This study identifies approaches to managerial influence in the People's Republic of China and examines the reflection of cultural themes in these approaches. Forty-eight factory directors from state-owned enterprises completed a survey in which they reported what they would say to workers in obligatory and nonobligatory work situations. Descriptive coding was used to develop message category systems for each situation. A more interpretive form of analysis was used to identify how the cultural themes of values, political ideology, and changing managerial roles were reflected in the influence approaches reported. The interrelated cultural values of group-centeredness, hierarchy, and face concern were reflected most often, followed by political ideology and changing managerial roles. Results reveal how managerial influence in China is best understood within the relational, political, and economic contexts in which it occurs.

Approaches to Managerial Influence in the People's Republic of China

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"Persuasion is used in helping workers to correct their shortcomings. If there are differences of opinion, I decide. I explain my position. They express disagreement but they'll do it my way."
Factory Director – 3,200 workers, Hunan Province

"If it happens that my decision is unpopular, it's because I didn't explain it well enough. So, I'll wait so they can understand. Then I will explain more."
Factory Director – 700 workers, Zhejiang Province

"The workers' union tells me what the workers need; what they're thinking. I communicate to workers too via work union representatives. They get them [the workers] to accept my plan so they will do the work willingly."
Factory Director – 2,800 workers, Hunan Province

"If we are having some difficulty implementing our yearly plans, [Communist Party] members give workers education. [This includes saying things like] 'Don't complain. Work harder.'"[1]
Factory Director – 2,300 workers, Hunan Province

While the study of persuasion and argumentation has not been widely emphasized in the People's Republic of China (Becker, 1991), preliminary evidence suggests that Chinese managers still view the practice of persuasion as important and useful in motivating employees and securing compliance with factory policies (Krone, Garrett, & Chen, 1992). Since all human communication is touched and shaped by culture (Hall, 1976), managerial approaches to per-

The Journal of Business Communication, Volume 34, Number 3, July 1997, pages 289-315
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suasion in China reflect and sustain values that underlie a Chinese world view. It is impossible to separate the expression of Chinese cultural values from day-to-day managerial approaches to persuasion (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, Neujen, Ohayv, & Sanders, 1990; Laurent, 1983). Still, as the above quotations suggest, the effects of cultural values on persuasion are not monolithic. For a variety of reasons, not all Chinese managers will approach persuasion in the same way.

The present study extends the study of persuasion in China by examining cultural themes that are expressed in factory directors' reports of what they say to influence their employees in every day situations. Specifically, it explores the ways in which factory directors persuade their employees to comply with obligatory organizational requirements and nonobligatory organizational preferences.

Chinese Culture and Managerial Influence

Fundamental to Chinese culture is an Eastern world view that fosters a set of basic beliefs regarding the nature of various forces including the universe and one's place in it (Dodd, 1995; Kim, 1991). Chinese cultural values emerge from and sustain an Eastern world view and pattern approaches to all communication including managerial influence. The terms managerial "influence" and "persuasion" will be used interchangeably throughout this research. As understood in the West, "influence" is an expansive concept that refers to the generalized ability to change the actions of others in some predetermined manner (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Relatedly, "persuasive communication" consists of messages that are intended to shape, reinforce, or change the responses of another (Miller, 1980). The ensuing discussion will address the role of Chinese cultural values, political ideology, and management style in the approaches managers take to persuade their employees.

Cultural Values

Interrelated cultural values emerge from an Eastern world view. Those that are particularly relevant to understanding work-related communication patterns include: an interconnected sense of self, the importance of hierarchy and concerns for face. All of these are expected to be reflected somehow in Chinese managers' approaches to persuasion.

An Eastern world view and Chinese culture cultivate an interconnected sense of self. Through the family, children learn the importance of loyalty, obedience, and filial piety within a role-bound network. In the family unit, children learn to restrain their individuality and maintain harmony (Hofstede & Bond, 1988). The social order of the family then serves as the prototype for conduct in all Chinese organizations (Chen & Chung, 1994). Over time, individuals continue to subordinate them-

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selves to the group, the community, and the state and in doing so, sustain a social order based on hierarchy. Thus, from an early age, a strong sense of group identification is fostered. Individual achievement is made possible by group effort and is, therefore, a source of group honor. Likewise, individual misconduct is a source of group shame since the group must have allowed it to happen (Hui, 1990; Nevis, 1983). Thus, the experience of shame is an organizing feature of group-centered cultures (Dodd, 1995).

The deep cultural forces that cultivate an interdependent sense of self also construct a social order based on hierarchy (Kim, 1991). An essential element of Confucianism, the virtue of "correct behavior" (li) involves learning to conform to the standards of behavior that are appropriate to social roles in life (Gong, 1989). Superiors in a social hierarchy are to look after the needs of their subordinates, while subordinates are to display respect and deference toward their superiors. When subordinates in organizational settings deviate from role requirements, an appropriate managerial response is to educate or reeducate them concerning their role-bound duties (Ralston, Gustafson, Elsass, Cheung, & Terpstra, 1992). Because of the simultaneous emphasis on unity and strict conformity to a hierarchical social order, Chinese managers are positioned both at the top of a pyramid and at the center of a web of interconnected relationships. In China, managerial influence would be understood as a process that exists in the context of these relationships (Varner & Beamer, 1995).

Finally, while members of all cultures display some concern for "face," the Chinese are particularly sensitive to face concerns (Hu, 1944; Hu & Grove, 1991; Redding & Ng, 1982). This is reflected in their use of implicit, high-context communication in which most of a message's information is either embedded in the context or internalized in the person (Hall, 1976). This type of communication is consistent with a group-centered orientation in that it succeeds in sustaining and avoids threatening long-standing, on-going relationships (Varner & Beamer, 1995). To cause another (or one's group) to lose face is a source of shame in Chinese culture and can be avoided by communicating in ways that avoid embarrassing another person (Varner & Beamer, 1995). Indeed, in particularly delicate situations (for example, interpersonal conflicts or asking for a big favor), the threat to face is so great that a third party is called upon to assist in the persuasive attempt (Hsu, 1981; Ma, 1992). Since persuasion of any kind is inherently face-threatening, managerial approaches to persuasion in China are likely to reflect a high concern for maintaining both self-face and other-face. For instance, managers might attempt to influence their employees in ways that avoid divisiveness (Ting-Toomey, 1985; Chua & Gudykunst, 1987).

