Winter 1992

A Comparison of Organizational, Structural, and Relationship Effects on Subordinates' Upward Influence Choices

Kathleen J. Krone
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, kkrone1@unl.edu

Published in *Communication Quarterly* 40:1 (Winter 1992), pp. 1–15; doi: 10.1080/01463379209369816

A Comparison of Organizational, Structural, and Relationship Effects on Subordinates' Upward Influence Choices

Kathleen J. Krone

Abstract
This research examined the extent to which organizational membership, centralization of authority, and subordinates' perceptions of supervisory relationship quality affected how frequently they report using different types of tactics in their upward influence attempts. Participants from five different organizations were surveyed. A typology of upward influence tactics was created based on the extent to which: (1) the means employed to attempt influence are open or closed, and (2) the desired outcomes are openly expressed or left undisclosed. The resulting dependent variable consisted of three types of tactics: open upward influence, strategic upward influence, and political upward influence. MANOVA results indicated that while organizational membership, centralization of authority, and leader-member exchange all significantly affect upward influence tactic choices, organizational membership explains more variance than do the other two independent variables.

Keywords: organizational membership, participation in decision making, leader-member exchange, upward influence

Arguing for work-related opinions and subordinating one's thoughts to those of coworkers are universal experiences in organizational life. Knowledge about when and how to attempt organizational influence is most likely acquired through a variety of socialization experiences and is important to individuals and organizations alike. From the individual's point of view, ineffective upward influence can result in perceptions of reduced personal control and increased work-related stress (e.g., Karasek, 1979). From the organization's perspective, subordinates' unwillingness or inability to influence a supervisor's thinking can reduce organizational effectiveness, increase gaps between organizational practices and publicly stated goals (Mechanic, 1962; Weinstein, 1979) and even reduce an organization's ability to avert disaster (e.g., Feynman, 1988).

Over time, individuals may learn to employ some general set of influence tactics across all interpersonal and organizational situations. However, through organizational socialization processes individuals most likely learn to adjust their preferred means of attempting influence to match those that are more likely to be effective in their current work relationships and larger work settings. Organizational and relationship characteristics can shape upward influence choices to the extent that they make available certain tactics and affect whether these tactics will be judged appropriate and effective (Krone & Ludlum, 1990). Given the necessity of social influence to organizations and their members, both can benefit by knowing more about how organizational and relationship factors condition subordinates' influence tactic choices. This research examines the extent to which previously untested yet pervasive features of working life—organizational membership, perceptions of centralization of authority and leader-member exchange, affect subordinates' selection of upward influence tactics.

Review of the Literature

Upward Influence

Studies that compare upward, lateral and downward tactic choices reveal that while individuals in general report using rationality tactics most frequently, the direction of the influence attempt affects additional tactic choices (Erez, Rim & Keider, 1986; Kipnis, Schmidt & Wilkinson, 1980). Specifically, managers are less likely to employ "assertiveness" with superiors than with co-workers, less likely to employ "sanctions" with superiors or co-workers than with subordinates, and less likely to employ "exchange" with superiors than with co-workers. In addition, researchers have successfully identified several personal and situational characteristics that affect subordinates' upward influence activity. At least two personal characteristics—locus of control and needs for power and achievement—affect subordinates' upward influence tactic choices. Those with an internal locus of control are more likely to select praising tactics, while "externals" are more likely to choose coercive tactics (Lamude, Daniels & White, 1987). School principals who score higher on both needs for power and achievement also are more active in attempting upward influence (Mowday, 1978). With respect to situational characteristics, studies conducted with students in hypothetical situations indicate that decreased power among subordinates is accompanied by an increased tendency to employ some forms of ingratiation (Michener, Plazewski & Vaske, 1979) and to use "politeness" strategies (Baxter, 1984). Additional research suggests that the larger organizational context might affect subordinates' upward influence attempts as well (Cheng, 1983). When presented with a positive/rational scenario or a negative/political one, employees reported that they were more likely to use "rational" appeals in the rational context, and more likely to use ingratiation, threat and blocking tactics in the political one.

Thus, existing research suggests that upward influence tactic choices are somewhat different from those reported in other directions, and that certain characteristics of subordinates and situations appear to affect these choices. Comparatively little is known about how characteristics of work relationships and macro features of organizations might affect subordinates' upward influence choices.

