. As has been shown in the values research, a focus on one's self is characteristic of individualistic societies, such as the U.S. and France, while in collectivistic societies, such as China and Vietnam, the focus is on the in-group (Inglehart 2004; Schwartz, 1999; Triandis, 1995). Therefore, we propose that Vietnam and China will be fairly similar (and low) on this dimension, given that both are high collectivism cultures, and that the French and Americans will be fairly similar (and high), given that both are high individualism cultures (Inglehart, 2004; Ralston et al., 1999). Thus, based on the previously discussed three perspectives and the existing influence literature, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 2c: *For Self-Indulgent Behavior, Vietnam and China will score significantly lower than France and the U.S.***

Finally, we develop an "Ethical Range" index to better understanding the ethical standards of upward influence behavior. The purpose of this index is to provide a measure of the distance or "spread" between the most ethical and least ethical means of obtaining upward influence. As noted, Organizationally Beneficial Behavior (most ethical) and Destructive Behavior (least ethical) identify the polar extremes of the Upward Influence Ethics Hierarchy. Thus, to operationalize the Ethical Range index, we define it as being the score derived when the Destructive Behavior score is subtracted from the Organizationally Beneficial Behavior score. The greater the distance or spread in the scores between these two dimensions, the greater a society differentiates ethical from unethical behavior, and thus the greater is the ethicality of that society. Conversely stated, the less the ethical range, the more a society is willing to embrace any and all means of influence, regardless of ethicality.

Corruption—the use of unethical means for attaining personal gain—has been shown to have an impact on the acceptability of upward influence strategies. Previous research has found that

perceived corruption is more common in low individualism cultures (Davis & Ruhe, 2003). Further, Laczniak (1993) has shown that in less economically developed countries, pressures to achieve results outweigh basing decisions on ethical considerations. In terms of the Ethical Range index, these findings propose that more-developed, high-individualism countries (U.S. and France) would have a higher ethical range than less-developed, low-individualism countries (China and Vietnam). In support of this theory, the Transparency International (2004) Corruption Perception Index, which has been used as an indicator of the acceptability of unethical business practices (Davis & Ruhe, 2003; Volkema, 2004), reported that the U.S. and France score less corrupt than China and Vietnam. Thus, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 3:** *Vietnam and China will score significantly lower than France and the U.S. on the Ethics Range index.*

As a final thought, while the three environmental perspectives, as well as the existing empirical data on values and influence, support the Asian-Western divide that has been hypothesized, these two transition economies of Asia are, as this description suggests, transitioning. Further, China's Open Door policy (Fukasaku & Wall, 1994) preceded *Doi Moi*, the Vietnam equivalent (Engholm, 1995), by approximately ten years. Preliminary indications of China's decade head start on its transition to a market economy is reflected in the data reported by Ralston et al. (1999), which identified China as having a more market-oriented culture (i.e., more similar to Western market cultures) than Vietnam, albeit not substantially so, at the time of that study. Thus, these hypotheses clearly reflect the findings of previous research (the past). However, they may, or may not, reflect the dynamically changing present.

## **Method**

### **Subjects**

The sample consisted of 629 respondents from four countries: Vietnam (n=136); China (n=166); France (n=151); and the United States (n=176). We collected the Vietnamese data in Hanoi, the Chinese in Shanghai, and the French and U.S. data countrywide. Not having

country-wide data for all four countries is a limitation of the study. The data used in this study were collected as part of a more encompassing study of cross-cultural issues. All subjects were professional or managerial-level employees.

The demographic comparisons, as presented in Table 1, show the four countries to be reasonably comparable on the six demographic variables, especially on the crucial issue of age (see Egri & Ralston, 2004). Nonetheless, as subsequently discussed, we assess all six demographic variables for inclusion as covariates in the analyses.

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Insert Table 1 about here

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## **Procedures**

We followed the traditional translation and back-translation procedure (Brislin, 1986) when we translated the English version of the questionnaire from English into Chinese, Vietnamese and French. Colleagues, who were native inhabitants of each country, administered the questionnaire to the subjects. Thus, subjects were administered the instrument in their native language by a local person. Additionally, subjects were assured of anonymity.