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Political Ideology

A world view and values can be understood as the deep, psychological structures that serve as the cultural basis for political ideology. Given its nature, a world view is resistant to human engineering and changes very slowly over time. Political ideology is a malleable expression of cultural world view and is much more subject to human manipulation. The dominant, political ideology in China today is a form of Communism internally referred to as Socialism. Chinese political ideology espouses a concern for the welfare of the whole (that is, the work unit, the factory, the state itself) rather than for personal loss or gain. Theoretically, the state and all its properties are owned collectively by the people and everyone should strive to serve the people. In return, people can assume that the state will provide for them and their families, in exchange for their work efforts. According to this philosophy, self-oriented behavior must be corrected through an educational process that re-emphasizes the need to behave responsibly so as to help maintain the welfare of the factory and the society as a whole (Howard, 1988; Yang, 1989). Approaches to managerial influence in China are not a-political, but rather reflect the political ideology of the times, at least to some extent.

Transition in Management Style

Chinese management styles are in a state of transition due to system, economic, and personal forces. Between 1949 and 1979, the Communist Party was a very influential force in the Chinese workplace. Beginning in 1979, however, a "factory director responsibility system" was instituted that represented a shift away from a singular emphasis on political, ideological purification toward a more balanced approach with a parallel emphasis on production. Rather than being subordinate to a Party Secretary (or needing to be party members themselves), factory directors now coordinate the Party, business management, and the Worker's Union (Warner, 1991). As a result, factory directors have more autonomy and accountability than ever before. Factories are now less dependent on state planning, and factory directors are more responsible to see to it that their factories are profitable. This requires a different kind of relationship with employees than before.

The second force to prompt change in Chinese management styles is a shift from the "planning economy" to a "market economy." Under the planning economy, production quotas were set up by the Central and Local Government. Under the market economy, production quotas are set by managers for the purpose of making a profit. This increased autonomy presents factory directors with the promise of increased profitability. However, the emergence of the market econ-

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omy also legitimizes greater diversity in the types of enterprises operating in China. Privately owned businesses and joint ventures operate under different sets of regulations and present a visible threat as they compete for raw materials and market share.

Because of these system and economic shifts, the directors themselves may be re-assessing their management styles. Since directors are now more responsible for the factory's economic success, they may be growing increasingly aware of the need to employ alternative management styles that are less authoritarian. Success now depends upon their ability to step down from the top of the hierarchical pyramid and to reach out to the grass roots of the organization. The restructuring of management and economic systems is triggering a restructuring of superior-subordinate relationships. More than ever before, managers see themselves and the success of their factories as connected to their employees and are more able to use economic incentives to motivate employee production. In addition, factories are now assigned directors with higher levels of education in technical areas which increases the knowledge base of management. As leadership becomes more knowledge-based and less ideologically-based, more democratic styles of management are possible. In summary, management styles are in transition and this might be reflected in their approaches to persuasion.

It is important to note that, for many reasons, we do not assume that all Chinese managers are equally and evenly group-centered, or uniformly motivated by political ideology or to experiment with more democratic leadership styles. The influence of cultural values is not monolithic. Managers are capable of drawing upon individual, inner resources and responding creatively to societal and organizational constraints. Their approaches to persuasion may deviate from some culturally "ideal" response. Still, cultural values are deeply internalized and resistant to change. This may be particularly so among high level managers in China who, through societal and organizational socialization processes, experience intensified pressure to conform to a cultural ideal. Moreover, although it is possible to attend business schools and receive training in specialized, technical fields such as accounting and bookkeeping, only recently has it become possible to acquire systematic training in strategic or personnel management. Historically, such training was viewed as unnecessary since the factories were governed by both a Communist Party Secretary, who held primary responsibility for motivating the workers, and a technically trained administrative official who managed the day-to-day work procedures such as ordering production supplies and coordinating work schedules. Even as the shift from a planning economy to a market economy takes place, the influence of deeply internalized cultural values

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persists. For instance, one manager of a very successful, privately-owned factory (and therefore not required by the government to rely upon the Communist Party for assistance with motivating workers and providing ideological guidance) recently found it necessary to implement a Party organization anyway, presumably to more effectively manage his employees ("Director Ma," 1994, p. 2).

No previous research has been conducted on managerial approaches to persuasion in China. Cross-cultural differences have been reported in the influence choices of Japanese and American managers, however. Japanese managers relied more often on altruism-based strategies such as asking employees to comply for the sake of the company or reminding employees of their duty to comply with managerial wishes; whereas, American managers relied more often on the use of reward- or punishment-based strategies (Hirokawa & Miyahara, 1986). Although this study reveals part of what may be unique about managerial influence attempts in Japan, a potential limitation is that managers' responses were coded according to a taxonomy developed from pre-existing measures of influence formulated within the United States (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967; Wiseman & Schenck-Hamlin, 1981; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980). Because of differences in cultural assumptions and values, it is doubtful that measures and coding schemes generated among Western populations and designed to assess influence strategy use in the United States, will adequately capture the nature of managerial influence in the East. Although undoubtedly useful in conducting general cross-cultural comparisons, the exclusive use of such measures also most likely masks some of what may be culturally unique about managerial influence as it occurs in Chinese factories. Because the present research is designed to examine how Chinese cultural themes are expressed in managerial influence attempts, it is necessary to conduct a more inductive, thematic analysis of factory directors' responses. Thus, the following research question is posed:

RQ1: How are Chinese cultural themes reflected in what factory directors report saying to influence their employees?

