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Perceptions of the ethicality of favors at work in Asia: An 11-society assessment

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Abstract We explore macro-level factors that shape perceptions of the ethicality of favors in Asian workplaces using the subordinate influence ethics (SIE) measure. We also expand and use the crossvergence model to examine the cross-level relationship between socio-cultural (i.e., traditional/secular; survival/self-expression; in-group favoritism) and business ideology influences (i.e., human development level, control of corruption) on perceptions of favor-seeking at work. This study examines the perceptions of a total of 4,325 managers and professionals in a diverse set of 11 Asian societies: China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore, South

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Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam. Our investigation focuses on both the “softer” (image management) and “harder” (self-serving) sides of subordinate influence attempts to seek favors, as well as the degree of ethical differentiation across these societies. Key results based on hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) suggest that both the World Value Survey’s socio-cultural values as well as in-group favoritism contribute to our understanding of influence behaviors in Asia. Likewise, level of human development and control of corruption also appear to be promising predictors of influence ethics. In sum, our results suggest that widening the scope of the crossvergence conceptualization of socio-cultural and business ideology influences engender a better understanding of differences in attitudes toward subordinate use of favoritism across Asian societies.

Keywords Favor-seeking · Favoritism · Subordinate influence ethics · Cross-cultural behavior · Asia · Hierarchical linear modeling

Jiao is a middle level employee with a mediocre performance record. As her end of quarter performance evaluation is not competitive she will likely not get her transfer to the city in which her husband currently works. Her father and Mr. Xiao (VP of Operations) were neighbors as boys, playing, exchanging favors, and going to school together. Jiao decides to send Mr. Xiao a large gift as a commemoration of the shared childhood that he had with her father. Upon receipt of the gift, Mr. Xiao reflects back fondly on that time, smiles, and sends a signed document authorizing Jiao’s desired transfer.

The story of Jiao’s favor-seeking behavior and ultimate transfer is an example of social exchange (Flynn, 2005) within a work setting, which is one that can occur anywhere in the world. Recent work by McCarthy, Puffer, Dunlap, and Jaeger (2012)

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suggests that general conceptualizations of favors within the management literature are embryonic at best. In response to this, they suggested a useful working definition of favors: “an exchange of outcomes between individuals to accomplish business objectives, typically utilizing one’s connections, that is based on a commonly understood cultural tradition...” (McCarthy et al., 2012: 27). In line with their argument for building culturally grounded conceptualizations of favors, we suggest that within Asian societies the possible variability in the kinds of favor-seeking and favor-giving behaviors that emerge are centered on relational dynamics. Indeed, researchers interested in forms of social-exchange within Asian contexts often draw parallels with relational-centric constructs such as *guanxi*, *wa*, and *inhwa* (Chen, Friedman, Yu, & Sun, 2011; Jiang, Chen, & Shi, 2012; Leung, Koch, & Lu, 2002; Xin & Pearce, 1996; Yeung & Tung, 1996), harmony (Yamagishi, Jin, & Miller, 1998), and ingroup social harmony (Farh, Zhong, & Organ, 2004; Han & Altman, 2010). In the current study, our conceptualization of favors follows this logic and we generally define favors as *a form of relationship-centric social exchange between individuals for influencing the attainment of outcome-related objectives*.

The forms of social-exchange influence behaviors involved in this type of relationship-centric favor-seeking are numerous. Jiao, for example, may attempt to seek favors through “softer” forms of influence such as adjusting her actions to gain the admiration of others or lead others to like her. She may also attempt to seek favors through “harder” forms of influence behaviors such as trying to influence others to make bad decisions or withholding information to make someone look bad. Softer favor-seeking behaviors are akin to image/impression management whereby individuals manage their social-exchange behavior in the presence of others in an attempt to create a specific impression that will result in attainment of a specific goal (e.g., Cialdini, 2001; Gordon, 1996; Jones & Pittman, 1982; Rosenfeld, Edwards, & Thomas, 2005).

Such forms of softer favor-seeking behaviors—image management—are particularly important when observers can influence the attainment of a desired goal or when the specific goal is important (Bohra & Pandey, 1984; Jones, Gergen, & Jones, 1963; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). In contrast, harder favor-seeking behaviors are more strongly associated with a “me first attitude” and involve behaviors intended to result in positive benefits for the individual above all else. These types of behaviors may best be understood as placing self-interest above the interests of others (Ralston et al., 2009).

Variations in the interpretation of both forms of favor-seeking behavior as ethical or not will likely depend on the specificities of where in the world Jiao and Mr. Xiao work. Relating “the where” or the specificities of the greater context to favors often results in both convergent and divergent views. Indeed, adopting a cross-cultural or multi-societal lens expands the repertoire of potential interpretations and therefore the resultant implications of these behaviors for management practices. Certainly, the ethicality of Jiao’s behavior may be seen quite differently depending on how common such behaviors are within a particular society (Forsyth, O’Boyle, & McDaniel, 2008). From a normative perspective, when such behaviors are common and openly used, they are more likely to be seen as acceptable—perhaps as simply seeking a favor. In societies where this type of behavior is less visible and/or less common, they are more likely to be seen as deviant—perhaps as attempting to undermine a more productive colleague

or attempting to bribe. From a consequentialist perspective, on the other hand, any judgment of the ethicality of Mr. Xiao's favor should ideally be suspended until the resultant consequences can be properly evaluated. Whether seen from a normative or consequentialist perspective, potential variability in interpretations of this same scenario both within a single society as well as across multiple societies raises questions about ethical differentiation as well as what shapes the differentiation.

Within a particular society, is Jiao's behavior interpreted as more or less ethically acceptable? What factors increase the tendency of observers within and across society(ies) to interpret Jiao's behavior as more or less ethically acceptable? Jiao's favor-seeking behavior may be perceived as categorically unethical in a certain society, while the same behavior in another society may be perceived as ethical by some and unethical by their compatriots. We argue that the first society can be described as having a smaller degree of differentiation between ethical and unethical forms of social exchange, than the latter society would have. The degree of differentiation between ethical and unethical forms of social exchange (operationalized as an Ethical Differentiation Index) will be explored throughout this study.

There are potentially a multitude of factors that may shape observer perceptions and therefore interpretations. These factors span the micro (e.g., individual identity-related factors, personality), meso (e.g., organizational climate, structure), and macro (e.g., cultural values, socio-economic development) levels of theory and analysis. In the current paper, we focus on the macro-level in which people and organizations function. To do this, we use a regional sample to explore favors and other forms of social exchange in organizations across 11 Asian societies. Asia is an important geo-economic region in today's business world because it comprises 60 % of the world's population (4 billion people; International Monetary Fund, 2010) and because of its rapid economic progress and transformation (Yeung & Tung, 1996). Indeed, more and more Asian countries are becoming the home of new global corporations (Collinson & Rugman, 2007) and projections suggest that Asia will remain of key importance to world business as it continues to exceed other regions in terms of contributions to global growth and economic recovery. What are the implications of this growth and recovery for the way both harder and softer forms of favor-seeking behavior will be perceived? How can we predict the manner in which others will interpret Jiao's behavior? Would Jiao's colleagues evaluate her behavior more negatively/positively depending on the society in Asia in which it occurred?

Due to a growth of the region and the wide range of differences among Asian societies in terms of culture, history, politics, wealth, and development (Edfelt, 2010), Asia is an ideal regional context to examine the influences of macro-level factors on forms of social exchange at work. We are particularly interested in further exploring specific macro-level differences such as business ideology and socio-cultural values (Ralston, 2008; Ralston, Holt, Terpstra, & Yu, 1997) that significantly shape interpretations of ethicality of behavior. Our research expands and refines earlier work on the influence of macro-level factors on subordinate influence ethics (Ralston et al., 2009; Ralston & Pearson, 2010) to include contributions from international leadership studies, development economics, as well as political science research. We integrate theory from these fields to build a better understanding of the factors that shape the perceived ethicality of using various subordinate influence behaviors to attain favors across the Asian workplaces.

In the next section, we first define the Subordinate Influence Ethics (SIE) dimensions that are relevant for our study and in turn, review the cross-cultural research on SIE. We then build our case for hypothesizing the societal-level influences that may predict favor-seeking and other forms of subordinate influence behavior in the Asia region. In turn, we present our methods and results and conclude with a discussion and interpretation of these findings of where Jiao is more likely to succeed.

Seeking influence and favors in the workplace

The Subordinate Influence Ethics (SIE) approach

Making sense of favors and other forms of work-related social exchange from a values-related or ethical point of view is a topic of growing interest in the cross-cultural management literature (Fu et al., 2004; Smith, Huang, Harb, & Torres, 2012). Included within the array of social exchange behaviors is the behavior of attempting to attain influence or garner favors. This influence behavior can be directed downward (superior to subordinate), laterally (peer to peer) or upward (subordinate to superior) (e.g., Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980; Ralston & Pearson, 2010; Yukl & Falbe, 1990). In our study, we focus upon the upward attempts of subordinates to obtain favors/influence from their superiors, with the subordinates' goal being to climb the corporate ladders in their organizations. This leads us to the fundamental, underlying question and the main point of our study: What do employees believe is and is not acceptable to do to garner favors and influence from a superior? As identified by Ralston and Pearson (2010: 150), SIE behaviors are "...what subordinates perceive to be ethical actions when acting with their superiors and when attempting to succeed (get ahead) at work." Jiao's gift giving in hopes of receiving a favor is an example of this subordinate influence behavior.