## **Measure**

We used the Strategy of Upward Influence (SUI) questionnaire to measure subjects' acceptance of various upward influence strategies. Ralston and Gustafson (1993) were the first to publish the SUI. They developed it using a nominal group technique (NGT) process. In this process, they asked practicing managers from China, France, Germany and the U.S. to identify upward influence tactics that they had seen used in their companies. They then used these responses as inputs to create the items of the instrument. The instrument was ultimately refined to include 38 tactic items measured with an eight-point Likert scale ranging from 1 "extremely unacceptable" to 8 "extremely acceptable". Thus, the higher the score is, the higher will be the acceptability of an influence tactic. Using confirmatory factor-analysis for data from twenty-

five countries, the three hierarchical dimensions—organizationally beneficial behaviors, self-indulgent behaviors and destructive behaviors—were developed (Ralston & Pearson, 2003).

Given the nature of upward influence, socially desirable responses are likely to be given by subjects if they are asked to provide information about themselves (Anastasi, 1982). To minimize this potential bias, the SUI utilizes an other-report approach that asked subjects to indicate how acceptable each of the 38 scenario items on the instrument was for their co-workers—rather than for themselves—as a means of getting ahead at work. By doing so, subjects should have felt less inhibited about responding candidly. Additionally, even though the responses were perceived co-workers' behavior, it is likely that subjects actually reported their own views (Egri et al., 2000). For a list of the 38 SUI items, please see the Appendix.

### **Design and Analysis**

With Likert scale questionnaire surveys, such as the SUI, previous research has shown that there may be cultural differences in the use of range of responses in questionnaire surveys (Smith Dugan & Trompenaars, 1996). For example, Asians tend to use the middle of the scale while Anglos are more likely to respond across the entire scale range. Given these tendencies, direct comparisons of raw scores obtained from different countries may have an inherent cultural response bias. To minimize this bias, we standardized the item scores, by country, before computing the dimensions, following the procedure used in Egri et al. (2000). The resulting standard scores represent the relative acceptability of an influence strategy/dimension for subjects within each country. Additionally, a concern in cross-cultural research is whether the dimensions are reliable across all the countries of the study. To assess the reliability of the three Strategy of Upward Influence dimensions, we calculated Cronbach's alpha statistics, by country, for each dimension.

After adjusting for the possibility of cultural response bias and verifying dimension reliability, we proceeded with a three-step statistical analysis. First, we ran a MANCOVA with

the three SUI dimensions as dependent variables, the four countries as independent variables, and the six demographic items—age, gender, marital status, position level, work experience, and organizational size—as covariates. Second, if the MANCOVA were found to be significant, we would run an ANCOVA for each of the dependent dimensions, using as covariates those demographics found in the MANCOVA to contribute significantly to the model. If no covariate was significant, we would run an ANOVA for the dimension. Finally, for those dimensions with significant ANOVA/ANCOVA results, we used Tukey Multiple Comparison tests to identify significant differences among the four cultural groups of managers.

## **Results**

### **Reliabilities**

For the twelve Cronbach's alpha tests that were conducted to determine the internal consistency of each of the three SUI dimensions for each of the four countries, the results indicated that, with one exception, all were equal to or greater than 0.70, a threshold reliability value for general survey studies (Sekaran, 2000). The alpha score exception was the Organizationally Beneficial dimension for France ( $\alpha=0.63$ ). The Organizationally Beneficial alpha score for France is within the range that has been considered acceptable in other cross-cultural studies (e.g. Fu & Yukl, 2000; Egri et al., 2000). Each country-by-dimension Cronbach alpha scores is reported in Table 2.