Previous research conducted in the West has attempted to isolate features of persuasive situations and examine their effects on the selection of specific employee influence strategies (for example, Hirokawa & Miyahara, 1986; Krone, 1992). Because it taps into the perceived right of a manager to exercise influence and the perceived duty of an employee to comply, whether an influence attempt occurs in an obligatory or nonobligatory work situation appears to be an important factor in affecting managerial influence choices (Hirokawa & Miyahara, 1986; Harper & Hirokawa, 1988). Both situations elicit responses that reveal the ways in which managers are inclined to use their legitimate

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authority in organizations. Thus, the following research question is posed:

RQ2: In what ways, if any, do factory directors' influence attempts differ when they occur in obligatory versus nonobligatory work situations?

Methodology

Participants

Forty-eight Executive Directors and Deputy Executive Directors from state-owned enterprises in the People's Republic of China participated in this research. The executives were members of two successive trade delegations visiting Columbus, Ohio, for a five-week-stay. All managed enterprises were engaged in some type of exporting business. Co-sponsored by the Sino-Ohio Center and the Chinese State Council of Mechanical and Electrical Products, the visits were designed to allow factory directors to discuss strategic and legal issues related to doing business with the United States. Since China traditionally is a male-dominated society, the majority of all organizational managers is male. Likewise, all of the Executive and Deputy Executive Directors in our sample were male and had held their current positions from 4 months to 21 years. Their levels of education varied and ranged from 8% having completed vocational school training to 8% having completed high school to 44% having completed technical college, 38% college, and 2% having completed a postgraduate college education. Their factories ranged in size from 50 employees to 38,000 and manufactured an array of products including tools, locks, and diesel engines. Only 58% of the factory directors reported that they had the authority to hire, and only 29% reported that they had the authority to fire workers. Most of the factories were located in medium size cities and are representative of mainstream, state-owned enterprises in China. State-owned enterprises are less dependent on the State Planning Commission than in years past. However, they still are more connected to the State Planning Commission than are joint-venture enterprises which tend to be driven by a blend of Chinese and other cultural values.

Procedures

Permission to conduct this research was secured from the Chinese State Council of Mechanical and Electrical Products through the Sino-Ohio Center. Once permission was granted, a questionnaire was designed that asked managers to describe what they would say in order to persuade an employee to comply with their wishes. The assumption that managers would in fact say something in the process of influencing their employees derived from an earlier study in which other factory directors spontaneously offered examples of what they

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would say to persuade a "problem" worker (Krone et al., 1992). Since all of the managers were Chinese-speaking, it was necessary to translate the questionnaire from English to Chinese. A back-translation procedure was followed in which one of the researchers translated the original questionnaire from English to Chinese. A research assistant translated the Chinese version back into English to enable us to clarify meanings that might have been changed in the initial translation. It was necessary to adjust only one Chinese character when the final survey was translated back into Chinese.

In order to examine the nature of managerial influence in obligatory and nonobligatory work situations in China, factory directors were asked to respond to two scenarios. Both were judged to be realistic in the Chinese context. The scenario presented in the obligatory situation is one that occurs frequently in Chinese factories. The nonobligatory situation also is one that is likely to occur, particularly as managerial roles continue to shift with the institution of the factory director responsibility system and the development of a market economy. Managers are very aware of the need to remain open to all ideas that would increase the profitability of their factories. In addition, previous research indicates that it is not uncommon for factory directors to develop systems for soliciting employee suggestions (Krone et al., 1992). The two scenarios read as follows:

Obligatory Work Situation

> Imagine that there is one worker who is late for his work a couple of days every week, generally not exceeding 15-20 minutes. This begins to make the others feel dissatisfied with him. In this case, what do you usually say to him when you have a talk with him convincing him to go to work on time?

Nonobligatory Work Situation

> Imagine that you have found a worker who has some good idea for improving the work and enhancing productivity. However he is still hesitating to talk to you. What would you likely say to him so that he can tell you his ideas and suggestions?

Factory directors' responses to each situation were then translated into English by a bilingual research assistant. During the translation process, every effort was made to maintain exact expressions rather than to simply capture the general ideas conveyed in the managers' responses. In addition, uncertainty about coding particular responses was resolved in part by examining the original reports in Chinese.

Analysis of Factory Directors' Responses

Data analysis proceeded in two phases relying initially on a descriptive coding process followed by a more interpretive analysis of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). First, discrete influence messages were iden-

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tified and coded. Second, message types were analyzed for cultural themes reflected in each. Inferences were made concerning the expression of and the relative influence of cultural values, political ideology, and changing managerial roles on these managers' approaches to influencing their employees.

In order to address Research Question 2, an open coding procedure was used to generate two sets of thematic categories: one from the participants' responses to the obligatory work situation and one from their responses to the nonobligatory situation. The researchers independently conducted a line by line analysis of each data set that allowed message categories to emerge. Message category schemes were developed for the obligatory and the nonobligatory situations. Each researcher then independently coded approximately 25% of the responses to each situation in order to test the adequacy of each coding scheme. Following a comparison of these ratings, minor refinements were made in each. The researchers also identified and agreed to eliminate the responses of factory directors that simply described the formal, bureaucratic procedures for managing problem workers and worker suggestions rather than reporting what they actually would say to a worker. This resulted in the elimination of five responses in the obligatory situation and two responses in the nonobligatory one. Tables 1 and 2 present the final category systems that were used to code factory directors' influence attempts in the obligatory and nonobligatory situations, respectively. Each researcher then independently coded the remaining responses. One hundred and eighty-six statements were identified and coded for the obligatory situation. The researchers were in agreement on 86% of the ratings. The codes for the remaining 27 statements were discussed until agreement on the proper classification could be reached. Two hundred and three statements were identified and coded for the nonobligatory situation. The researchers were in agreement on 82% of their initial ratings. Coding agreement was reached following discussion on a total of 36 statements.