The foundation for the current research on SIE was developed by Kipnis et al. (1980) with their work on the upward-directed influence tactics managers employ to get ahead. This line of research sparked other related studies largely conducted within the American socio-cultural context (e.g., Egri, Ralston, Murray, & Nicholson, 2000; Falbe & Yukl, 1992; Schmidt & Kipnis, 1984; Yukl & Falbe, 1990). More recently, Ralston and Pearson (2010) widened the cultural focus of this research stream with their 30-society study that identified three primary cross-culturally relevant SIE dimensions. As their labels would suggest, from an organizational perspective, these three behavioral dimensions (*pro-organizational behaviors*, *self-serving behaviors*, and *maliciously intended behaviors*) range from supportive/desirable behavior to coercive/undesirable behavior. Research relating to these three sets of influence behaviors indicates that their perceived ethicality ranges from *most ethical* to *least ethical*, respectively. This continuum of ethicality among these three SIE dimensions was found to be consistent across 41 societies (Ralston et al., 2009). Further, Ralston and Pearson (2010) identified a fourth dimension, *image management*. However, they also found that this dimension was not relevant across all 30 countries in their study. Thus, they cautioned that this dimension should be validated with the researcher's specific dataset before being used. The [Appendix](#) provides a comprehensive list of the behaviors that comprise each of these SIE dimensions.

In our study, we focus our attention on three aspects of subordinate influence: (1) image management behavior (a “softer” side of favor-seeking), (2) self-serving behavior (a “harder” side of favor-seeking) and (3) the Ethical Differentiation Index (calculated by subtracting the maliciously intended behavior score from the pro-organizational behavior score). *Image management behaviors* are the softer, more subtle actions that a person can use to influence his/her superiors; for example, volunteering for undesirable tasks to make themselves appreciated by the superior. *Self-serving behaviors* are harder actions epitomized by “it’s me first” attitude whereby self-interest is clearly placed above the interests of others, whether individual, group, or organization. An example of a self-serving behavior would be asking someone in one’s personal network to discredit a competitor in order to secure a potential promotion. The *Ethical Differentiation Index* measures the difference between the most ethical (pro-organizational) and the least ethical (maliciously intended) influence behaviors (originally referred to as the Ethical Range Index by Ralston, Terpstra-Tong, Maignan, Napier, & Nguyen [2006]). It measures the degree to which a society differentiates ethical from unethical behavior. A larger *Ethical Differentiation Index* score denotes a society in which people discriminate more as to what is ethical and what is not ethical behavior. Conversely, a small *Ethical Differentiation Index* score indicates less differentiation between types of influence behaviors. At the extreme, a small *Ethical Differentiation Index* score denotes a society where maliciously intended behaviors and pro-organizational behaviors are considered equally acceptable in order to get ahead at work (i.e., no differentiation).

Cross-cultural studies on subordinate influence

Whereas there have been a number of cross-cultural studies of subordinate attempts to influence superiors (e.g., Egri et al., 2000; Fu et al., 2004; Ralston et al., 2009; Ralston, Terpstra, Cunniff, & Gustafson, 1995; Schermerhorn & Bond, 1991), relatively few empirical studies have examined subordinate influence within the greater Asian region (e.g., Braithwaite, Westbrook, & Mallock, 2007; Fu & Yukl, 2000; Ralston, Giacalone, & Terpstra, 1994). Ralston, Vollmer, Srinivasan, Nicholson, Tang, and Wan’s (2001) study suggested some contrasting patterns in influence ethics across three regions (Asia, Europe, and North America) and six societies (respectively, Hong Kong and India, Germany and the Netherlands, Mexico and the US). Significant societal differences in subordinates’ upward influence behaviors have been found between research participants in the US and their counterparts in China (Fu & Yukl, 2000), Hong Kong (Ralston et al., 1994; Schermerhorn & Bond, 1991), and Thailand (e.g., Ralston, Hallinger, Egri, & Naohinsuhk, 2005).

Previous research suggests that East Asian participants in a collectivistic context would have a preference for influence behaviors aligned with coalition tactics, upwards appeals, and gift giving (Fu & Yukl, 2000). That is, one might expect a favoring of relational strategies as well as other pro-organizational behaviors over other types of influence strategies. However, other research suggests that more destructive behaviors are an acceptable form of influence behavior in some Asian contexts. For example, in Singapore, indirect-assertive tactics were found to be preferred over direct strategies (Braithwaite et al., 2007). Furthermore, other

empirical research suggests that there is a greater openness to, and acceptability of, using negatively perceived hard strategies such as information control and strong-arm coercion (Ralston et al., 2001). Indeed, research by Ralston et al. (1994) suggests that destructive (legal and illegal) behaviors are more acceptable to Hong Kong managers than to their Western counterparts.

However, any generalization across Asia is problematic as there is ample historic and contemporary evidence to expect societal differences when a more macro-level lens is used to differentiate among Asian societies. For example, the distinctively different forms of dominant business organization among Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan (Hamilton, Zeile, & Kim, 1990; Orru, Biggart, & Hamilton, 1991; Whitley, 1990) demonstrate a plurality of viable ways of organizing and directing economic activities (Whitley, 1990). From a historical perspective, multiple and different religious influences and early ideologies have impacted the region for centuries and remain relevant today across Asia (Pye, 1999). Such influences have done much to increase regional variation in currently held socio-cultural values, beliefs, and practices. This suggests that Mr. Xiao may smile when he receives Jiao's gift if living in one Asian context, but may be offended if living in a different context.

In the next section, we build on Ralston et al.'s (1997, 2009) concepts of socio-cultural values and business ideology as shapers of differences in SIE perceptions. We expand this model to include societal factors that may prove to be more crucial in understanding the ethics of subordinate favor-seeking in developing nations, such as those in our Asian sample.

Predictors of influence and favor-seeking by subordinates

In this study, we use a crossvergence perspective to predict differences in the perceived ethicality of SIE across Asian societies. The crossvergence hypothesis proposes that the evolution of a society's values system may result from a set of socio-cultural influences coming in contact with a competing set of business ideology influences (Ralston, 2008). As such, crossvergence logic suggests that knowing the dominant socio-cultural and business ideology influences in various societies will improve the ability to predict societal variation in enacted values and ethics (Ralston et al., 1997). Ralston et al.'s (2009) 41-society study suggests some support for societal crossvergence in that there appears to be a global trend whereby economic development (a business ideology influence) and individualism (a socio-cultural influence) together shape individual-level patterns in subordinate influence behaviors.

In the present study, we provide a refined test of societal crossvergence theory in three respects. First, we examine the influence of socio-cultural values with respect to Inglehart's (1997) two cultural values dimensions (as suggested by Ralston, 2008). Second, we explore a socio-cultural influence that has more recently garnered interest in cross-cultural and international management studies; namely, *in-group favoritism* (Van de Vliert, 2011). Third, given more recent trends in development economics relating to the human development perspective (Sen, 1999) and the importance of understanding mechanisms for controlling corruption (Davis & Ruhe, 2003), we examine how these macro-level factors influence subordinate favor-seeking ethics at work. These latter two constructs represent newer perspectives in business ideology.

Socio-cultural predictor variables

Differences in value systems across societies have been a major topic in international management research (e.g., Smith, Dugans, & Trompenaars, 1996). Socio-cultural values can be defined as a set of shared principles, norms, and goals that are viewed as legitimate, acceptable, and effective in a social context (House, 2004). These societal-level values encapsulate the shared and socially desired norms that inform individual perceptions, decisions, and behaviors. A range of societal differences in ethical values, attitudes, and behaviors has been identified (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Schwartz, 1994; Smith et al., 1996) and attributed to societal variations (Leung, Bhagat, Buchan, Erez, & Gibson, 2005).

In our paper, we consider three societal-level, socio-cultural predictors: traditional/secular-rational, survival/self-expression, and in-group favoritism. The World Values Survey provides a comprehensive paradigm for conceptualizing such socio-cultural values based on major areas of human concern including religion, politics, economics, and social life (Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Two dimensions of particular relevance for the current study are traditional/secular-rational and survival/self-expression cultural values. Further, social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) provides the basis for the concept of in-group favoritism as a potentially relevant factor. In-group favoritism attempts to capture the values associated with and therefore the level of advantage given to social group members as compared to people perceived as out-group members.

Traditional/secular-rational Traditional/secular-rational values reflect the contrast between societies in which respect for religion, authority, and traditional family values are considered important versus those cultures where these attributes are considered less significant. Societies near the traditional pole tend to reject ideas such as divorce, abortion, euthanasia, and suicide, have high levels of national pride, and share a nationalistic outlook. With such values, there often comes an adherence to rules and a likelihood that differentiating what is “right” from “wrong” is less muddled because they are clearly dictated by religion and authority. In such traditional societies there is likely to be a clear differentiation between what is “good” (ethical) and what is “bad” (unethical) behavior. Conversely, individuals in more secular societies with more tolerance for differences and more possible diverse interpretations of ethicality, there is likely to be less of a clear differentiation between what constitutes ethical versus unethical influence behavior. Thus, we would expect a larger ethical differentiation index score in traditional societies vis-à-vis secular societies. Of the Asian societies in our study, the most traditional are Malaysia and Pakistan, while the least traditional (most secular) are Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Thus, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1a Ethical Differentiation Index scores will be significantly larger in more traditional values societies than in more secular values societies.