### **Test of Significance**

The MANCOVA indicated a significant Wilks' lambda effect [ $\lambda = .606$ ,  $df = 4, 2, 620$ ,  $p < .001$ ] and showed that gender was a significant covariate for the Organizationally Beneficial and Destructive Behavior dimensions. Since the MANCOVA was significant, we calculated ANCOVAs for Organizationally Beneficial Behavior and Destructive Behavior, with gender being included as a covariate. We ran an ANOVA for the Self-Indulgent Behavior dimension,

for which no demographic contributed significantly to the model. All three analyses of variance were significant. In Table 2, we report the means, standard deviations, and F-test results of these findings. The ANOVA for the Ethical Range index was also significant ( $F=10.9, p<.001$ ). Thus, since all three SUI dimensions and the Ethical Range index were significant, we ran Tukey multiple comparison tests for each. We present these Tukey results in Table 3 and discuss them in the “Assessment of the Hypotheses” in following section of the paper.

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Insert Tables 2 & 3 about here

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Additionally, given the significance of gender as a covariate, we ran a MANOVA with country and gender specified as independent variables to assess the possibility of a country–gender interaction effect. The findings indicate that there was no interaction effect for the Destructive Behavior dimension, while there was one for the Organizationally Beneficial Behavior dimension ( $F = 2.94, p<.05$ ).

### **Discussion**

For our first hypothesis, France and the U.S would be significantly different from China and Vietnam, we found only partial support. These findings will be discussed in detail in our subsequent individual discussions of the three SUI dimensions, including an interpretation of the country differences. We will then conclude our discussion of the study findings with our assessment of the Ethical Range index results.

#### **Assessment of the Three SUI Dimension Hypotheses**

**Organizationally beneficial behavior.** For the Organizationally Beneficial dimension, we hypothesized that the Vietnamese and Chinese managers would score significantly lower than the U.S. and French managers would. Our findings indicated that the French managers scored significantly higher than the other three sets of managers. In turn, the U.S. managers scored

higher than the Chinese managers, who scored higher than the Vietnamese managers, who were lowest on this dimension (see Table 3). Thus, our findings fully support this hypothesis. However, in addition to the hypothesized differences, we also found the French scoring significantly higher than the Americans and the Chinese scoring significantly higher than the Vietnamese.

**Self-indulgent behavior.** For the self-indulgent behavior dimension, we hypothesized that the Vietnamese and Chinese managers would score significantly lower than the U.S. and French managers. Our findings indicated that, as with the Organizationally Beneficial dimension, the Vietnamese managers scored significantly lower than any of the other managers, while none of the other three groups of managers was significantly different from one another. Thus, there are both some similarities and differences in the results for the Organizationally Beneficial Behavior and the Self-indulgent Behavior dimension. The support for our Self-indulgent Behavior hypothesis is moderate. In support of the hypothesis, the U.S. and French managers scored higher than the Vietnamese managers did. However, in opposition to the hypothesis, the Chinese also scored higher than the Vietnamese did, while the U.S. and French managers did not score higher than the Chinese.

**Destructive behavior.** For the destructive behaviors dimension, we hypothesized that the Vietnamese and Chinese managers would score significantly higher than the U.S. and French managers would. Our findings indicated that the French managers scored significantly higher than the other three groups of managers, while the Chinese managers also scored significantly higher than the U.S. and Vietnamese managers did. In terms of support for our hypothesis, there is some, albeit minimal, support. In support of the hypothesis, the Chinese managers did score higher than the U.S. managers did. In contrast, the Chinese managers did not score higher than the French managers did, and the Vietnamese managers did not score higher than

either the French or the U.S. managers. Additionally, the Chinese managers scored higher than their Vietnamese counterparts.

### **Interpretation of the Country Differences**

Based on our hypotheses that were an integration of the historical, business ideology and socio-cultural perspectives, as well as the existing upward influence literature, the Vietnamese–Western cultures (U.S. and France) findings were most consistent with the hypothesized relationships, although not without a surprise or two. The Vietnamese–Chinese findings were perhaps the most intriguing in the context of this study, because of the consistent differences found between these presumed similar cultures. Thus, we begin with our discussion with a look at these two within-Asia cultures.