In order to address Research Question 1, the researchers then conducted a more interpretive analysis of the message categories for expressions of cultural themes including:

- the values of group-centeredness, hierarchy, and face
- political ideology
- changes in managerial roles.

This level of analysis was accomplished through discussion among the researchers. Within message categories, prototypical examples were identified to illustrate cultural themes or combinations of themes.

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Table 1
Types of Influence Messages Reported in Obligatory Situation

1. Verify truth of reports of lateness
2. Seek reasons
   a. directly
   b. indirectly
3. Offer help
   a. specific assistance from the factory to solve problem
   b. explain to others so they will understand
   c. suggest ways to get permission for leave
4. Confrontations (Statements explicitly directed toward a target; describing consequences for self)
   a. gentle warnings remind of rules regarding time
   b. mid-level warnings strong requests/commands/orders
   c. strong warnings mention punishments like loss of bonus, dischargings
5. Educate/criticize to comply (Statements explicitly directed toward a target; educating him/her to think of consequences on others)
   a. to see own mistake
   b. to see the importance of discipline
   c. to see consequences of behavior on production
   d. educate in proper ownership spirit
   e. to strengthen relationship between individual & collective work group, factory, state, foreign customers
   f. to see that everyone's watching you/you should be watching others
   g. to have concern for self-image/self-respect
6. Philosophical advice/consciousness raising (General statements that can apply to anyone; not directed to a particular person)
   a. "We are all masters of the factory."
   b. "Treasure your time."
   c. "The employee is the owner of the factory."
   d. "Be punctual. It's like prolonging your own 'life.'"
7. Encouraging remarks
   a. Expression of faith in overcoming difficulties
   b. Group will notice and appreciate your efforts

Results and Discussion

Messages Common to Both Situations

In both the obligatory and nonobligatory situations the use of educational messages and philosophical advice emerged in managers' reports of what they would say in an attempt to influence their employees. Educational messages involved instructing employees as to the proper attitude toward their work and were distinguished from

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philosophical advice in that they were directed toward one specific employee (for example, "You should dismiss any hesitations . . ."; "You shouldn't have been late for work so often. It will be a bad influence on others"). Similar messages were embedded in philosophical advice; however, their structure implied more distance from the immediate situation. Abstract and impersonal expressions such as "The best way to realize one's value as a person is to . . ." could be taken as sound advice by all people, when in fact they were being directed toward one specific employee.

Table 2
Types of Influence Messages Reported in Nonobligatory Situation

1. Compliments
   a. cautious compliment
   b. compliment on idea
   c. compliment for caring about the organization/compliment on doing the right thing
2. Educate/Criticize
   a. to want to make the effort/to dismiss hesitation/to want to discuss
   b. as to what would be a good idea
   c. to proper ownership spirit/collectivist spirit
3. Philosophical Advice/Consciousness Raising
4. Solicit ideas
   a. indirectly create atmosphere; show respect; praise, any ideas welcome
   b. ask for help
   c. request improvements/gently ask for ideas/express interest in worker and in his ideas
   d. directly
5. Ask intermediaries to talk to worker
   a. party secretary
   b. committee members in charge of suggestions
6. Promise of rewards
   a. material
   b. spiritual
7. Offer reassurances/supports
   a. no problem if doesn't work
   b. serious consideration will be given
   c. confidentiality will be maintained if doesn't work
   d. offer measures to materialize the idea
8. Discuss to improve/perfect ideas

In addition, managerial messages directed to employees in both situations could be arrayed along a continuum of indirectness to direct-

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ness. In the obligatory situation, the managers reported using confrontation messages that ranged from mild, to mid-level, to strong warnings. In fact, in this situation managers reported using confrontation messages more frequently than any other message type, but over 70% of these were only mildly or moderately confrontative. Similarly, in the nonobligatory situation the most frequently reported message type also appeared to exist along a directness continuum. At the indirect end were messages that involved creating the "proper atmosphere" in which the employee would feel comfortable sharing ideas for improvement. There was evidence of increasing directness in managerial messages ranging from reports of framing their request as one in which they were seeking help from their employees, to gently asking employees for their ideas and several who reported directly asking employees for ideas (see Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3
Frequencies and Percentages of Influence Messages Used in the Obligatory Situation

Tactic Type	*n*	Percentage*	*n*	Percentage*
Verify truth of reports of lateness	1	.5	1	.5
Seek reasons			22	11.8
directly	15	8.1		
indirectly	7	3.8		
Offer help/assistance from the factory			23	12.4
specific assistance	17	9.1		
explain to others	3	1.6		
suggest permission-seeking	3	1.6		
Confrontations			75	40.3
mild confrontations	24	12.9		
mid-level confrontations	29	15.6		
strong confrontations	22	11.8		
Educate/criticize to comply			54	29.0
see own mistake	9	4.8		
see the importance of discipline	10	5.4		
see consequences on production	14	7.5		
proper ownership spirit	4	2.1		
strengthen individual-collective	7	3.8		
mutual influence	6	3.2		
think of self-image	4	2.1		
Philosophical advice/consciousness raising	6	3.2	6	3.2
Encouraging remarks			5	2.7
express faith in overcoming	3	1.6		
group will appreciate your efforts	2	1.1		
	186	99.8	186	99.9

*Percentages less than 100 are due to rounding differences.