An attempt to fill gaps in what is known about upward influence in organizations is complicated by considerable disagreement on how upward influence should be conceptualized and measured (see Schilit & Locke, 1982). Many researchers have used the Kipnis, Schmidt and Wilkinson (1980) checklist, or checklists derived from the Marwell and Schmitt (1967) typology, while others have developed coding systems based on politeness theory (Baxter, 1984). The present paper argues that there may be something unique about upward influence that is only partially captured by existing conceptual frameworks. Upward influence attempts are motivated by a desire for some alternative condition or course of action than what presently exists in an organization (e.g., Weinstein, 1979). Subordinates may express their desires for change openly. However, because supervisors typically have the authority to formally evaluate subordinate performance (e.g., Athanassiades, 1973; Cohen, 1958), subordinates learn to pursue their desired outcomes in edited and self-protective ways. Indeed, research has consistently demonstrated marked "distortion" in upward communication (e.g., Campbell, 1958; O'Reilly & Roberts, 1974). Thus, any framework for organizing upward influence tactics should consider: (1) the subordinates' desired outcomes and whether or not these are explicitly stated, and (2) the means employed to send upward influence messages, and the explicitness with which they are sent.

In addition, existing conceptualizations of upward influence exclusively adopt a message sender orientation. This potentially masks the importance of message reception behaviors in attempting upward influence. Subordinates who listen simply to understand their supervisors' point of view may glean different kinds of information than do subordinates who listen to analyze and judge their supervisors' opinions (Kelly, 1974). This study attempts to conceptualize and measure upward influence more comprehensively by including a range of subordinate listening behaviors.

Upward Influence Model and Tactics

The measure of upward influence proposed in this paper tests an extended model of political behavior in organizations (Porter, Allen & Angle, 1981), and addresses the concerns mentioned previously. The model assumes that subordinates may be more or less open in their attempts to influence supervisors and more or less open in stating their desired outcomes. The proposed typology clusters existing influence tactics according to whether each makes obvious or leaves obscure both the means of attempting influence and the desired outcome. In addition, the model has been extended to incorporate a range of listening behaviors subordinates might use in the course of attempting upward influence. Since the present research focuses on subordinate attempts to influence their supervisors in face-to-face conversations, tactics involving co-worker communication (e.g., coalition formation) have been excluded from the study.

Tactics I: Open Upward Influence

When subordinates use open upward influence, their influence attempts are overt and their desired outcomes are fully disclosed. With the use of open upward influence, subordinates may listen empathically, openly argue for some desired course of action, give reasons, and/or provide factual support for their point of view. To some extent, these are

information-based tactics which involve collecting and using information to support an explicitly stated desired decision outcome.

Tactics II: Strategic Upward Influence

Strategic upward influence is characterized either by the use of obvious means of attempting influence but undisclosed desired outcomes or the use of covert means of influence but openly expressed desired outcomes. With the use of strategic upward influence, subordinates are partially open/obvious as they verbally pursue a desired course of action. Compared to open upward influence, strategic tactics are less explicit and direct.

Influence attempts with open means and closed ends include the use of foot-in-the door and door-in-the-face techniques, both of which involve manipulating the size of an initial request. Foot-in-the-door techniques involve asking for less than what is actually wanted, and hoping to get more later. Door-in-the-face techniques involve initially asking for more than what is actually desired. The inflated request is then followed by the actual request which presumably gives subordinates the appearance of making reasonable concessions (see Dillard, Hunter & Burgoon, 1984). Thus, when subordinates use strategic upward influence, the attempt to influence is obvious, yet a preferred decision outcome is not explicitly stated. In listening strategically, subordinates may listen carefully to what their supervisors say. But rather than listening simply to understand what their supervisors mean, subordinates listen to find flaws in their supervisors' thinking or to incorporate their supervisors' perspective in subsequent influence attempts.