Research focused on the link between these societal values and the softer types of subordinate influence behaviors—image management—is rare. One example is Ralston et al.’s (2001) six-country study which found that image management was viewed as a slightly ethically negative influence behavior by Hong Kong Chinese

managers, but not by American, Dutch, German, Indian, and Mexican managers. It may be that in more traditional Chinese cultures where pre-existing relational networks exist (Tsui & Farh, 1997; Yeung & Tung, 1996), attempting to manage one's image in order to gain the favor of one's supervisor may be seen as pretentious. For example, if Jiao and Mr. Xiao did not share *guanxi* then Jiao's favor seeking may very well be interpreted as unacceptable and overstepping appropriate conventions of social exchange. It is the pre-existing relationship between Jiao's father and Mr. Xiao that set the foundation for the current day advantageous exchange of favors. The existence of similar significant relational patterns exists in various parts of Asia; for example, this is referred to as *kankei* in Japan and *kwankye* in Korea (Alston, 1989; Yeung & Tung, 1996).

Therefore, in traditional societies where custom and customary norms of social exchange guide behavior, requests for favors, self-serving exchanges, and softer behaviors geared at managing one's image to gain favor would likely be perceived as inappropriate. Hence, we would expect that image management would be viewed less positively in more traditional societies. In more secular societies where requests for favors and other social exchange are less governed by pre-existing social custom and norms, image management behaviors are likely to be perceived as more ethically acceptable. Thus, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1b Image management behaviors are perceived to be significantly more ethical in more secular values societies than in more traditional values societies.

Furthermore, the centrality of religion and authority for traditional societies creates distinctive priorities to serve the relevant authority. "Relevant" in that the authority serves the better well-being of one's in-group (Triandis, 1989). As such, in traditional societies what people perceive as ethically acceptable behavior at work may tend to be those subordinate influence behaviors that serve the relevant authority because these serve to ultimately protect the interests of one's in-groups. Engaging in self-serving behaviors at work may be perceived as countering the authority or as disobedient and may therefore pose a threat to the wellbeing of the in-group. Therefore, we would expect that self-serving behaviors at work would be viewed more negatively in traditional values societies. Hence, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1c Self-serving behaviors are perceived to be significantly more ethical in more secular values societies than in more traditional values societies.

Survival/self-expression The second values dimension, survival/self-expression, is closely related to the level of industrialization that polarizes certain societies from others. Societies close to the self-expression pole are primarily societies that have accumulated substantial levels of wealth and therefore individuals are less concerned with struggling for economic and physical security. Self-expression values prioritize quality of life issues such as environmental protection and tolerance of diversity including greater acceptability of minority groups, rising demands for participation in decision making in economic and political life, emphasis on hard work, interpersonal trust, and creativity. These societies have been described as post-materialist (Inglehart

& Baker, 2000), which reinforces the stage of wealth accumulation where attention can be turned beyond the securing of material goods.

Societies holding survival values are still struggling to “make ends meet.” Indeed these societies are in a low economic development phase and therefore are focused on materialistic needs and accumulation of basic goods (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Societies that hold survival values may epitomize an “anything goes” mentality to secure what is needed for survival. Individuals in these societies are likely to perceive a wide range of behaviors as ethical and therefore the distinction between “right” and “wrong” is likely to be less differentiated than it is in more self-expression values societies. Therefore, survival values societies, by endorsing such values, are likely to have a smaller ethical differentiation score than self-expression values societies. Therefore, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2a Ethical Differentiation Index scores will be significantly larger in more self-expression values societies than in more survival values societies.

In a society where survival values are salient, managing others’ perceptions of oneself is of paramount importance. Efforts to gain the admiration or assistance of others, as well as attempts to strengthen one’s familiarity with or utility for a superior become worthwhile. This suggests that engaging in the softer image management influence behaviors may be perceived as relatively more acceptable forms of subordinate influence behavior in survival societies than in self-expression societies. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2b Image management behaviors are perceived to be significantly more ethical in more survival values societies than in more self-expression values societies.

Furthermore, research suggests that in survival focused societies priorities are based on securing and maintaining economic and physical security as opposed to quality of life (Inglehart, 1997). An individual does not want to risk unemployment or be at a disadvantage at work because he/she is perceived as selfish or as engaging in self-serving behaviors. Therefore, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2c Self-serving behaviors are perceived to be significantly more ethical in more self-expression values societies than in more survival values societies.

In-group favoritism In-group favoritism is another socio-cultural value that has recently garnered interest in the cross-cultural management literature (e.g., Van de Vliert, 2011). The notion of in-group favoritism is derived from social identity theory that identifies it as a privileging of in-group interests over those of other groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Much of the work on in-group favoritism has been in the domain of social psychology with a focus on studying perceptions, attitudes, and biases (see Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002). However, Van de Vliert (2011: 495) describes in-group favoritism as a composite construct that is meant to capture a society’s “average level of advantageous treatment of members of a social group to which one belongs compared with outsiders.” As conceptualized by Van de Vliert (2011), in-group favoritism appears unique in

its focus on three separate relational levels: (1) favoring the nuclear family (familism); (2) favoring ones' relatives (nepotism); and (3) favoring ones' fellow nationals (compatriotism). For example, the relationship between Mr. Xiao and Jiao is a classic example of in-group favoritism whereby the initiation of Jiao's request and the corresponding granting of the favor by Mr. Xiao are based on a privileging of a specific in-group existing at a secondary relational level; namely, nepotism.

To date, there has been little research examining the influence of the different levels of in-group favoritism (see Fig. 2). However, we note that Van de Vliert's familialism measure is the in-group collectivism country values scores developed by the GLOBE values project (House et al., 2004). In this regard, Fu et al. (2004) studied the impact of in-group collectivism on managerial influence strategies at work. This study had a somewhat mixed set of results in that in-group collectivism was found to be positively related to "softer" relationship-based influence strategies as well as "harder" influence strategies such as assertiveness. As Fu et al. (2004) argued, in cultures with higher levels of in-group collectivist values, people are more likely to establish and focus on relationships with others, and these relationships serve as a basis for influencing others. In that they also found in-group collectivism to be positively associated with the use of harder influence strategies, these findings suggest there would be less differentiation between ethical and unethical influence tactics in high in-group collectivist societies.

In the present study, we assess the influence of in-group favoritism as developed by Van de Vliert (2011) that goes beyond solely looking at familialism to consider the interplay of different relational levels of in-group favoritism. For instance, Brewer and Yuki (2007) suggested that in considering in-group identities and resultant behaviors, there needs to be a finer-tuned differentiation between the various levels of social selves. They also proposed that this differentiation may assist in better understanding the roles of cultural values in shaping and defining social identity and its consequences for interaction and behavior in the workplace. On the one hand, we would expect that higher levels of in-group favoritism would lead to the dominance of a "we" social identity and therefore a higher value being placed on relational needs, goals, and priorities indicative of softer influence behaviors. However, the different relational levels within the in-group favoritism construct indicate dissimilar predictions regarding the ethicality of harder influence behaviors. For example, if individuals perceive only members who constitute the most intimate relational level (i.e., family) as part of the in-group, then members of the other relational levels (i.e., nepotism and compatriotism) would be perceived more as out-group members. Hence, "harder" influence behaviors (i.e., maliciously intended and self-serving) may be more acceptable in workplace settings because there is a favoring of, or fighting for, what is best for one's circumscribed familial in-group over the needs of the distant relatives, colleagues, and/or compatriots. This would suggest that in societies that hold in-group favoritism to be an important value, there may be less differentiation between ethical and unethical influence behaviors.

On the other hand, taking a view of one's in-group to be relational levels including friends, colleagues, and compatriots may result in less willingness to engage in more unethical influence strategies. From this perspective, one would

expect that societal in-group favoritism would be associated with greater differentiation between ethical and unethical influence behaviors. This logic would lead one to expect that in-group favoritism is likely to lead to a clear differentiation between what is ethical versus what is unethical (i.e., a greater ethical differentiation), a positive relationship with image management, and a negative relationship with self-serving subordinate influence behaviors. Therefore, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3a Ethical Differentiation Index scores will be significantly larger in societies with higher levels of in-group favoritism.

Hypothesis 3b Image management behaviors are perceived to be significantly more ethical in societies with higher levels of in-group favoritism.

Hypothesis 3c Self-serving behaviors are perceived to be significantly less ethical in societies with higher levels in-group favoritism.

Business ideology and subordinate influence ethics

From the crossvergence perspective, business ideology influences are equally important factors that shape a society's unique values system and resultant patterns of perceived ethicality of subordinate influence behaviors. We argue that it may be useful to draw from development economics instead of more traditional concepts of economic progress when examining favors and other forms of influence-attempts in Asia. Hence, our investigation of the influence of business ideology focuses on two factors: (1) societal development and (2) control of corruption within a society.