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Table 4
Frequencies and Percentages of Influence Messages Used in the Nonobligatory Situation

Tactic Type	*n*	Percentage	*n*	Percentage
Compliment			21	10.3
cautiously	5	2.5		
on idea	9	4.4		
on doing the right thing	7	3.4		
Educate/criticize			22	10.8
to want to make the effort	7	3.4		
as to what would be a good idea	5	2.5		
proper ownership/collectivist spirit	10	4.9		
Philosophical advice/consciousness raising	18	8.9	18	8.9
Solicit ideas			56	27.6
indirectly	17	8.4		
ask for help	7	3.4		
request improvements/gently ask	30	14.8		
directly	2	1.0		
Use of intermediaries			2	1.0
party secretary	1	.5		
committee members in charge of suggestions1		.5		
Promise rewards	6	3.0	39	19.2
material	16	7.9		
spiritual	17	8.4		
Offer reassurances/supports			3	16.3
no problem if doesn't work	12	5.9		
serious consideration will be given	8	3.9		
promise confidentiality	1	.5		
offer measures to materialize idea	12	5.9		
Discuss idea with others to improve/perfect	12	5.9	12	5.9
	203	100	203	100

Obligatory Situation

As was mentioned above, the use of confrontations was more frequent than all other approaches in the obligatory situation. Within this category, however, mild and mid-level confrontations were used much more often than strong confrontations. The next most frequently used approach was to educate or criticize. This approach involved the use of instructive statements that were directed specifically toward the problem employee regarding his or her misconduct. Educating the employee to have a greater concern for the consequences of his or her behavior on production was reported most often, followed by educating the employee to see the importance of disciplining himself or herself to the factory's rules. The approaches of confronting and educating or criticizing were noticeably larger than all of the others. However, seeking reasons and offering assistance on behalf of the

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factory were also frequently reported. Table 3 presents the frequencies and percentages of influence messages and approaches reported by factory directors in the obligatory situation.

A little over half (53%) of the factory directors reported that they would try to find out why the worker had been late. Of these (65%) directly sought reasons for being late to work, while (30%) reported using more indirect approaches. In addition, a little over half of the factory directors (53%) reported in the course of their influence attempt that they would offer some kind of help or assistance to the worker in the event that an acceptable explanation for being late had been provided.

It also is important to note that several managers reported using a progressive sequence of behaviors in their influence attempts. As was mentioned above, over half reported that they would begin by finding out why the employee was late. The subsequent steps in the sequence depended on whether the employee provided acceptable reasons for being late. If acceptable reasons were provided, quite often the factory director would offer assistance in solving the employee's problem. If no acceptable reasons were offered, then mild confrontations or educational attempts occurred, followed by mid-level confrontations. Most often, only if the employee resisted these milder forms of influence, did the managers resort to using strong confrontations and threats. Rarely did managers report relying on the use of such harsh approaches in their initial influence attempts with employees. Most commonly they reported a gradual escalation from the use of milder to harsher persuasive messages.

Nonobligatory Situation

The category "solicit ideas" was by far the most frequently reported approach to managerial influence in the nonobligatory situation. The vast majority of these messages involved the use of indirect requests for workers to voice their ideas. The next most frequently reported approach involved the promise of material and spiritual rewards in return for offering ideas. This was followed closely by the use of reassurance that no problem would result in the event that the idea for improvement was premature or would fail, and the use of offers to provide resources that would help put the idea into action. Table 4 presents the frequencies and percentages of influence messages and approaches reported by factory directors in the nonobligatory situation.

If an intensification of influence approaches exists in the nonobligatory situation, it appears to be more subtle than in the obligatory one. In general, some managers appeared to be fairly direct in their influence attempts, using a combination of educational approaches along with simple requests for ideas. Others appeared to be mainly indirect

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by indicating the need to create a comfortable atmosphere so that employees would feel more comfortable offering their ideas or by reporting their use of abstract, philosophical advice and slogans to encourage workers to share their ideas.

Cultural Themes in Approaches to Managerial Influence

To varying degrees, Chinese cultural themes are reflected in the approaches to influence reported by this group of factory directors. Cultural values are reflected most often, followed by political ideology and changing managerial roles (see Tables 5 and 6).

Table 5
Cultural Themes Reflected in Influence Approaches Used in the Obligatory Situation

Influence Approaches	V-G	V-H	V-F	PI	CMR*
Verify truth of reports			X		
Seek reasons		X	X		
Offer factory's help	X	X	X		
Confront		X	X		X
Educate	X	X	X	X	
Philosophical advice	X	X	X	X	
Encourage	X	X	X		

*V-G = value of group-centeredness
V-H = value of hierarchy
V-F = value of face concern
PI = political ideology
CMR = changing managerial role

Table 6
Cultural Themes Reflected in Influence Approaches Used in the Nonobligatory Situation

Influence Approaches		V-G	V-H	V-F	PI	CMR*
Compliment			X	X		
Educate		X	X	X	X	
Philosophical advice	X	X	X	X		
Solicit ideas			X	X		
Use of intermediaries			X			
Promise rewards					X	X
Offer reassurances/supports			X	X		
Discuss idea with others to improve/perfect		X		X		

*V-G = value of group-centeredness
V-H = value of hierarchy
V-F = value of face concern
PI = political ideology
CMR = changing managerial role

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Cultural Values

The greatest percentage of managerial influence messages across both situations reflected the interrelated cultural values of group-centeredness, hierarchy, and concerns for face. In the obligatory situation, group-centeredness was expressed through educational approaches concerning the need to strengthen the relationship between individual workers and the work group or factory. One factory director even evoked the fundamental image of the family in reminding a problem employee of the proper individual-organizational relationship by saying "You should have the spirit of loving the factory as your own family." Most group-centered, educational messages, however, were of the following variety: "[You should] try to maintain a sense of care and a sense of collectivity"; "I would discuss with him the importance of . . . the relationship between the individual and a collective"; and "Point out explicitly to him or her that being frequently late for work is wrong because his or her colleagues might have felt discontent about his or her conduct, but they may not have directly talked with the person about this."

Group-centeredness also was expressed in messages that instructed problem workers to be more aware of how their poor behavior would negatively influence others and in messages that urged errant, nonconforming workers to pay more attention to the positive example of others. The following admonishments are representative of this type of education: "It [being late for work] will be a bad influence"; "Be careful of your influence on others"; and "[I would] Try to educate and inspire him with some good examples." The importance of maintaining a proper individual-group relationship also was reflected in factory directors' reports that they would explain reasons for a worker's tardiness to his or her co-workers so that others would understand the context in which the violation occurred.