Strategic upward influence attempts with closed means and open ends include manipulating the use of information, managing one's self-presentation and using ingratiation behaviors during the course of pursuing an explicitly stated decision outcome. Subordinates who intentionally manage information may: (1) positively distort upward communication (O'Reilly & Roberts, 1974; Rosen & Tesser, 1970); (2) tell supervisors what they think their supervisors want to hear (Campbell, 1958); (3) withhold information from their supervisors (Read, 1962; Roberts & O'Reilly, 1974), and/or (4) overwhelm their supervisors with information (Allen, Madison, Porter, Renwick & Mayes, 1979). Self-presentation refers to the use of impression management techniques with which subordinates project certain features of themselves that they would like their supervisors to assimilate (Goffman, 1959). In organizations, this may involve behavior such as pointing out previous personal accomplishments to create and maintain the impression of competency and loyalty (Allen et al., 1979).

Ingratiation behaviors are employed to enhance one's interpersonal attractiveness (Wortman & Linsenmeier, 1977). For example, subordinates may emphasize what they have in common with their supervisors and deemphasize their differences. This can be a particularly effective influence method since research suggests that: (1) perceived similarity between interactants is positively associated with increased interpersonal influence (Byrne, 1969; Falcione, McCroskey & Daly, 1977), and (2) in highly uncertain decision situations, social comparison with similar others may often be used to stabilize opinions and guide action (Pfeffer, Salancik & Leblebici, 1976). Ingratiation also includes other-enhancement behaviors such as acting humbly while in the presence of supervisors and making a point of complimenting them (Allen et al., 1979; Kipnis et al., 1980).

Tactics III: Political Upward Influence

More than either of the previous types of tactics, the use of political upward influence involves disguising the attempt to exercise influence. Political tactics are comparatively more deceptive than strategic ones since their use includes obscuring from one's supervisor both the means of influence and the desired outcomes. For example, subordinates may deliberately establish and sustain a false image, discuss mistakes of co-workers, or distort information presented to their supervisors. The use of these tactics is unattached to a specific decision outcome. Subordinates listen "politically" when they do things to encourage their supervisors to continue talking, even though they may not be listening to what their supervisors are saying.

Organizational Membership and Upward Influence

While previous research has not examined the relationship between organizational membership and subordinates' selection of upward influence strategies, it seems possible that within a particular organization, some types of influence would be considered more appropriate and effective than others. Current theorizing suggests that certain types of people are attracted to and decide to remain in particular organizations, and that over time, the people come to define the organization's climate and culture (Schneider, 1987). Others are suggesting that because of structuration processes, there may be something unique about any given organization (e.g., Poole, 1988). To examine the possibility that organizational membership might affect subordinates' selection of influence strategies, the following research question is posed:

> Research Question 1: To what extent does organizational membership affect subordinates' selection of open, strategic or political upward influence tactics?

Centralization of Authority and Upward Influence

Considered by some to be the most significant of all structuring characteristics (Barnard, 1938; Simon, 1957), centralization refers to the dispersion of decision-making authority throughout an organization (Dalton, Todor, Spendolini, Fielding & Porter, 1980). In ordering decision-making processes, centralization affects the overall frequency of communication in organizations (Hage & Aiken, 1969; Hage, Aiken & Marrett, 1971). As perceptions of decentralization increase, research consistently reveals an increase in the overall amount of superior-subordinate communication. Specifically, as decentralization increases, so does the amount of unplanned, task-related communication between employees and their supervisors, and between supervisors and their managers (Hage, Aiken & Marrett, 1971). Previous research does not examine how centralization might affect subordinates' selection of specific types of upward influence with their supervisors.

Research does suggest however, that under decentralized conditions, subordinates are more willing to disclose important and even personally threatening information to their supervisors (Young, 1978), and that in high vs. low participatory work groups individuals report an increased willingness to interact (Harrison, 1985). Based on the results of available research, the following hypothesis is advanced:

H1: Subordinates' perceptions of participation in decision making will significantly affect their selection of open, strategic and political upward influence tactics.