**Vietnam and China.** Our study results show that Vietnam and China are different across all three upward influence strategies. This is somewhat surprising given that the two countries share so much in common historically, politically/economically and in terms of geographic proximity. Historically, China and Vietnam have been linked closely for over a thousand years. Both of these cultures have shared the basis of moral behavior, Confucianism, for centuries. More recently, their common political history of having planned economies and of sharing the same communist ideology do not seem to have caused a true convergence of Vietnamese and Chinese attitudes towards upward influence ethics.

On the other hand, this lack of convergence is consistent with the findings of the Ralston, Nguyen and Napier (1999) study of values in Vietnam, China and the U.S. Thus, even given the geographic proximity and historical and political commonalities, the differences between these societies may be less surprising than at first they seem. As indicated in the Ronen and Shenkar (1985) model, language, religion and geographic proximity are the three primary determinants of cultural clustering. Vietnam and China clearly have different languages, including Vietnam's adoption of a Romanized alphabet—in contrast to the Chinese character

set—over 200 years ago. Additionally, there are important differences in the level of religious affiliations between these two countries. In Vietnam, approximately 80% of the population has a religious affiliation, with Buddhism (52%) being the predominant religion (*Economist*, 2001, 2002). Conversely, in China, 80% of its population has no religious affiliation (Chen, 2003). The importance of the contrast between Vietnam and China in religiosity, especially for an issue with ethical implications, might be worthy of further research investigation, as is suggested in the Inglehart et al. (2004) multi-country study. Further, the differing start-dates for their respective transitions to market economies may be relevant and may also be worthy of further research investigation.

In sum, a common Western perception of Vietnamese being similar to Chinese because of their shared socio-cultural and business ideology heritages appears to be flawed. Vietnamese are Vietnamese, and they are different from the Chinese. This is a finding worthy of note given the increasing economic activity between the West and Vietnam. One implication of which Western MNCs should be aware is that this difference does exist, and in turn, that they should realize that a cut-and-paste of their Chinese management strategies into Vietnam may not insure success there.

**Vietnam and France.** France, as the colonial sovereign of Vietnam for approximately one hundred years, had a very close relationship, as well as a substantial influence on Vietnam, as epitomized in the change to a Romanized alphabet. However, that relationship ended almost fifty years ago. Based on the significant differences found in this study on each of the three upward influence ethics dimensions, it appears that any French cultural influence that remains is negligible, with the exception of the architecture. However, of interest is that the finding for Destructive Behavior is in the direction opposite to the hypothesis. The French are higher than the Vietnamese are on Destructive Behavior, and for that matter, the French are significantly higher than *all* countries on this dimension.

In the search for an explanation, it may be relevant to note that the French educational system is tied closely to a rigid and elitist system of advancement in business and public service (Roussillion & Bournois, 1997). Only those from the best universities make it to the top, while the others tend to hit an education-based glass ceiling. Therefore, one's educational pedigree may be more important than one's ability. Thus, this elitism, which is fraught with protocol, rewards the more destructive types of influence because these influence behaviors take circuitous routes that exploit the rigidity of the system, instead of relying more heavily on the open and transparent route, as described by Organizationally Beneficial Behavior. Further, observations by a colleague suggest that the French admire good political skills, including being able to manipulate and maneuver in order to climb the corporate ladder. The high scores for the French on both the Organizationally Beneficial and Destructive Behavior dimensions suggest that this observation may be true. The French appear to embrace the use of influence tactics from both ends of the ethics hierarchy.

**Vietnam and the U.S.** Our findings that contrast the styles of Vietnamese and U.S. managers are those most consistent with our expectations. As expected, the U.S. managers scored significantly higher than the Vietnamese managers did on both the Organizationally

Beneficial and the Self-Indulgent dimensions. These findings are consistent with previous findings comparing the U.S. with a Confucian-based society (Ralston et al., 2001). However, for the Destructive Behavior dimension, the non-significance between Vietnam and the U.S. is the most interesting finding. Since the U.S. and Vietnam fall into very different culture clusters—“Anglo” culture for the U.S. and “Far East/Asian” culture for Vietnam (Inglehart et al., 2004; Ronen & Shenkar, 1985; Schwartz, 1999)—our usual inference is that they should differ significantly across various organizational behaviors. This finding is even more interesting because at the same time that we find this lack of significance between Vietnam and the U.S., we also find significant differences on Destructive Behavior with China for both Vietnam and the U.S. Thus, it appears from the findings of our study that we cannot infer Destructive influence behaviors, or the other influence behaviors, from cultural clustering alone. Nonetheless, the importance of understanding the ethical standards of a society in the context of global business goes virtually without saying.