Many of the educational messages appeared to be attempting to cultivate feelings of shame among employees who had conducted themselves improperly. The cultivation of such feelings was most explicitly expressed in educational messages that reminded problem employees that feelings of self-worth would suffer from such misconduct. Directors reported saying things like: "Continuing to violate regulations will have a negative effect on your personal development"; "You are still getting paid by the factory; therefore, please have some self-respect and try to maintain a sense of care and a sense of collectivity"; and finally, "I am sure that you will be able to overcome your mistake as soon as possible and present a new image of yourself in your work place so that you can have a good relationship with your colleagues and do your work well."

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A concern for displays of group-centeredness also was reflected in educational messages that factory directors reported using to persuade workers to suggest ideas for factory improvements. This concern appeared in brief comments such as "Sharing your suggestions would be directly beneficial to every one of the employees", and "Good ideas and suggestions will bring benefits and good results to the organization and to mankind", but also in this more extended example:

> You should dismiss any hesitations and for the benefit of the factory and yourself offer your ideas so that we can discuss its practicability. If the idea is good and practical you will be rewarded so that every employee will care more about their own factory and their own future and destiny. This way the factory will stand on firm ground and every one of us employees will obtain honor and benefit from the prosperity of our factory.

Embedded in these explanations is a lesson in the proper individual-organizational relationship. Everyone, not just individual employees (even all of humanity), stands to gain spiritually and materially by employees offering suggestions for factory improvements. And in the process of offering ideas, the behavior of innovative employees serves as a guide for all others to follow.

An interest in maintaining displays of group-centeredness as well as the cultivation of feelings of shame for not doing so was reflected in philosophical advice offered to prompt workers to voice ideas (for example, "The best way to realize one's value as a person is when ideas and suggestions are acknowledged and accepted by the society and the organization"; "People who dare to speak and dare to act are able to realize their self-worth"; and "It is the right and obligation of every employee to put forward rationalized suggestions to enhance the organization's development"). Such messages appeared to reinforce the connection between the work-related practice of offering ideas for factory improvements and the extent to which employees should feel good about themselves as human beings.

A final way in which group-centeredness permeated managerial influence was in reassurances to individual workers that their ideas would be discussed either with the factory director himself, or with others, in order to refine them (for example, "Whatever ideas and suggestions put forward should be ... carefully discussed for perfection", and "Even if the idea is not perfect it would still be welcome. After discussion we might get better results"). Discussion of ideas with interconnected others was an appropriate, group-centered response to a single individual's suggestion for factory improvements.

As was mentioned earlier, a belief in the hierarchical nature of society and a concern for conforming to the correct standards of conduct associated with one's role in the hierarchy derive from a Confucianist philosophy. Failure to conform to such standards often is met with

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attempts to re-educate workers as to what constitutes appropriate behavior. In the process, feelings of embarrassment and shame are evoked that should motivate workers to try and correct their behavior. The following example best illustrates the instructional tone and shaming that characterized factory director attempts to educate workers to comply with factory rules regarding time:

> We are a manufacturing organization and there are some 10 employees in your workshop. If everybody behaved in this same manner, how could work be done properly? How could production tasks be finished? If there were a few employees like you, how do you think that I could manage this factory? How can we produce according to the state plan? Ours is an exporting organization. How can we deliver our products to the foreign customers? Also, let's look at it in terms of economy. If 10% of employees were late twice a week, like you by 20 minutes, in one week, the loss would equal the loss of one employee per month. If we look at it in terms of a year, the consequences would be even more serious.

In addition, as superiors in the social hierarchy, factory directors stand in a paternalistic relationship to their employees. This is reflected in their reports of offering philosophical advice on how tardy workers should be conducting themselves, not only at work, but in life in general. Admonishments such as "Treasure your time" or "Be punctual. It's like prolonging your own life" come from a position of superiority and reinforce the hierarchical role relationships between factory directors and their workers. It is the director's responsibility to remind employees of appropriate conduct and the subordinate's responsibility to receive such managerial advice. In addition, managerial messages that offered workers emotional and material support for sharing their ideas and protection in the event that their ideas failed, conveyed loyalty to employees. This approach is consistent with an interpretation of hierarchy that emphasizes the more "senior" member not only directing and advising the more junior members, but also mentoring and protecting them (Hu & Grove, 1991).

Concern for face is a communicative manifestation of both group-centeredness and hierarchy, and it was evident throughout the factory directors' reports of how they would go about influencing their employees in both situations. Even when these managers had the hierarchical right and responsibility to confront chronically late workers, only 22% of their messages were directly confrontative and therefore, potentially face-threatening. For example, one manager reported that he would confront a tardy worker by saying "Tell him or her that he or she is already late for work--never do it again." Most of these managers, however, reported using more indirect approaches with a problem worker. For instance, one manager reported that he would say, "Can I ask you what has been the matter with you recently? You seem to always be in a rush. Anything I can help with?" Another responded

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that "First of all, we need to create a harmonious atmosphere." He went on to indicate that he would do this by asking "How are you recently? How is your family? Your friends and relatives? I notice you were late once. If this continues, it wouldn't be appropriate. I hope you will be more careful." In the obligatory situation in particular, the desire to verify whether workers had, in fact, been late for work several times before confronting them and if so, to attempt to understand *why* they had done so reflected a simultaneous concern for not wanting to embarrass oneself or employees by making false accusations. The use of such face-saving approaches conveys a proper managerial desire to avoid humiliating employees who must already know they're in the wrong and who already should be feeling badly for demonstrating such poor behavior.

It was interesting to note that the use of educational approaches was much lower in the nonobligatory situation while the use of philosophical advice was much higher (see Tables 3 and 4). The reader may recall that the use of educational messages is more personalized than is the use of philosophical advice. Because their use could be potentially face-threatening, educational messages may be more justified when confronting lapses in meeting obligatory work requirements. Employees may be less aware of the obligation to share innovative ideas and may be held less accountable for not doing so, at least at the present time.