Leader-Member Exchange and Upward Influence

The concept of leader-member exchange emerged from the organizational role-making perspective (Graen, 1976) and represents a way to characterize the quality of a supervisory relationship. Theoretically, subordinates in leadership exchanges (i.e., in-group subordinates) exercise comparatively more influence in the role-making process than do subordinates in supervisory exchanges (i.e., out-group relationships) (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Graen, 1976). Generally, in-group relationships are characterized by mutual influence processes between supervisors and their subordinates. Within out-group relationships, the exercise of influence appears to be more unidirectional and downward. Communication research is beginning to reveal important differences in how everyday "talk" occurs within leader-member relationships of varying quality. Managers are more conversationally dominant with out-group subordinates than they are with in-group ones (Fairhurst, Rogers & Sarr, 1987), and mutual persuasion seems to be more characteristic of in-group relationships than of out-group ones (Fairhurst & Chandler, 1989). To date, no research has examined the specific types of upward influence tactics in-group and out-group subordinates select in attempting to influence their supervisors' thinking. Based on currently available research, the following hypothesis is advanced:

H2: Subordinates' perceptions of leader-member exchange will affect their selection of open, strategic or political upward influence tactics.

Methodology

Research Setting

Organizations

Five organizations agreed to participate in this research. All organizations were located in a large metropolitan area in the southwest and ranged in size from 100 hundred employees to several thousand. Organization #1 develops, markets, and trains clients in the use of computer software designed specifically for use within finance-related companies. This organization is fairly young and has grown rapidly in recent years. Data were collected from the system research division of this company where software is developed and documented. Organization #2, a Fortune 500 company, develops and manufactures aerospace technology and equipment. Data were collected from the operations division where equipment is assembled according to government specifications and the written instructions of manufacturing engineers. Organization #3 is an administrative office of a large state human service organization. The majority of participants from this organization were members of newly formed "quality circles" which had been in operation for several weeks. Respondents represented five different administrative departments within the state office. Organization #4 is a life insurance company. Participants from this organization interpret

policy, work with agents and process claims on a daily basis. Organization #5 is a large, diversified public utility company. Data were collected from employees in their lignite coal plant, a field operations and maintenance unit, and the central administration office.

Respondents

Each of the 411 participants in this research had a supervisor to whom s/he reported. Approximately 53% of the respondents were male, with a little over 75% falling between the ages of 20 and 39. Only 5% of the participants had not finished high school, a little over half had completed high school, almost a third held undergraduate degrees, and 6% had earned graduate college degrees. About one-fifth of the sample reported having been employed with their organization for one year or less, 40% for two to five years, 20% for six to ten years and 17% for eleven years or more. Approximately 46% of the participants perceived themselves to be in the lowest levels of their organization's formal hierarchy, while only 1% located themselves at the highest level in their organization.

Data Collection Procedures

Prior to data collection, the researcher asked a liaison in each organization to inform employees that they would be participating in a study concerning how people communicate during organizational decision making. At that time, participants also were informed of when and where data would be collected, that their participation in the study was voluntary and that results would be reported in a manner that protected their anonymity. The researcher repeated the latter two points at the time of data collection. Participants also were informed of the option to leave a particular item blank if they felt that by responding their identity would be revealed. Finally, participants were informed that they would have access to the final summary report that their organization would receive once the research was completed. Data were typically collected in a conference room within each organization with groups of respondents scheduled at 45-minute intervals. The organizational liaisons were asked to schedule subordinates and their supervisors in separate response groups.

Data Gathering Instruments

One questionnaire was prepared and used to collect data for this study. The questionnaire included: the Index of Actual Participation, the Leader-Member Exchange Scale, and three upward-influence scales constructed specifically for use in this study.

An adapted version of the Index of Actual Participation (Hage & Aiken, 1967) measured workers' perceptions of the extent to which they participated in administrative and policy decisions in their organizations. This scale consists of four items that participants responded to on a series of five-point scales using "never" to "always" as anchors. Since the Index of Actual Participation was designed initially for use within social service organizations, items from the original scale were slightly reworded to be equally relevant to business and industrial settings. For example, instead of asking respondents about the extent to which they participated in decisions to adopt new programs, they were asked to indicate

the extent to which they participated in decisions to adopt new products/programs. A reliability analysis conducted on this slightly revised version of the Index of Actual Participation indicated that it was internally consistent (alpha = .90).

The Leader-Member Exchange Scale (Craen, Liden & Hoel, 1982) was used to measure subordinates' perceptions of the quality of their supervisory relationship. This scale is composed of five items that participants responded to on a series of four-point scales. A reliability analysis suggests that the scale is sufficiently reliable (alpha = .76).