#### **An Assessment of The Ethical Range Index Comparison**

As shown in Table 3, the U.S. scored significantly higher than France, Vietnam, and China, while France scored significantly higher than China on the Ethical Range index. These findings provide partial support for our hypothesis that the U.S. and France would score significantly higher than China and Vietnam. Additionally, it is interesting to note that Vietnam and China were not significantly different from one another on this index, even though they were significantly different on both the Organizationally Beneficial and Destructive Behavior dimensions. In essence, since Vietnam scored lower than China on the ethical Organizationally Beneficial Behavior dimension and lower than China on the unethical Destructive Behavior dimension, their scores on the Ethical Range index averaged out to be not significantly different, with Vietnam embracing both Organizationally Beneficial and Destructive Behavior less than China. Thus, this Ethical Range index, which might also be described as a higher-

order SUI dimension, provides a comprehensive view of ethical differences in upward influence among the workforces of the societies being studied, while the three SUI dimensions provide a more detailed description of the level and type of differences that may occur.

Finally, while it is not the primary purpose of this study to identify gender differences on ethics with respect to upward influence behavior, our results show that gender differences did exist in the acceptability of both the Organizationally Beneficial and Destructive Behavior dimensions, with females showing greater sensitivity to ethical issues. This finding is consistent with prior studies on ethics in that male and female significantly differ in their ethical orientations. Recent research shows that female respondents are perceived to be more ethical than males (D'Aquila, Bean & Procario-Foley, 2004), have lower acceptability of unethical behavior (Kini, Ramkrishna & Vijayaraman, 2004), and higher moral reasoning skills (Loe & Weeks, 2000). Females have also self-reported higher ethical standard (Kelley, Ferrell and Skinner, 1990). Thus, our findings help to remind cross-cultural ethics researchers that gender is an important variable to considered in developing predictive models.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Our study presents empirical evidence on differences in upward influence ethics between Vietnam and three diverse comparison cultures: China, France and the U.S. We expected significant differences between Vietnam and the two Western comparison countries, while not expecting differences between Vietnam and China. The results of this study partially confirmed our hypotheses and partially rejected them. As reflected by the Ethical Range index, the sharpest contrasts that we found were between the Eastern and Western cultures. However, within the Western culture comparison, the U.S. and France were also significantly different, with the U.S. scoring higher. Interestingly, while having identified differences between the Vietnamese and Chinese on all three dimensions, we found no difference on the Ethical Range index for these two groups, which share the common roots of Confucius-based culture and

transitioning communist ideology, as well as over one thousand years of shared history. Thus, while there clearly are East-West differences, in terms of upward influence ethics, there are also differences within these culture groups worthy of note and future study.

As a consideration for future research endeavors, the literatures on corruption-levels (Getz & Volkema, 2001; Husted, 1999) and societal trust (Fukuyama, 1995; Inglehart, 2004) propose that both of these country-level constructs correlate with and possibly predict the ethicality of a workforce in a society, in that high trust and low corruption should correlate with high ethicality. The Corruption Perception Index (CPI) assessment of corruption is consistent with this prediction for the Ethical Range index. The CPI found the U.S. (7.5) scoring highest, France (7.1) next and China (3.4) and Vietnam (2.6) considerably lower (Transparency International, 2004). Further, Inglehart and colleagues index of “trust by people” indicates there are substantial differences between Eastern and Western cultures (Inglehart et al., 2004).