In both situations the use of philosophical advice in the form of slogans or statements that reflect an ideal, but somewhat "grandiose" code of conduct also function to make a point indirectly, and thereby in a less face-threatening manner. These types of messages do not call attention directly to the failure to comply with factory regulations or to a reluctance to articulate ideas for improvements in the factory. Instead, they serve to remind everyone of the "golden rules of conduct." At the same time, those who have behaved improperly have been sent a clear message that their behavior has been noticed. Under the circumstances, it should be unnecessary to say anything more.

Face issues also were addressed in the use of cautious compliments in the nonobligatory situation. Cautiously complimenting a worker on the possibility that he *may* have a good idea, enabled the worker to decline sharing an idea and also protected the superior from falsely assuming that workers had innovative thoughts when they may not have had any such ideas. With the use of such messages, factory directors could have been protecting themselves and their workers from potential embarrassment. The gradual intensification of approaches to persuasion in the obligatory situation also reflected a concern for face. By beginning tentatively, seeking reasons for lateness and offering help, if necessary, managers avoided causing further embar-

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rassment to themselves and to their problem workers. More specifically, they protected themselves from accusations of having overreacted and protected their workers from feeling more shame than what they should have already been feeling.

Only two factory directors reported the use of intermediaries, both in the nonobligatory situation. Nonetheless, the use of this approach clearly reflected concerns for face as the following example illustrates: "the best way is to ask the Party secretary to talk with him first and try to persuade him to propose his good ideas. He may be hesitating due to unexpressed disagreements with the manager. After the Party secretary's mediation I will talk with him to encourage his spirit." A high sensitivity to face is displayed by this factory director who understands that employees make suggestions for change within the context of an on-going relationship. Since proposals for change could be construed as implicit criticisms of current managerial practices, the use of an intermediary may be helpful in encouraging employees who could feel uncomfortable proposing improvements to factory directors themselves.

Political Ideology

Since political ideology derives from cultural values, it is difficult to draw neat distinctions between managerial messages that reflect group-centeredness, hierarchy, and face and those that reflect Chinese political ideology. Most of what these factory directors reported saying to influence their employees appeared to reflect cultural values. However, political ideology clearly surfaced in philosophical advice offered to employees in both the obligatory and nonobligatory situations. In the obligatory situation, workers were urged to comply because "We are all masters of the factory", and "The employee is the owner of the factory" and therefore should be behaving in a more responsible and dignified fashion. Political ideology also was evident in managerial attempts to educate or criticize tardy workers concerning standards of conduct that would reflect "proper ownership spirit." One manager justified his remarks of this sort by saying, "The employee is the owner of the organization. I am giving him an education in proper ownership spirit" and went on to report what he would say to the problem worker: "Our factory is an organic organization. It has to be constrained by disciplines. Everyone must comply to the factory's work regulations." He then indicated that he would "strictly carry out the rules and regulations in the factory, giving out punishments accordingly and help the employee who came late to work to solve any specific problem." In the nonobligatory situation, philosophical messages such as "The masses are the real heroes", and "As a member of this organization you should display proper ownership

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spirit" were used in the context of encouraging workers to share ideas that would improve the factory and its production. An expanded example follows:

> The masses are the real heroes. At the bottom of their hearts they have a lot of creativity and good initiatives. We are all owners of the socialist project. On behalf of the Party and people's benefit, anything good to the nation and the collective should be offered without hesitation or reservation. This is the honor and pride of each of us employees.

A Chinese factory director acts as a spokesperson for the enterprise (a part of the Socialist construction). In this role, it is his responsibility to remind everyone of their duties and obligations within the ideological scheme of things. Messages such as these reinforce and sustain a political ideology of which all are aware, but to which all do not consistently conform.

Changing Managerial Roles

The shift from a planning economy to a market economy has triggered changes in the responsibilities of managers. Not only must they meet their production quotas, they also must be concerned with making a profit. This theme of change in managerial roles can be discerned in the persuasive messages of Chinese managers primarily when they reported mentioning the use of economic rewards and threats. In the obligatory situation, economic threats were mentioned during strong confrontations of unacceptable behaviors. Several managers reported that they would remind tardy employees of the possibility of economic sanctions for their negative behavior. Depending on the severity of the situation, company regulations and their own level of authority, managers mentioned the use of such monetary punishments as fining problem employees, eliminating their bonus pay, passing them up for promotion, or even discharging them.

Comparable economic appeals also were found in persuasive messages in the nonobligatory situation. While some managers still reported the use of "spiritual rewards" (for example, "If the suggestion is good I will give you the 'Reasonable Suggestion Award'"), many managers also reported that they would mention material rewards when attempting to persuade employees to share their potentially useful ideas. Some said they would just mention the likelihood of "material rewards," while others reported they would specify that "rewards be proportional to the savings or profits brought by the suggested change or innovation." However, in the nonobligatory situation, managers also reported approaches that involved educating employees as to what constitutes a useful idea. For example, while he did not mention the use of economic incentives, one manager reported that he would say:

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> Your idea and suggestion is worth our consideration. If there is some part of it which can be put in practice, I will then bring it to the attention of the management. As for your idea and suggestions, please give it careful consideration, taking into account the actual situation in our factory. At the stage of product introduction, we should put our main emphasis on meeting the demands of the market and increase our competitiveness. With regards to management, we should reinforce further internal management, increasing product quality, and reduce cost. In terms of technological innovations, we should try to reduce labor intensity and work towards higher efficiency. Your new idea is very good. Please write it down together with all of your relevant plans. You would duly contribute to the prosperity and development of our factory.

An approach such as this seems to reflect a blend of cultural themes. It appears to educate or re-educate the worker as to what types of suggestions would be useful under the current economic conditions. At the same time, the manager does not offer material rewards in exchange for the employee's good ideas. Instead, he concludes his lesson with an appeal to more traditional values (that is, the desirability of demonstrating a proper individual-organizational relationship).