The measures of upward influence were designed to test the expanded model of political communication described earlier. Three scales were constructed based on a review of the upward influence literature and research related to the use of persuasive appeals in a variety of interpersonal situations. These scales were designed to assess: (1) open upward influence (tactics with open means/open ends), (2) strategic upward influence (tactics with open means/closed ends or with closed means/open ends), and (3) political upward influence (tactics with closed means/closed ends). All three scales measured message selection frequency using a five-point Likert response format ranging from "Never" (1) to "Always" (5) as anchors.

A pilot study was conducted in which all three scales were administered to 165 undergraduate students enrolled in communication courses at a large university in the southwest. A factor analysis (principal components-varimax rotation) of responses resulted in a multiple factor solution which was difficult to interpret. Consequently, a decision was made to retain items whose factor loadings were at least .60 on one factor and no more than .40 on any other factor. In addition, single-item factors were excluded. A second factor analysis (principal components-varimax rotation) of this attenuated pool of items resulted in a four-factor solution which accounted for 56% of the total item variance.

The second phase of scale development consisted of attempts to improve the technical character of the original items and to construct new items that further tapped the conceptual characteristics of open upward influence, strategic upward influence and political upward influence. These revised scales were administered to the participants in the present research. Sixteen items measured open upward influence, fifteen measured strategic upward influence and thirteen measured political upward influence. A factor analysis of the open upward influence scale resulted in a nine item, one-factor solution which explained 44% of the total item variance. A factor analysis of the political upward influence scale resulted in a ten-item, one-factor solution which accounted for 37% of the total item variance. A factor analysis of the Strategic Upward Influence scale, however, yielded a two-factor solution. The first factor (Strategic Upward Influence A) contained seven items and accounted for 29% of the variance, while the second factor (Strategic Upward Influence B) contained five items and explained 11% of the variance. The first scale consisted of items designed to measure open means and closed ends (e.g., manipulating the size of an initial request), as well as items designed to measure closed means and open ends (e.g., ingratiation techniques, selective information sharing). The second scale contained items designed to measure closed means and open ends, but in addition, three of the five items appear to involve the ability to assume the perspective of the supervisor (e.g., stressing common opinions, arguing for ideas in terms of what is important to the supervisor). (See Table 1 for a listing of scale items and factor scores.)

Table 1. Upward Influence Scale Items and Factor Scores

Items	Factor Scores
Open Upward Influence (9 items formed one factor, explaining 44% of the variance)	
Explain my reasons for my point of view.	.72
Make a careful presentation of my idea.	.67
Use logic to convince my supervisor of the worth of my ideas.	.77
Listen carefully to what my supervisor says and ask him/her to explain points I don't understand.	.53
Schedule a meeting to tell my supervisor what I think.	.62
Say what I think in a direct and straightforward manner.	.66
Make my argument more than once, but not so often that my supervisor sees me as a nuisance.	.52
Offer my supervisor access to information I've collected that supports my point of view.	.74
Openly express my thoughts to my supervisor.	.69
Strategic Upward Influence-A (7 items formed the first factor, explaining 29% of the variance)	
Ask for *less* than what I really want, hoping to get more later.	.42
Use different words than I normally would in everyday conversations with my co-workers.	.42
Compliment my supervisor before saying what I think.	.53
Leave out information that would weaken my position.	.66
Avoid saying exactly what I think, but try to get what I want in other ways.	.72
Say things to get my supervisor to feel good about me even though I am displeased with what s/he thinks.	.71
Ask for *more* than is necessary, hoping to come closer to getting what I want.	.58
Strategic Upward Influence-B (5 items formed the second factor, explaining 11% of the variance)	
Discuss things I have in common with my supervisor.	.42
Argue for my idea in terms of what I know is important to my supervisor.	.64
Mention possible problems associated with my idea, but point out how its benefits outweigh its costs.	.77
Listen for inconsistencies in my supervisor's point of view.	.56
Stress the ways in which my point of view is similar to my supervisor's.	.69
Political Upward Influence (10 items formed one factor, explaining 37% of the variance)	
Do things to encourage my supervisor to go on talking even though I'm not listening to him/her.	.53
Say things that may not be true if it will make my supervisor feel good about me.	.66
Say things I know my supervisor agrees with even if I don't believe them myself.	.61
Fake knowing more than I do.	.63
Encourage my supervisor to tell me things about himself/herself that I'd be reluctant to tell about myself.	.57
Discuss mistakes of co-workers hoping to make myself look better.	.64
Maneuver behind my supervisor's back to get what I want.	.53
Discuss my reputation in the organization for being well-liked, loyal and honest, even if that is not the case.	.56
Take credit for others' ideas.	.66
Manipulate my supervisor into going along with my idea.	.62