Ralston et al.'s (2006, 2008, 2009) conceptualization of business ideology consists of three interrelated macro-level influences; namely, political, economic, and technological. All three of these influences are closely related to business activity in a society and are therefore likely to shape perceptions of ethicality of workplace behaviors. However, each aspect can be framed differently, depending on the school of thought to which one ascribes. For the economic component of business ideology influences, most of the work to date has been dominated by a more classic approach where GDP is a catchall concept of economic progress/development. For example, Franke and Nadler (2008) examined the relationship between GDP per capita and ethical attitudes across 44 nations and found a negative relationship in 41 of the countries sampled. In the current study we bring to the forefront an alternative conceptualization of economic progress/development that is derived from development economics (Sen, 1990) and the rise of the *human development approach* to economics exemplified by the work of Sen (1990, 1999) and ul Haq (2010).

Human Development Index Sen (1999) suggested that the notion of “development” itself should be revisited to place greater emphasis on human development as opposed to solely emphasizing economic growth. Further, Sen (1999) argued for an index of “human capabilities” to provide a better evaluation of living standards and quality of life and therefore, ultimately, development. Working with ul Haq and

others, this led to the creation of the Human Development Index (HDI), which was introduced in the 1990 Human Development Report. The HDI is an index that captures three essential components of human life: (1) longevity in terms of average years of life; (2) knowledge, which refers to the formation of human capabilities; and (3) income, which is a proxy measure for the choices people have in putting their capabilities to use. This multi-faceted focus was substantially an effort to lessen an overly large emphasis on economic growth as the objective of development policies (Klugman, Rodríguez, & Choi, 2011).

Therefore, the HDI was designed to capture whether a society is “creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accord with their needs and interests.” Consequently, in contrast to the more classical economic progress conceptualizations, the HDI is an indication of societal development not solely grounded in economic terms. It attempts to capture a society’s average achievements in terms of health, knowledge/education, and standard of living to provide a more realistic sense of the societal development. The HDI is, in effect, a closer link to the day-to-day lives of individuals within these societies than a pure economic measure, and it is regarded as a more robust alternative to GDP per capita for measuring the relative developmental progress of a society. Further, it has international status and recognition as a United Nations-endorsed indicator (Bonini, 2008).

While no empirical research linking the level of societal human development (in the human capabilities sense) to the SIE could be found, a body of work, which links societal human development to ethical behavior, does exist. For example, Mauro (1995) found that unethical corrupt practices have a negative effect on the ratio of public education spending to GDP and the ratio of public health spending to GDP. Akçay (2006) also found a significant negative relationship between unethical corrupt practices and human development in a sample of 63 countries. The current study is interested in testing the obverse, the impact of societal human development on perceptions of the ethicality of subordinate influence ethics.

It is expected that in societies with higher human development, the range of things that individuals can do or be in life expands (ul Haq, 2010). In societies where a greater range of choices are available, it may be suggested that people have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living and therefore may be able to participate more fully in both work and personal realms. With greater achievements in human development, societies tend to focus greater attention on quality-of-life and well-being issues (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). There may also be a greater focus on codes, rules, policies and laws which protect the rights and freedoms of others. Internalization of such values and related rules would lead one to expect that societal development is likely to lead to a clear differentiation between what is ethical versus what is unethical (i.e., a higher score on the Ethical Differentiation Index). Therefore, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4a Ethical Differentiation Index scores will be significantly larger in more developed societies.

Moreover, in more developed societies where there is likely to be more protection of human and employee rights and more options for appeal and filing workplace grievances, there is likely to be less of a tendency to view both the soft as well as hard forms of influence behavior at work as ethical. In these contexts, the softer image

management behaviors are likely to be seen as trying to gain an unfair advantage, while harder self-serving behaviors are likely to be seen as undermining others' rights and freedoms and therefore more unethical. Therefore, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4b Image management behaviors are perceived to be significantly less ethical in more developed societies.

Hypothesis 4c Self-serving behaviors are perceived to be significantly less ethical in more developed societies

Control of corruption We also examine the influence of societal control of corruption on influence ethics. The effects of corruption can be wide ranging. Davis and Ruhe (2003) suggested that corruption can range from the misallocation of resources, disruption of economic development, public policy distortion to the degradation of the integrity of the societies business system. Despite potential long-term effects, the ethical evaluation of corrupt actions may not be the same for all observers given cultural and moral differences in corruption, bribery, and gift giving (Steidlmeier, 1999).

Corruption has been identified as the single greatest obstacle to economic and societal development because it distorts the rule of law, and weakens the institutional foundation on which economic growth occurs (Labelle, 2008). Research within the Asia Pacific region suggests that multi-national corporations' subsidiaries are less profitable in countries with higher levels of corruption (Lee & Hong, 2012). Formal institutions (e.g., government, courts, law enforcement agencies) function poorly and lack legitimacy in highly corrupt contexts (McCarthy et al., 2012). In effect, these authors argue that corruption creates an institutional void that allows for a wider variety of influence behaviors being viewed as acceptable (i.e., there will be a smaller differentiation between what is ethical and what is not ethical). The converse is also true in that the greater the control of corruption in a society, the greater the ethical differentiation. Therefore, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 5a Ethical Differentiation Index scores will be significantly larger in societies with greater control of corruption.

Corruption creates unique contextual demands that may necessitate individuals to look out for their own self-interest because if you do not take care of yourself no one else will. In corrupt societal contexts, behaviors that focus on benefiting oneself or the in-group may become legitimized as acceptable forms of social exchange. Indeed, it is conceivable that self-serving behaviors may form the basis for a social exchange "currency." For example, Jiao's self-serving request (debit) and Mr. Xiao's favor-giving (credit) may be viewed as a form of debit-credit exchange. In effect, subordinate influence behaviors may be perceived as a legitimate social exchange currency used as a means to secure work-related advantages or at least to avoid disadvantages in societies where corruption is high.

Examining the use of favors in the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, China), McCarthy et al. (2012) suggest that although formal institutions exist, they function poorly and

lack the legitimacy to be relied upon to achieve business goals. In the institutional void created by corruption, the authors argue that being successful in business necessitates relying on alternative means to accomplish one's goals, such as engaging in favors exchange as a "system" to replace the void in the system (Khanna & Palepu, 1997; Puffer, McCarthy, & Boisot, 2010).

This opens a myriad of behavioral potentialities that are dictated by the level of institutional void. For our study, this means that in societies with higher corruption levels there is a greater institutional void, and therefore a greater need to look out for oneself and potentially resort to informal influence strategies. Therefore, we propose that individuals in societies with greater control of corruption (i.e., lower levels of corruption) will engage in lower levels of both image management and self-serving behaviors to get ahead at work. Thus, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 5b Image management behaviors are perceived to be significantly less ethical in societies with greater control of corruption.

Hypothesis 5c Self-serving behaviors are perceived to be significantly less ethical in societies with greater control of corruption.

Methods

Sample

Our sample consisted of 4,325 managers and professionals in 11 societies in East and South Asia: China ($n = 1,079$), Hong Kong ($n = 154$), India ($n = 269$), Indonesia ($n = 132$), Malaysia ($n = 329$), Pakistan ($n = 338$), Singapore ($n = 938$), South Korea ($n = 283$), Taiwan ($n = 300$), Thailand ($n = 280$), and Vietnam ($n = 223$). The data were collected using a mail survey of managers and professionals in a cross-section of individuals and industries. The surveys were conducted in the 2001 to 2004 period, and the very large majority of respondents were from different companies in their countries (no more than five respondents per company). The average response rate was 23 %, with response rates ranging from 15 % to 43 %. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of study participants for each society.

Measures

The survey questionnaire was originally prepared in English and then translated into each of the native languages of the countries in the study. We used standard translation/back-translation procedures to translate the survey from English to the native language of a society (Maxwell, 1996). The one exception was India where the language of business is English and therefore the questionnaire was administered in English.

Subordinate influence ethics We used the SIE instrument (Ralston & Pearson, 2010) to assess participants' views of the ethicality of influence behaviors. The SIE instrument consists of 38 short scenario items that asks participants to "...indicate how acceptable [ethical] you think that your co-workers would consider each strategy as a means of

Table 1 Demographic and organizational characteristics of country samples ^a

	N	Age		Gender	Education		Position		Company size		Industry
		Mean	s.d.	(% male)	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.	(% manuf./resource)
China	1,079	31.92	7.61	60 %	3.68	1.02	2.02	.96	2.02	.78	28 %
Hong Kong	154	34.12	8.22	38 %	3.63	1.00	1.77	.96	1.88	.83	17 %
India	269	37.43	11.49	72 %	4.53	.81	2.75	.90	2.25	.74	34 %
Indonesia	132	37.09	7.47	75 %	n.a.		2.08	.89	2.28	.66	41 %
Malaysia	329	34.62	7.31	60 %	3.83	.45	2.15	.55	3.00	.00	100 %
Pakistan	338	32.51	8.84	87 %	4.50	.60	2.54	.85	2.25	.77	36 %
Singapore	938	34.95	9.61	51 %	3.80	1.02	1.89	1.04	1.96	.80	29 %
South Korea	283	39.50	9.16	80 %	4.17	.93	1.95	.96	2.35	.83	26 %
Taiwan	300	41.31	11.01	69 %	3.97	.97	2.24	1.15	2.23	.74	32 %
Thailand	280	37.12	9.89	42 %	4.29	.70	2.27	1.09	1.97	.71	20 %
Vietnam	223	38.58	9.11	69 %	n.a.		2.34	.90	1.89	.54	13 %
Total	4,325	35.23	9.38	62 %	3.94	.91	2.12	.98	2.14	.77	33 %

Coding for categorical variables as follows: Education level: 1 = 4 or fewer years completed, 2 = 5–8 years, 3 = 9–12 years, 4 = undergraduate, 5 = Master’s degree, 6 = Doctorate degree; Position level: 1 = professional, 2 = first level management, 3 = middle level management, 4 = upper level management; Company size: 1 = less than 100 employees, 2 = 100–1,000 employees, 3 = more than 1,000 employees; Industry: manufacturing and resource-based, services, and other

influencing superiors” (using an 8-point Likert-type scale, 1 = extremely unacceptable to 8 = extremely acceptable). Participants were instructed that it was their perceptions that were important, and that there were no right or wrong answers. This approach reduces the possibility of subjects “faking” desirable responses as occurs when asked to report on sensitive topics (Anastasi, 1982).