Likewise, the hierarchical rigidity of social class in a society may contribute to our understanding of ethical orientation of businesspeople, where low rigidity should correlate with high ethicality. We previously acknowledged the rigidity and elitism of the French system. However, we might expect even more the rigidity within the hierarchical Confucian cultures to lead to a strong preference for the less direct, more convoluted Destructive Behavior approach to influence, which is consistent with previous research in this area (Ralston et al., 1993). Nonetheless, it should be noted that there may be potentially mitigating influences at work that could have future impact on these two Asian cultures. Relative to France, both China and Vietnam possess strong entrepreneurial spirits, and the Western-based growth of capitalism is giving these cultures reason to reconsider their traditional values. Furthermore, looking at the findings of this study, we see that Vietnam, although beginning its economic transition a decade after China's, appears, presently, to possess ethical standards, in terms of what is

unethical, that are more congruent with the U.S. culture than with the Chinese culture, which again emphasizes the uniqueness of these two Asian cultures.

Our findings, along with findings from other recent research (Fu & Yukl, 2000; Inglehart et al., 2004; Fu et al., 2004; Schwartz, 1999) argue strongly that general knowledge of history, business ideology and culture, while very important, is not sufficient to predict behavior. Therefore, there is a need for more sophisticated, more inclusive predictors of differences/similarities in ethics-related behavior across countries. In addition to culture, the roles that trust, corruption level and hierarchical rigidity play appear to be relevant research avenues to explore in terms of determining the influence on ethics preferences of a workforce. Moreover, given the existing social and economic dynamics, especially within these Asian cultures, a replication of the present study several years from now might provide some interesting transformations to discuss.

Thus, we believe that this research will add to our knowledge in two ways. First, it expands our management knowledge on Vietnam, which today is still very limited. Second, it contributes to the overall understanding of the cross-cultural perspectives on upward influence ethics. In so doing, it has helped to demonstrate the need to develop more encompassing models of cross-cultural behavior (e.g., Terpstra-Tong & Ralston, 2002), as well as the need for empirical testing of these models. In sum, we see this research as having answered some questions, raised some questions and provided some ideas regarding how to answer the questions that it has raised about upward influence ethics across cultures.

### FOOTNOTES

1. Subjects' scores for each item were converted to standard scores using the following equation:

$$SS_{(i,j)} = [S_{(i)} - \mu_{(j)}] / \sigma_{(j)}$$

where,  $SS_{(i,j)}$  = the subject's standard score for item  $i$  in group  $j$ ,  $S_{(i)}$  = subject's score for item  $i$ ,  $\mu_{(j)}$  = overall mean of Strategies of Upward Influence item scores for group  $j$ , and  $\sigma_{(j)}$  = overall standard deviation of item scores for group  $j$  (Glass & Hopkins, 1970).

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**Table 1****Demographic Data of the Subjects (N=629) from Vietnam, China, France and the U.S.**

	Vietnam (n=136)	China (n=166)	France (n=151)	U.S. (n=176)
Mean Age (standard deviation)	36.8 (7.8)	35.7 (9.9)	41.1 (8.9)	38.5 (8.8)
Gender (% male)	48.5	64.0	77.5	55.5
Marital Status (% married)	70.6	68.3	81.4	66.2
Mean years worked (standard deviation)	14.0 (7.5)	14.4 (10.7)	11.2 (8.4)	11.2 (9.7)
Position (% managerial)	55.9	89.6	94.7	67.3
Company Size (% >100 employees)	66.5	57.2	77.5	73.3

**Table 2**  
**Cronbach Alpha, Means, Standard Deviations, and F-test Results**  
**for the Four Countries on the Three SUI Dimensions**

SUI Dimensions	Countries ( $\alpha$ )	Mean	SD	F
Organizational Beneficial Behaviors	France (.63)	0.964	0.241	45.5***
	United States (.85)	0.776	0.352	
	China (.90)	0.578	0.508	
	Vietnam (.75)	0.496	0.372	
Self-Indulgent Behaviors	United States (.71)	-0.003	0.387	8.8***
	China (.74)	-0.020	0.507	
	France (.70)	-0.107	0.397	
	Vietnam (.73)	-0.246	0.526	
Destructive Behaviors	France (.77)	-0.682	0.249	23.4***
	China (.97)	-0.866	0.653	
	Vietnam (.89)	-1.007	0.378	
	United States (.95)	-1.071	0.378	