A reliability analysis conducted on each of the four scales indicated that two of the scales were internally consistent (alpha = .84 for the Open Upward Influence scale, .81 for the Political Upward Influence scale). Both of the strategic upward influence scales approached acceptable levels of reliability (alpha = .71 for strategic upward influence-a, .65 for strategic upward influence-b).

Data Analysis

Prior to examining the hypotheses and research question, two levels of centralization and leader-member exchange were formed by computing median splits for data secured from the Index of Actual Participation (median = 8.07, sd = 4.58), and the Leader-Member Exchange Scale (median = 14.51, sd = 3.11). Using this procedure, participants were assigned to a high or low pdm group and a supervisory in-group or out-group. Because of a considerable degree of collinearity between the four influence measures (median *r* is approximately .39), a multivariate statistical procedure (MANOVA) was used to explore the hypotheses and research question. When necessary, significant multivariate effects were probed through the use of ANOVA procedures and Newman-Keuls multiple comparison tests.

Results

Research question one asked to what extent organizational membership affected subordinates' upward influence choices. While there were no significant multivariate interaction effects, results of the MANOVA analysis revealed a significant multivariate main effect for organizational membership (Mult. F = 3.23, df = 16,935, p < .000, R^2 = .15). Examination of the univariate ANOVA results revealed main effects for all four tactic types: open upward influence (F = 8.21, df = 4,347, p < .00, eta^2 = .08), strategic upward influence-A (F = 5.87, df = 4,346, p < .00, eta^2 = .06), strategic upward influence-B (F = 12.85, df = 4,344, p < -00, eta^2 = .13) and political upward influence (F = 4.95, df = 4,350, p < .00, eta^2 = .05). As the means in Table 2 suggest and post hoc Newman-Keuls multiple comparison tests confirmed, those individuals in organization 1 used significantly more open upward influence than did those in organizations 2, 3, and 5, and those individuals in organization 4 used significantly more open upward influence than did those in organization 2. Those individuals in organizations 1, 3, and 5 used significantly more strategic upward influence-A than did those in organization 2. Those individuals in organization 1 used significantly more strategic upward influence-B than did those in any of the four remaining organizations, and those in organization 5 used significantly more strategic upward influence-B than did those in organization 2. Those in organizations 1 and 5 used significantly more political upward influence than did those in organizations 2 and 4.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations for Use of Upward Influence Message Types by Organizational Membership

	Organization[A]													
	One			Two			Three			Four			Five		
Message Type	Mean	SD	(n)	Mean	SD	(n)	Mean	SD	(n)	Mean	SD	(n)	Mean	SD	(n)
Open Upward Influence	34.90	4.05	87	30.46	7.34	69	32.00	6.80	37	33.29	5.29	52	31.02	5.77	92
Strategic Upward Influence-A	14.77	3.95	87	11.87	4.32	69	14.08	3.78	37	13.02	3.71	52	13.98	3.66	92
Strategic Upward Influence-B	16.31	2.91	87	12.71	4.43	69	14.10	3.14	37	13.54	3.15	52	14.33	2.78	92
Political Upward Influence	15.16	4.14	87	13.26	4.13	69	14.57	4.69	37	12.90	2.86	52	15.29	4.34	92

A. n = 337

Hypothesis 1 proposed that subordinate perceptions of participation in decision making would significantly affect their selection of upward influence tactics. Results of the MANOVA analysis revealed a significant main effect for participation in decision making (Mult. $F = 6.43$, $df = 4,306$, $p < .000$, $R^2 = .08$). Examination of the univariate ANOVA results revealed significant main effects for open upward influence ($F = 19.41$, $df = 1,309$, $p < .00$, $eta^2 = .06$) and strategic upward influence-B ($F = 17.97$, $df = 1,309$, $p < .00$, $eta^2 = .05$). As the means in Table 3 suggest, those individuals in the high participation group reported using significantly more open upward influence and strategic upward influence-B than did those in the low participation group.