The use of economic appeals to motivate employees is consistent with the principles of a market economy. In years past, Chinese business organizations were governed by a political ideology that stressed the importance of ideological education to motivate workers rather than the use of economic incentives. The use of economic appeals as a managerial tool has only recently become available to Chinese managers. This is reflected in the small proportion of top-level managers in this study who reported that they had the authority to hire or fire employees. It is interesting to note that of the 48 managers surveyed, not a single one reported that he would use only economic appeals in his attempts to persuade employees. All reported using other approaches together with monetary punishments or rewards. Moreover, monetary sanctions are commonly reserved as a last resort when all other approaches have been exhausted, even in the nonobligatory situations. This may be explained by the nature of economic sanctions. In contradiction to traditional cultural values, the use of material punishments is harsh and presents a blatant threat to face. Moreover, the use of material rewards is tangential to the political ideology. Traditional cultural values and socialist ideology are operating side-by-side with the market economic laws and managerial approaches to persuasion will reflect all of these underlying cultural forces.

Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to highlight what is unique about approaches to managerial influence in China. We have identified approaches similar to those found in the standard influence literature as well as those that are not represented in that literature. These man-

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agerial approaches to persuasion, to various degrees, expressed the interrelated themes of Chinese cultural values, political ideology, and changing managerial roles. The extent to which group-centeredness, hierarchy, and face concerns were expressed throughout the managers' responses, however, supports the claim that managerial influence in China cannot be understood separately from the hierarchical and group-centered relational context in which it occurs. Concern for face was expressed in all of the managerial approaches to persuasion reported in the obligatory situation and in all but two of the approaches in the nonobligatory situation. Even when managers had the duty to confront problem workers, most of them still reported using approaches that would not be face threatening to themselves or to others. The use of indirect approaches alone, or of approaches that began indirectly and gradually led up to the persuasive request, were quite common in both situations. Face protecting approaches to persuasion sustain a manager's position within the center of a web of relationships as well as his position at the top of the social hierarchy.

As frequently as cultural values were expressed in managerial approaches to influence, the results of our study suggest that managerial influence also is shaped by political and economic forces. While reflected less frequently in approaches to persuasion than cultural values, political ideology still appeared, but typically along with other cultural themes. Very few managers in this study relied exclusively on political ideology to gain worker cooperation. Occasionally, managers even combined the use of political ideology with the use of material incentives; two approaches that appear on the surface to be contradictory. Clearly, a manager's repertoire of persuasive appeals has been broadened by the changes in economic systems. The near equal use of material and spiritual rewards is most likely a recent development. The use of ideological appeals alone may be less effective than in years past with employees who have grown accustomed to the party line and perhaps disillusioned by its failed promise. At the same time, the use of material incentives may appear coarse and, therefore, less effective when used alone to inspire worker performance. Combining the approaches may be the most effective way to persuade employees in Chinese organizations today. Indeed, each approach to managerial influence in China appears to reflect and reinforce more than one cultural theme.

In beginning to highlight what is unique about approaches to managerial influence in China it is important to note that even approaches to managerial influence that appear to be superficially similar to those used in other cultures may not be at a deeper level of analysis. For instance, groups of Japanese and U.S. managers both reported frequently using "rationality tactics" (that is, providing explanations and

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giving reasons for requests) in their influence attempts with employees (Hirokawa & Miyahara, 1986). What the present study reveals, however, is that providing explanations for requests in China is akin to an educational or even a consciousness-raising process which reflects and reinforces interrelated cultural values and political ideology. Furthermore, even though a single approach to managerial influence may be found in other cultures, the combination of approaches that we've found represents a pattern unique to the Chinese.

Limitations

It is important to acknowledge several limitations of the present study. First, the analysis is based on managers' self-reports of their persuasive communication which may or may not accurately represent their actual communication behavior. Second, our sample is potentially limited in several ways. Our results are mainly representative of managers in state-owned enterprises in medium size cities in China and there is no guarantee that directors of factories located in rural areas or in joint-venture enterprises would approach managerial influence in the same manner. In addition, because all of the directors were managing factories with some degree of exporting business, their responses may not be representative of those whose factories do not export products to the United States. Further, 82% of our sample had completed technical college or college. It is likely that more educated directors are more likely to be sent abroad, so our results may not be representative of how managerial influence would be approached by those with lower levels of education. Finally, it is highly likely that only directors of relatively successful factories are chosen to go abroad. Our results may not be representative of those whose factories are operating on the brink of bankruptcy.

Further Developments

In deciding to study what may be culturally unique about managerial influence in China, and in doing so with a fairly limited sample, we may have overlooked or been unable to detect ways in which the actions of individual managers deviate from the cultural ideal. A deep understanding of managerial influence in China requires consideration of ways in which managers are both alike and different. Furthermore, as economic changes continue to occur throughout China, managers may be facing and needing to respond to contradictory pulls between economic, political, and cultural forces. Ways in which they attempt to balance these forces through persuasion and other forms of organizational communication would be worthy areas of exploration.

Last, we acknowledge that our portrayal of what may be unique about approaches to managerial influence in the People's Republic of

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China runs the risk of masking what may be universally true about these communication processes, if anything. Nonetheless, we are intrigued by the possibility of using culturally sensitized approaches to understand the nature of managerial influence, particularly in Eastern cultures. To date, what is known about managerial influence is based largely on Western conceptualizations against which everyone else gets compared. It could be illuminating to compare the use of influence approaches among groups of managers from Western cultures using themes grounded, at least in part, in the experience of an Eastern population. As organizations become increasingly internationalized, the need intensifies to develop a culturally sensitized understanding of critical communication processes such as managerial influence.

NOTES

[1] These quotations were extracted from interviews conducted with 10 factory directors from the People's Republic of China. This research was supported in part by a grant from the Office of Research at The Ohio State University.

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