The four SIE dimensions are pro-organizational behaviors (6 items), image management (5 items), self-serving behaviors (6 items), and maliciously intended behaviors (5 items). Six of the 17 items focus specifically on the favor or favor-seeking behaviors. We conducted multi-group confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) to assess the cross-societal invariance of these measures (cf. Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998). Given that Chi-squared test statistics are sensitive to sample sizes and prone to Type II errors (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002), we focused on other model fit indices (CFI, NNFI, RMSEA). In particular, we used Cheung and Rensvold’s (2002) cutoff level for model fit comparisons with a change in $CFI \leq .010$ indicates a non-significant difference in model fit.

The baseline (unconstrained) CFA model showed an acceptable level of between-group configural invariance [$\chi^2_{(2233)} = 6616.18$, $CFI = .936$, $NNFI = .927$, $RMSEA = .073$] and metric invariance [factor loadings constrained: $\chi^2_{(2413)} = 7302.51$, $CFI = .930$, $NNFI = .926$, $RMSEA = .074$; $\Delta CFI = -.006$]. The scalar invariance model had a significant change in model fit [intercepts constrained: $\chi^2_{(2593)} = 11355.46$, $CFI = .885$, $NNFI = .887$, $RMSEA = .095$; $\Delta CFI = -.045$]. The partial scalar invariance model (12 intercepts unconstrained) had a more acceptable model fit [$\chi^2_{(2473)} = 7875.81$, $CFI = .921$, $NNFI = .919$, $RMSEA = .077$; $\Delta CFI = -.009$].

Given the number of unconstrained intercepts, which indicates cross-cultural differences in scale response style, we used within-subject standardized adjusted scores in analyses (per Hanges, 2004). For the 11 societies, the range of scale reliabilities was: pro-organizational $\rho = .58$ to $.85$; maliciously intended $\rho = .63$ to $.87$; image management $\rho = .64$ to $.82$; self-serving $\rho = .75$ to $.92$. Only one of the 44 scale reliabilities (pro-organizational $\rho = .58$ for Thailand) was below the $.60$ cutoff level used in previous cross-cultural research (e.g., Fu & Yukl, 2000; Parboteeah, Hoegl, & Cullen, 2009). To construct the ethical differentiation index, we subtracted the maliciously intended score from the pro-organizational score. The adjusted country means, standard deviations, and scale composite scale reliabilities (Raykov's ρ) for the three SIE measures are presented in Table 2.

Societal-level predictors For socio-cultural context, we used the World Values Survey scores for traditional/secular-rational and survival/self-expression cultural values (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). We used Van de Vliert's (2011) in-group favoritism index, which is derived from societal measures of compatriotism, nepotism, and familialism. We note that for the 11 societies in this study, the in-group favoritism scores were based on two of the three composite scores for five societies (Hong Kong, Malaysia, Pakistan, Thailand, Vietnam). Our measure of societal development was the Human Development Index (HDI) scores obtained from the United Nations (UN) Human Development Reports (<http://www.undp.org/>). In that the UN does not report data for Taiwan, comparable statistics were obtained from the Taiwan National Statistics website (<http://eng.stat.gov.tw/>). To measure societal control of corruption, we used the control of corruption indicator (estimates score from -2.50 to $+2.50$) from the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators database (<http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/>). Where there was longitudinal data available, we used society

Table 2 Subordinate influence ethics: Means, standard deviations, and scale reliabilities (Raykov's ρ)

	Ethical Differentiation Index			Image management			Self-serving		
	Mean	s.d.	ρ	Mean	s.d.	ρ	Mean	s.d.	ρ
China	4.25	.95	.76/.75	5.06	1.00	.76	2.65	.89	.82
Hong Kong	4.46	1.04	.85/.84	5.13	1.02	.75	2.82	1.10	.87
India	4.09	1.36	.78/.63	4.18	1.16	.80	2.80	1.30	.92
Indonesia	4.15	.87	.64/.81	4.97	1.04	.68	2.63	.80	.66
Malaysia	4.22	1.08	.72/.87	4.92	.92	.71	2.79	.99	.80
Pakistan	3.35	1.59	.70/.80	4.44	1.20	.71	3.45	1.44	.85
Singapore	4.43	1.00	.76/.86	4.75	1.00	.82	2.48	.99	.89
South Korea	4.28	.84	.79/.81	5.07	.92	.74	2.08	.63	.75
Taiwan	4.34	.89	.68/.78	5.46	1.00	.73	2.55	.91	.83
Thailand	4.66	.59	.58/.65	5.13	.78	.65	2.35	.72	.75
Vietnam	4.35	.75	.67/.75	4.88	.91	.64	2.54	.74	.75

Scale reliabilities for the Ethical Differentiation Index are for the component pro-organizational and maliciously intended measures, respectively

scores for the year data was collected. The society scores for these societal-level predictors are presented in Table 3.

Demographic and organizational characteristics We included a number of respondent characteristics as covariates in the analyses. With respect to personal demographics, these were: age (years), gender (1 = female, 0 = male), organizational position level (1 = professional/non-supervisor, 2 = first-level manager, 3 = middle-level manager, 4 = top-level manager), and education level (1 = 4 or fewer years completed, 2 = 5–8 years, 3 = 9–12 years, 4 = undergraduate university, 5 = Master's degree, 6 = Doctorate degree). Education level data was not collected for Thailand and Vietnam, so we assigned the total sample mean for respondents in these societies. In regards to respondents' organizations, these were: company size (1 = less than 100 employees, 2 = 100–1,000 employees, 3 = more than 1,000 employees) and industry sector (1 = manufacturing/natural resource-based, 0 = services).

Analyses

In that managers and professionals are nested within countries, we used hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) intercepts-as-outcomes procedures (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) to test the study hypotheses. The intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC) for the null models (three SIE dependent variables) indicated sufficient between-group variance to proceed with HLM analyses (9.02 % for the Ethical Differentiation Index, 7.35 % for image management behaviors, and 11.02 % for self-serving behaviors, all χ^2 significant at the $p < .001$ level).

HLM simultaneously analyzes data at the individual level (Level-1) and at the societal-level (Level-2). The Level-1 model estimates the relationships between individual-level covariates (age, gender, education, position level, company size, and industry) and the dependent variables (ethical differentiation, image management, and

Table 3 Societal socio-cultural and business ideology predictors

	Cultural values			Business ideology	
	Traditional/Secular	Survival/ Self-expression	In-group favoritism	Human development	Control of corruption
China	.80	-1.16	.51	.78	-.43
Hong Kong	1.20	-.98	-.24	.93	1.91
India	-.56	-.26	.34	.56	-.43
Indonesia	-1.07	-.50	.62	.68	-1.14
Malaysia	-.73	.09	-.25	.80	.40
Pakistan	-1.42	-1.25	-.32	.54	-.72
Singapore	-.64	-.28	-.04	.91	2.39
South Korea	1.13	-.55	.35	.90	.49
Taiwan	1.16	-1.18	.20	.90	.86
Thailand	-.64	.01	.36	.77	-.28
Vietnam	-.30	-.26	.47	.70	-.56

self-serving influence behaviors). The Level-2 model estimates the relationships for the societal predictors. In each HLM analysis, the Level-1 variables were groupmean-centered and Level-2 variables were grandmean-centered.

Given the number of societies in the study relative to the number of societal-level predictors, we estimated three separate HLM models with subsets of Level-2 variables (per Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). The Level-2 predictors in each set of HLM models were: (1) traditional/secular-rational and survival/self-expression cultural values; (2) in-group favoritism and human development; and (3) control of corruption. While the mean-centering procedure helps minimize potential multicollinearity among predictors, we also estimated HLM models separately for each Level-2 societal variable in the first and second models. These analyses yielded the same results (significant or not) as the models that had paired variables.

Results

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics of the study variables. Table 5 presents the results of the HLM analyses testing hypotheses regarding the influence of socio-cultural predictors (H1, H2, and H3) and the business ideology predictors (H4 and H5) on perceptions of the ethicality of subordinate influence ethics behaviors.

Consistent with H1b (traditional/secular values), image management behaviors were perceived to be more acceptable in secular values societies than in traditional values societies ($\gamma = .11, p < .01$). Inconsistent with H1a, societies with more secular values had larger ethical differentiation index scores than societies with more traditional values ($\gamma = .22, p < .001$). Inconsistent with H1c, self-serving behaviors were perceived to be more acceptable in traditional values societies than in secular values societies ($\gamma = -.27, p < .001$).