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations for Use of Upward Influence Message Types by PDM Group

	Participation in Decision Making[A]					
	High			Low		
Message Types	Mean	SD	(n)	Mean	SD	(n)
Open Upward Influence	34.54	4.40	150	30.95	6.60	186
Strategic Upward Influence-A	13.93	3.77	150	13.34	4.20	186
Strategic Upward Influence-B	15.44	2.94	150	13.45	3.67	186
Political Upward Influence	14.54	4.35	150	14.19	3.93	186

A. n = 336

Hypothesis 2 proposed that subordinates' perceptions of leader-member exchange would significantly affect their selection of upward influence tactics. Results of the MANOVA analysis revealed a significant main effect for leader-member exchange (Mult. $F = 2.50$, $df = 4,306$, $p < .04$, $R^2 = .03$). Examination of the univariate ANOVA results revealed significant main effects for open upward influence ($F = 6.47$, $df = 1,309$, $p < .01$, $eta^2 = .02$) and political upward influence ($F = 4.22$, $df = 1,309$, $p < .04$, $eta^2 = .01$). As the means in Table 4 suggest, those individuals who perceive an in-group supervisory relationship select open upward influence significantly more often, and political upward influence significantly less often than do those who perceive an out-group supervisory relationship.

Table 4. Means and Standard Deviations for Use of Upward Influence Message Types by LMX Group

	Leader-Member Exchange[A]					
	In-group			Out-group		
Message Types	Mean	SD	(n)	Mean	SD	(n)
Open Upward Influence	33.84	4.94	166	30.95	6.48	164
Strategic Upward Influence-A	13.52	3.66	166	13.87	4.30	164
Strategic Upward Influence-B	15.04	3.08	166	13.73	3.83	164
Political Upward Influence	13.99	3.88	166	14.93	4.47	164

A. n = 330

Discussion

The results of this research demonstrate that centralization of authority, leader-member relationship, and organizational membership all significantly affect subordinates' upward influence tactic choices. Subordinates who participate in decision making to a greater extent select significantly more open upward influence and strategic upward influence-b. In legitimating upward influence attempts, decentralized decision making appears to promote the use of open, information-based tactics as well as those that reflect sensitivity to a supervisor's point of view. The results of this study do not support the possibility that low participation subordinates select more political upward influence tactics in order to be heard. A lack of opportunity to participate in organizational decision making does not appear to drive subordinates "underground." Instead, the use of strategic upward influence-A and political upward influence is fairly low and constant across both centralization conditions. That low participation subordinates also are not selecting significantly more indirect or covert upward influence tactics, suggests that they are generally less active than high participation subordinates in attempting influence. The results of this study combined with others (Harrison, 1985) suggest that participation in decision making can affect related communication habits. Failing to provide legitimate avenues for worker participation in decision making can suppress the overall amount of upward influence activity as well as the range of tactic types chosen.

The results of this study reveal that subordinates' perceptions of leader-member exchange also affect their selection of upward influence tactics. That in-group subordinates report an increase in arguing openly for their ideas and opinions is consistent with the results of Fairhurst and Chandler (1989). Believing that their supervisors are essentially "on their side," in-group subordinates may self-edit less, express their viewpoints more freely, and feel less compelled to protect themselves from potentially nonsupportive or retaliatory responses. The fact that out-group subordinates report using significantly more political upward influence may be related to the increased use of unilateral, downward influence by supervisors with out-group subordinates. In yielding more often to supervisory directives, out-group subordinates may experience less success arguing openly for their ideas. They may choose to supplement their obvious influence attempts with covert action such as avoiding talking to a supervisor, simply proceeding with some preferred course of action, or maneuvering behind a supervisor's back to obtain desired outcomes. While the use of covert upward influence could possibly jeopardize in-group supervisory relationships (i.e., a supervisor could detect a subordinate's deception and respond negatively), their use within out-group relationships may be less risky since subordinates would have less to lose if caught in their deception.