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

**Table 3**  
**Tukey Multiple Comparison Findings for the**  
**Three SUI Ethics Hierarchy Dimensions and the Ethical Range Index**

Dimensions	Means	Countries				
Organizational Beneficial Behavior (OBB)	.491	Vietnam				
	.578	China	*			
	.776	U.S.	*	*		
	.964	France	*	*	*	
			Vietnam	China	U.S.	France
Self-Indulgent Behavior (S-IB)	-.246	Vietnam				
	-.107	France	*			
	-.020	China	*			
	-.003	U.S.	*			
			Vietnam	France	China	U.S.
Destructive Behavior (DB)	-1.071	U.S.				
	-1.007	Vietnam				
	-.866	China	*	*		
	-.682	France	*	*	*	
			U.S.	Vietnam	China	France
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Ethical Range (OBB - DB)	1.444	China				
	1.498	Vietnam				
	1.647	France	*			
	1.847	U.S.	*	*	*	
			China	Vietnam	France	U.S.

\* indicates comparisons are significant at the  $p < .05$  level, controlling for experiment-wise error rate.

## Appendix

### The 38 Items of the Strategies of Upward Influence Measure

1. try to increase their credibility by obtaining a diploma or advanced degree, such as an MBA.
2. spread rumors about someone or something that stands in the way of their advancement.
3. volunteer for undesirable tasks to make themselves appreciated by the superior.
4. hire a criminal to seriously injure a competitor for a promotion.
5. try to influence the boss to make a bad decision, if that decision would help them to get ahead.
6. learn the likes and dislikes of important people in the organization in order to avoid offending these people.
7. use detrimental information to blackmail a person who is in a position to help them get ahead in the organization.
8. become well known within the organization by volunteering for high profile projects.
9. support the views of important people in the organization, even when they do not agree with these views.
10. use their network of friends to discredit a person competing with them for a possible promotion.
11. withhold information to make someone else look bad.
12. identify and work for an influential superior who could help them get an advancement.
13. attempt to act in a manner that they believe will result in others admiring them.
14. take credit for a good job that was done by their subordinates.
15. use their technical expertise to make the superior dependent upon them.
16. demonstrate the ability to get the job done.
17. threaten to quit the company if their demands are not met.
18. put a listening device, such as a tape recorder, in the office of a competitor for a promotion to get information about this person.
19. threaten to give valuable company information to someone outside the organization if their demands are not met.
20. help subordinates to develop their skills so that the subordinates, in turn, will be in a position to help them attain their objectives.
21. offer sexual favors to a superior.
22. blame another for their own mistakes.
23. dress the way successful business people dress.
24. try to create a situation where a competitor for a promotion might be caught using illegal drugs or engaging in some other illegal activity.
25. try to get the answers to a job promotion examination to insure that they would score higher than the others taking the exam.
26. put false information on a job resume to make themselves look better than they really are.
27. behave in a manner that is seen as appropriate in the company.
28. develop an in-depth knowledge of the work assignments.
29. try to develop contacts who might be able to provide detrimental information about one of their competitors for a promotion.
30. ask to be given the responsibility for an important project.
31. make sure that the important people in the organization hear of their accomplishments.
32. not bypass the superior and go to someone at a higher level in the organizational chain of command for fear of alienating the superior.
33. steal secret corporate documents and give them to another company in return for a better job at the other company.
34. maintain good working relationships with other employees, even if they dislike these other employees.
35. seek to build a relationship with a senior person who could serve as a mentor.
36. make anonymous, threatening phone calls to psychologically stress a competitor for a promotion.
37. work overtime, if necessary, to get the job done.
38. quit the company to take a better job with a new company.