Consistent with H2a (survival/self-expression values), societies with more self-expression values had larger Ethical Differentiation Index scores than societies with more survival values ($\gamma = .58, p < .001$). Inconsistent with H2b, societal survival/self-expression values were not significantly related to the perceived acceptability of image management behaviors ($\gamma = .06, n.s.$). Inconsistent with H2c, self-serving behaviors were perceived to be more acceptable in survival values societies than in self-expression values societies ($\gamma = -.52, p < .001$). Consistent with H3b, in-group favoritism was positively related to the acceptability of image management behaviors ($\gamma = .27, p < .01$). Also, consistent with H3c it was negatively related to the acceptability of self-serving behaviors ($\gamma = -.48, p < .001$). Inconsistent with H3a, in-group favoritism values were not significantly related to ethical differentiation of influence behaviors ($\gamma = .06, n.s.$). Thus, in respect the societal cultural values and the perceived ethicality of influence behaviors, minimal support was found for H1 (traditional/secular values) and H2 (survival/self-expression values), and moderate support was found for H3 (in-group favoritism).

Consistent with H4a, societal development level was positively related to ethical differentiation of influence behaviors ($\gamma = 1.18, p < .001$). Also, consistent with H4c, societal development was negatively related to the acceptability of self-serving behaviors ($\gamma = -1.25, p < .001$). Inconsistent with H4b, societal development was positively, rather than negatively, related to acceptability of image management

Table 4 Descriptive statistics: Means, standard deviations, and correlations ^{a, b}

	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Ethical differentiation	4.25	1.07													
2. Image management	4.90	1.04	.25												
3. Self-serving	2.63	1.02	-.38	-.08											
4. Traditional/secular	-.03	.87	.09	.20	-.12										
5. Survival/self-expression	-.63	.48	.12	-.07	-.11	-.54									
6. In-group favoritism	.19	.30	.08	.10	-.12	.52	-.24								
7. Societal development	.79	.12	.19	.16	-.20	.43	.16	-.08							
8. Control of corruption	.42	1.18	.12	-.01	-.10	-.09	.37	-.53	.75						
9. Age	35.23	9.38	.07	-.05	-.05	.02	.11	.02	.06	.03					
10. Gender	.61	.48	-.07	-.03	.00	-.02	-.08	.01	-.15	-.14	.13				
11. Education level	3.94	.91	-.01	-.01	.01	-.14	.05	-.05	-.20	-.11	.06	.10			
12. Position level	2.12	.97	.02	-.01	.02	-.09	.00	-.00	-.22	-.15	.41	.18	.22		
13. Company size	2.14	.77	.03	.03	.02	-.06	.09	-.12	-.06	-.07	.11	.08	.13	.05	
14. Industry: manuf./resources	.33	.47	.01	-.02	.01	-.12	.14	-.19	-.02	-.01	.09	.10	-.04	.11	.21

^a Sample size: $N = 4,325$ (11 societies)

Correlations computed by assigning societal-level variables to each respondent within a given country
Country samples counterweighted by sample size so that each weighted equally

Correlations $r \geq .05$ significant at $p < .001$ level, $r \geq .03$ significant at $p < .01$ level

^b Coding for categorical variables as follows. Gender: 1 = male, 0 = female; Education level: 1 = 4 or fewer years; 2 = 5–8 years; 3 = 9–12 years; 4 = Bachelor's degree; 5 = Master's degree; 6 = Doctorate degree; Position level: 1 = professional, 2 = first level manager, 3 = middle level manager, 4 = upper level manager; Company size: 1 = less than 100 employees, 2 = 100–1,000 employees, 3 = more than 1,000 employees; Industry sector: 1 = manufacturing and resource-based, 0 = services

Table 5 Hierarchical linear modeling results

	Ethical differentiation		Image management		Self-serving	
	β	<i>s.e.</i>	β	<i>s.e.</i>	β	<i>s.e.</i>
Societal-level models						
Model 1						
Traditional/secular	.22***	.02	.11**	.03	-.27***	.02
Survival/self-expression	.58***	.03	.06	.06	-.52***	.03
Model 2						
In-group favoritism	.06	.09	.27**	.06	-.48***	.06
Societal development	1.18***	.16	.60*	.21	-1.25***	.13
Model 3						
Control of corruption	.10***	.01	-.02	.02	-.05*	.02
Individual-level models						
Age	.002	.004	-.01***	.001	-.001	.004
Gender	-.09	.05	-.04 [†]	.02	-.03	.05
Education level	-.02	.04	-.02	.04	.04	.04
Position level	.07 [†]	.03	.06*	.02	-.01	.03
Company size	.09*	.04	.06*	.02	.01	.04
Industry: manufacturing/resource-based	.05	.06	-.07	.04	-.02	.05
Intercept	4.21***	.09	4.92**	.08	2.65***	.10

[†] $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

behaviors ($\gamma = .60, p < .05$). In sum, moderate support was found for H4 regarding societal development level and influence behaviors.

Consistent with H5a, societal control of corruption was positively related to the ethical differentiation of influence behaviors ($\gamma = .10, p < .001$). Also, consistent with H5c it was negatively related to the perceived ethicality of self-serving behaviors ($\gamma = -.05, p < .05$). Inconsistent with H5b, societal control of corruption was not significantly related to the perceived ethicality of image management behaviors ($\gamma = -.02, n.s.$). Hence, moderate support was found for H5 regarding the societal control of corruption and influence behaviors.

Discussion

The current study reinforces the suggestion that the perceptions of the ethicality of subordinate favor-seeking/influence behaviors are shaped by the crossvergence of societal-level contextual variables consisting of both socio-cultural and business ideological influences (Ralston et al., 1997, 2009). Thus, for our scenario, the perceived ethicality of Jiao's favor-seeking behavior will most likely be determined by the integrated effect of her socio-cultural and business ideology context. We were particularly interested in examining how these various societal-level influences shape subordinate influence behaviors spanning both the “softer”

side (image management behavior) and “harder” side (self-serving behavior) of favors-seeking. Further, we were also interested in examining the degree to which a society differentiates ethical from unethical behavior (i.e., societal scores on the ethical differentiation index) and whether this differentiation is shaped by focal macro-level factors.

Our results suggest specific profiles of Asian societies that tend to: (1) differentiate clearly between “good” and “bad” societal ethics (see Table 6); (2) perceive softer image management behavior as ethically acceptable (see Table 7); and (3) perceive harder self-serving behavior as ethically acceptable (see Table 8). We begin the discussion by considering each of these profiles in turn.

Societal profiles for ethical differentiation

As illustrated in Table 6, Asian societies that can be characterized as having a *high ethical differentiation profile* tend to have secular values and higher levels of both societal development and control of corruption. Hong Kong and Singapore are closest to this societal profile. It is in these societies where the Jiao–Mr. Xiao social exchange (favor seeking and granting) would likely be perceived as less ethically acceptable. Conversely, Pakistan, India, and Indonesia have a *low ethical differentiation profile* with traditional values as well as lower levels of societal development and control of corruption. It is in these societies where the Jiao–Mr. Xiao social exchange would likely be perceived as more ethically acceptable.

The inclusion of the survival/self-expression value within this profile appears to be somewhat problematic in the Asian context. This is primarily because most of the sampled Asian societies are more on the survival values half of this values continuum (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Hence, the lack of societies in our sample that represent strong self-expression values may have limited the test of this prediction for societal ethical differentiation. Further, our results suggest that in-group favoritism does not appear to impact the Ethical Differentiation Index scores of our sampled societies. In developing this hypothesis, we discussed how there may be different predictions depending on which relational level was in focus. To address this question, we conducted subsidiary HLM analyses using the three component measures that Van De Vliert (2011) used to construct the in-group favoritism index. Whereas all 11 societies had nepotism scores, analyses were conducted with a reduced set of societies for compatriotism ($N = 8$, missing scores for Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Thailand), and for familialism ($N = 9$, missing scores for Pakistan and Vietnam). We found that the degree of ethical differentiation was positively related to compatriotism ($t = 3.919, p < .01$) but negatively related to nepotism ($t = -6.50, p < .001$). While Fu et al.'s (2004) findings suggested that familialism (in-group collectivism) would be negatively related to ethical differentiation, we found a non-significant relationship ($t = .105$). These findings indicate that societal differentiation between ethical and unethical behaviors may depend on the relational level that is in focus. Specifically, this ethical differentiation is greater in societies where there is high or moderately high compatriotism and low nepotism (e.g., Singapore) whereas it is least developed in societies where there is low compatriotism and intermediate nepotism (e.g., Pakistan) as well as high compatriotism and low nepotism (e.g., India). Although limited by the small number of societies, one implication is that further research is

Table 6 Ethical Differentiation Index: Country rankings for relevant societal predictors

Ethical Differentiation Index		Traditional/Secular		Survival/Self-expression		Societal development		Control of corruption	
Society	Score	Society	Score	Society	Score	Society	Score	Society	Score
Thailand	4.66	Hong Kong	1.20	Malaysia	.09	Hong Kong	.93	Singapore	2.39
Hong Kong	4.46	Taiwan	1.16	Thailand	.01	Singapore	.91	Hong Kong	1.91
Singapore	4.43	S. Korea	1.13	India	-.26	S. Korea	.90	Taiwan	.86
Vietnam	4.35	China	.80	Vietnam	-.26	Taiwan	.90	S. Korea	.49
Taiwan	4.34	Vietnam	-.30	Singapore	-.28	Malaysia	.80	Malaysia	.40
S. Korea	4.28	India	-.56	Indonesia	-.50	China	.78	Thailand	-.28
China	4.25	Thailand	-.64	S. Korea	-.55	Thailand	.77	China	-.43
Malaysia	4.22	Singapore	-.64	Hong Kong	-.98	Vietnam	.70	India	-.43
Indonesia	4.15	Malaysia	-.73	China	-1.16	Indonesia	.68	Vietnam	-.56
India	4.09	Indonesia	-1.07	Taiwan	-1.18	India	.56	Pakistan	-.72
Pakistan	3.35	Pakistan	-1.42	Pakistan	-1.25	Pakistan	.54	Indonesia	-1.14

needed to reconcile these disparate results for the subcomponents of the in-group favoritism index.

Societal profiles for the acceptability of image management

As shown in Table 7, societal profiles for high acceptability of image management behaviors include those that tend to have secular and high in-group favoritism values, as well as high societal development scores. Hong Kong and Taiwan fit this profile

Table 7 Image management dimension: Country rankings for relevant societal predictors

Image management dimension		Traditional/Secular		In-group favoritism		Societal development	
Society	Score	Society	Score	Society	Score	Society	Score
Taiwan	5.46	Hong Kong	1.20	Indonesia	.62	Hong Kong	.93
Hong Kong	5.13	Taiwan	1.16	China	.51	Singapore	.91
Thailand	5.13	S. Korea	1.13	Vietnam	.47	S. Korea	.90
S. Korea	5.07	China	.80	Thailand	.36	Taiwan	.90
China	5.06	Vietnam	-.30	S. Korea	.35	Malaysia	.80
Indonesia	4.97	India	-.56	India	.34	China	.78
Malaysia	4.92	Thailand	-.64	Taiwan	.20	Thailand	.77
Vietnam	4.88	Singapore	-.64	Singapore	-.04	Vietnam	.70
Singapore	4.75	Malaysia	-.73	Hong Kong	-.24	Indonesia	.68
Pakistan	4.44	Indonesia	-1.07	Malaysia	-.25	India	.56
India	4.18	Pakistan	-1.42	Pakistan	-.32	Pakistan	.54

most closely with secular values, high societal development, and intermediate (rather than high) in-group favoritism values. Conversely, the profile for low acceptability of image management behaviors is a society with more traditional values, low in-group favoritism as well as low societal development. India and Pakistan have the lowest acceptability of image management behaviors. Whereas Pakistan is a society with all these characteristics, India is a close fit with the exception of having intermediate in-group favoritism values.

Societal profiles for acceptability of self-serving behaviors

As shown in Table 8, the profile for high acceptability of self-serving behaviors is a society that has traditional, survival, and low in-group favoritism values, as well as low societal development and low control of corruption. This societal profile depicts Pakistan, which has the highest self-serving behaviors score. Conversely, South Korea had the lowest self-serving behaviors score but there were mixed results in terms of fitting this societal profile. Consistent with this societal profile, South Korea has secular and higher in-group favoritism values, high societal development, and intermediate (but positive) control of corruption although this is a low survival (rather than self-expression) values society.

An extension to these societal profiles of influence ethics perspectives would be exploring the interaction effects between the various macro-level factors, as has been suggested as a fruitful area of future research within management studies (Klein & Kozlowski, 2000; Klein, Tosi, & Cannella, 1999). We concur and provide the following scenario as one potential area for exploration. It may be that in traditional societies with survival values there are different patterns of the perceived ethicality of subordinate influence behaviors than in traditional societies with self-expression values. We propose that the earlier societal profile would have a smaller Ethical Differentiation Index than the latter one.

Beyond the suggestion of these societal-level profiles that would likely shape the tendency of observers within a particular society to interpret Jiao's behavior as more or less ethically acceptable, our research suggests a number of interesting points that may provide directions for future research. In the following sections we discuss our findings further and use this as a basis to advance other directions for future research.

Favors and the harder vis-à-vis softer forms of subordinate influence behaviors

This study of favors and other forms of subordinate influence behaviors focused on the bottom-up social exchange relationship between managers/professionals and their supervisor/boss. Subordinate influence behaviors have previously been conceptualized along a continuum whereby pro-organizational behaviors are conceptually more likely to be perceived as ethically acceptable when compared to maliciously intended forms of subordinate influence behaviors (Ralston et al., 2009; Ralston & Pearson, 2010). In the current paper, we introduce a second conceptual continuum following this soft-to-hard logic (see Fig. 1) as opposed to the one denoting a continuum of ethicality. The harder forms of favor-seeking represent more definitive actions that multiple observers are more likely to interpret similarly and view as intentional. The softer forms of favor-seeking represent more subtle forms of influence behaviors that

Table 8 Self-serving dimension: Country rankings for relevant societal predictors

Self-serving dimension	Traditional/Secular		Survival/Self-expression		In-group favoritism		Societal development		Control of corruption	
	Society	Score	Society	Score	Society	Score	Society	Score	Society	Score
Pakistan	Pakistan	-1.42	Pakistan	-1.25	Pakistan	-.32	Pakistan	.54	Indonesia	-1.14
Hong Kong	Indonesia	-1.07	Taiwan	-1.18	Malaysia	-.25	India	.56	Pakistan	-.72
India	Malaysia	-.73	China	-1.16	Hong Kong	-.24	Indonesia	.68	Vietnam	-.56
Malaysia	Thailand	-.64	Hong Kong	-.98	Singapore	-.04	Vietnam	.70	China	-.43
China	Singapore	-.64	S. Korea	-.55	Taiwan	.20	Thailand	.77	India	-.43
Indonesia	India	-.56	Indonesia	-.50	India	.34	China	.78	Thailand	-.28
Taiwan	Vietnam	-.30	Singapore	-.28	S. Korea	.35	Malaysia	.80	Malaysia	.40
Vietnam	China	.80	India	-.26	Thailand	.36	Taiwan	.90	S. Korea	.49
Singapore	S. Korea	1.13	Vietnam	-.26	Vietnam	.47	S. Korea	.90	Taiwan	.86
Thailand	Taiwan	1.16	Thailand	.01	China	.51	Singapore	.91	Hong Kong	1.91
S. Korea	Hong Kong	1.20	Malaysia	.09	Indonesia	.62	Hong Kong	.93	Singapore	2.39

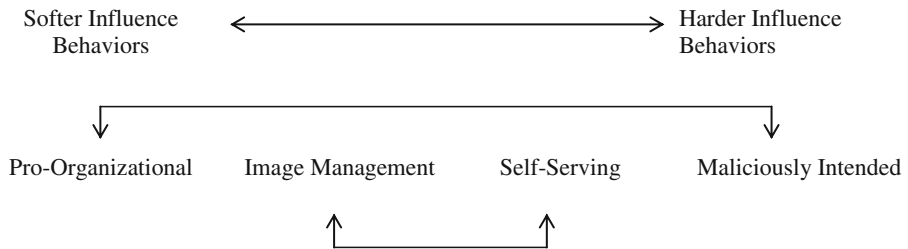


Fig. 1 Continuum of subordinate influence behaviors

observers could interpret in a multitude of ways and therefore the perceived intention is not likely to be as clear-cut. The implications of viewing favor-seeking behavior as intentional or as “open to interpretation” may have important implications for interpersonal reactions as well as future social exchange events. An interesting question to consider in the context of this latter continuum is whether a subordinate’s choice of using the harder or the softer forms of favor-seeking influence is actually a manifestation of the same intention or whether the intention also varies. It could be that the same intention in harsher contexts necessitates a harder behavioral manifestation to get the same result. Future research could explore these nuances related to intentions, perceptions of intentions, and perceived ethicality of hard and soft favor-seeking behaviors.

Favors and other forms of social exchange in Asia

Many of the Asian countries in our sample are on a path of economic and socio-cultural development (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). As suggested by the crossvergence model (Ralston, 2008), this development may result in shifts in societal values and therefore in the general context in which favors and other forms of employee behaviors are exchanged. Hence, a useful future research direction could be a larger-scale longitudinal study in Asian societies to track the emergence of new patterns of societal values and ultimately managerial and employee behavior.

Asia as a relationship-centered context Jiao’s favor-seeking and Mr. Xiao’s favor-giving behavior occurred in a societal context that may be characterized as largely relational. This relationship-centered context creates a level of acceptability of favors that may be indicative of the Asian socio-cultural context. At the individual level of analysis, it may be that favor seeking is normalized and that, consequently, an expectation of favor-giving on the part of Mr. Xiao exists. Indeed, it may be that if Mr. Xiao fails to grant the transfer his behavior will be perceived as unethical in that the pre-existence of exchange-relationships (*guanxi*) provides a basis (e.g., “personal-history”) for social exchange. This interpretation of the Jiao–Mr. Xiao social exchange, we believe, may be too simplistic. A more sophisticated examination of the social exchange should consider macro-level factors. For example, viewing in-group favoritism as a socio-cultural contextual factor, in conjunction with another salient macro-level factor (i.e., relationship-centered culture), suggests that an understanding of the Jiao–Mr. Xiao social exchange requires multi-level analysis.

Furthermore, the salience of relationships within many Asian societies has been well documented, particularly those with a Confucian legacy (Edfelt, 2010). There is

a great deal of emphasis on social and relational interactions constituting a relationship-centered world where social order and stability are largely dependent on properly differentiated relational roles (King, 1991). These differentiated relationships serve as a basis to guide one's actions and reactions in relation to others. Tsui and Farh (1997) described three salient relational levels that exist in a particular Asian context, namely, China. Interestingly, the three relational levels captured in Van de Vliert's (2011) in-group favoritism construct correspond closely to these three levels (see Fig. 2).

Tsui and Farh (1997) suggested that in China there are three basic types of relationships, each characterized by different in-group membership. The most intimate relational level is the *Chia-Jen* (e.g., family, lineage group, regional clan) where the welfare of the family members is part of a person's duty. The rules of social exchange here are that a person may try to help others with little or no expectation of return in the future (Tsui & Farh, 1997). This has been described as *kinship guanxi* (Bond & Hwang, 1986), which corresponds to the first level in Fig. 2. The second relational level is the *Shou-Jen* (e.g., friend, schoolmate, and classmates) and it is this level that fits most closely in describing the relationship between Jiao and Mr. Xiao. In this relationship, the principle of *renqin* (i.e., social obligation or interpersonal favors) is at play and reciprocity is assumed (Tsui & Farh, 1997). This may be described perhaps as *relationship guanxi* which corresponds to the second level in Fig. 2.

Both the first and second relational levels involve a past relationship and a continuation of relational connection between parties. The third relational level is *Shen-Jen* and this involves relationship with strangers or mere acquaintances. No previous meaningful relationship exists and there is no duty, obligation or expectation of relational maintenance. Although Tsui and Farh (1997) focused on China, research suggests that relationships are central across many Asian societies (Edfelt, 2010). Centralizing the notion of relationship-centered perceptions appears to be a promising direction to guide future research on favors and other forms of subordinate influence behaviors.

One additional point relating to a relational perspective is that favor-seeking and favor-giving may not always be two sides of the same relational coin. Alternate relationships between seeking-and-giving are possible. For example, Jiao may have sent the gift to Mr. Xiao with no pre-existing relational basis. In this case, Jiao's behavior may very well have been intended as a bribe and Mr. Xiao's signature a sign of the acceptance of the bribe. As suggested by our findings, perceptions of the ethicality of favor-seeking may be shaped by socio-cultural and business ideological factors. As such, one direction for future research would be to examine how the

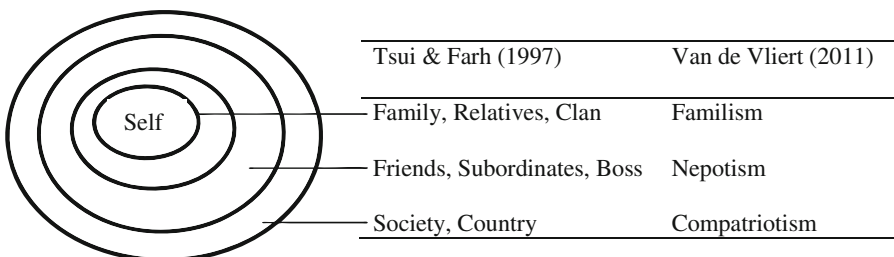


Fig. 2 Relational levels of interdependent self and in-group favoritism

meaning of various patterns of social exchange (not just perceptions of ethicality) may also be shaped by specific socio-cultural and business ideological manifestations.

The crossvergence model and cross-fertilization

Within the theoretical framework of crossvergence, our examination of societal contexts in terms of business ideology and socio-cultural values confirmed the utility of adopting a wider conceptualization of development beyond income level and economic growth. Indeed, adopting a human development approach appears to be a promising direction for future research on social-exchange at work. Exploring the influence of human development subcomponents on subordinate influence ethics may also prove interesting. ul Haq (1995) separately examined the economic and the development components for 173 countries and noted that only four of these countries had an equal ranking on both the HDI and GDP per capita income. Although one would expect that higher income levels denote more societal development because of a higher investment in educational and/or health care systems and therefore a higher quality of life, this was not always the case. The unequal match between income and development levels suggested that perhaps income was not being invested in education and healthcare for the greater society but was being spent elsewhere, possibly in ways that did not contribute to the common good. This sparked interest in exploring more closely the contribution of the non-income components of the HDI to societal human development. Initial research suggests that societal development occurs even without the benefit of rapid economic growth (Choi, Heger, Pineda, & Rodriguez, 2011). Future research may therefore focus on exploring the impact of the income versus non-income components of societal human development on the perceived ethicality of favors and other forms of social exchange in the business world.

Further, the current study suggests the utility of expanding crossvergence models to include more societal level factors drawn from disciplines outside of management and international business studies. Our study, in part, was an attempt to move beyond our own “ivory tower” and toward more cross-fertilization of scholarship by integrating work from various disciplines. We began with our neighbors in the social sciences (international leadership studies, political science, and development economics) but other cross-disciplinary dialogues may be promising and the possibilities are numerous.

Limitations

Though the SIE is applicable to favor-seeking behaviors, it is a concept and measure that has been developed and operationalized to reference behaviors beyond solely favor-seeking. As such, the results of the research concern behaviors not only related to favors. Whereas this cross-cultural study focused on upward influence behaviors, to date, most of the research on influence strategies directed top-down and laterally has been conducted in Western societies with some cross-cultural comparisons between the US and Hong Kong or China (e.g., Flynn, 2003; Fu & Yukl, 2000; Schermerhorn & Bond, 1991; Yukl & Falbe, 1990; Yukl, Guinan, & Sottolano, 1995).

Hence, one direction for future cross-cultural research would be to focus on downward as well as on horizontal influence behaviors across a wider range of societies in Asia.

Concluding thoughts: The story of Jiao

Our scenario about Jiao is a classic example of bottom-up social exchange within a work setting. As suggested by the results of this study, the interpretation of her behavior will largely be shaped by where in the world she lives and works. Indeed, what is perceived as ethically acceptable derives from a “crossvergence” whereby the socio-cultural (e.g., traditional/secular; survival/self-expression, in-group favoritism) and business ideology (e.g., human development and control of corruption) influences shape perceptions of the acceptability of subordinate influence ethics and/or favors sought and given.

In sum, the transfer that Jiao seeks and the means she uses to attain it is but one example of the multitude of similar stories played out every day in the business world. Understanding these informal interpersonal processes, which are not described or defined in any company manuals, are crucial for a company to function effectively in the global work world. And, while research interest in studying these processes has increased, there remain a plethora of interesting topics related to influence and favors yet to pursue in this substantially unexplored segment of international business research. Thus, you may be doing yourself a *favor* to be one who takes up this exploration.

Appendix: Description and items of the Subordinate Influence Ethics (SIE) dimensions

Ethical Differentiation Index = (Pro-organizational ethics – Maliciously intended ethics)

Pro-organizational ethics behavior may be defined as the “*organizational person*” approach to gain influence in that these behaviors reflect those that are typically prescribed and/or sanctioned by organizations for their subordinates. These may be viewed as behaviors that tend to be directly beneficial to the organization.

- ask to be given the responsibility for an important project.
- behave in a manner that is seen as appropriate in the company.
- demonstrate the ability to get the job done.
- help subordinates to develop their skills so that the subordinates, in turn, will be in a position to help them attain their objectives.
- maintain good working relationships with other employees, even if they dislike these other employees.
- work overtime, if necessary, to get the job done.

Maliciously intended ethics behavior may be defined as the “*burn, pillage, and plunder*” approach to gain influence in that they are intended to directly hurt others and/or the organization, to facilitate personal gain. These behaviors are the extreme of self-serving behaviors, and in many industrialized societies these behaviors would also be considered illegal.

- make anonymous, threatening phone calls to psychologically stress a competitor for a promotion.
- offer sexual favors to a superior.
- steal secret corporate documents and give them to another company in return for a better job at the other company.
- threaten to give valuable company information to someone outside the organization if their demands are not met.
- try to create a situation where a competitor for a promotion might be caught using illegal drugs or engaging in some other illegal activity.

Image management ethics behavior may be defined as subtle actions that an individual may use to influence his/her superiors with the objective being personal gain.

- attempt to act in a manner that they believe will result in others admiring them.
- identify and work for an influential superior who could help them get an advancement.
- learn the likes and dislikes of important people in the organization in order to avoid offending these people.
- use their technical expertise to make the superior dependent upon them.
- volunteer for undesirable tasks to make themselves appreciated by the superior.

Self-serving ethics behavior may be defined as the “*it’s me first*” approach to gain influence in that these behaviors show self-interest being of paramount importance, and thus being above the interests of others and the organization. Whether these behaviors help or harm the organization is subject to interpretation and may be determined by the situation.

- blame another for their own mistakes
- spread rumors about someone or something that stands in the way of their advancement.
- take credit for a good job that was done by their subordinates.
- try to influence the boss to make a bad decision, if that decision would help them to get ahead.
- use their network of friends to discredit a person competing with them for a possible promotion.
- withhold information to make someone else look bad.

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