While centralization and the quality of supervisory relationship both significantly affect the selection of upward influence tactics, organizational membership affects the selection of all four tactic types (rather than just one or two) and also explains the greatest amount of variance in the upward influence measures. Thus, there may be something particularly important about organizational membership as a source of variation in influence activity. Through organizational socialization and individualization processes Oablin & Krone,

1987), subordinates may learn to enact locally appropriate and effective influence behaviors. And what constitutes appropriate and effective upward influence may vary somewhat from one organization to the next. That organizational membership is a significant predictor of upward influence tactic choice also supports those who argue that "the people make the place" (Schneider, 1987) as well as the structurationist suggestion that there is something a little unique about every organization (Poole, 1988).

Finally, the calculation of average item scores reveals that in general, open upward influence was selected most frequently, followed by strategic upward influence-b, strategic upward influence-a and political upward influence. Open upward influence may be selected most frequently because it requires less rhetorical finesse than does strategic upward influence-a or -b. Behaviors such as presenting two-sided arguments, assessing what is important to a supervisor and appealing to those attitudes and values during upward influence attempts require more persuasive skill than the use of information-based influence tactics. Also, the use of open upward influence involves less risk than the use of political upward influence. In selecting political tactics, subordinates actively deceive their supervisors in the course of attempting influence. While the use of these tactics may in fact help subordinates accomplish work-related goals, if detected their use could also jeopardize a trusting supervisory relationship (e.g., Bok, 1978).

While there are clear patterns in how organizational membership, centralization, and leader-member relationship affect upward influence, it also is important to note the limitations of this study. First, the data collection procedures employed are subject to the standard criticisms leveled against the use of all strategy checklist approaches (see Seibold, Cantrill & Meyers, 1985 for a review). In anticipation of some of these criticisms, a manipulation check item was included to assess how typical respondents thought the tactics were of their everyday influence attempts. Respondents indicated that the list of influence tactics were moderately typical of the ones that they would use every day. Equally important however, are potential problems with the construct validity of the political model of communication behavior extended and tested in this study. Although discussion with experienced organizational members suggests that the model possesses face validity, the problems with the factor analysis call into question its construct validity. Obviously, it is very difficult to develop survey items that can capture the subtle differences between messages with open vs. closed means and ends.

Despite these problems, this study detects patterns in what causes certain types of tactics to be selected over others. Given the importance of effective subordinate influence to organizations and their members, organizational leaders should be sensitive to situational sources of variability in influence tactic choice. They should be aware that within a single organization, informal "rules" or the general climate may mitigate against upward influence attempts or attempts using specific types of tactics. In addition, organizational leaders could be more devoted to ensuring that subordinates receive adequate training in how to assess situational features, make appropriate and effective tactic choices, and enact the necessary behaviors to increase their likelihood of being heard. Finally, while it is sensible to assume that organizational features such as the ones explored in this study affect tactic

selection because they also affect subordinates' perceptions of tactic availability, appropriateness and effectiveness, this assumption remains to be explicitly examined in future research.

Acknowledgments – Kathleen J. Krone (Ph.D., University of Texas at Austin, 1985) is an assistant professor at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln in the Department of Speech Communication, Lincoln, Nebraska 68588. This manuscript is based in part on my doctoral dissertation which was completed under the direction of Fredric M. Jablin at the University of Texas at Austin. I would like to express my appreciation to Professor Jablin for the challenge and support he has provided along the way. I would also like to thank two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on earlier versions of the manuscript.

References

Allen, R. W., Madison, D. L., Porter, L. W., Renwick, P. A., & Mayes, B. T. (1979). Organizational politics: Tactics and characteristics of its actors. *California Management Review, 22,* 77–83.

Athanassiades, J. C. (1973). The distortion of upward communication in hierarchical organizations. *Academy of Management Journal, 76,* 207–226.

Barnard, C. (1938). *Organizational and management*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Baxter, L. (1984). An investigation into compliance-gaining as politeness. *Human Communication Research, 10,* 427–456.

Bok, S. (1978). *Lying: Moral choice in public and private life*. New York: Pantheon.

Byrne, D. (1969). Attitude and attraction. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), Advances in experimental and social psychology (Vol. 4, pp. 30–89). New York: Academic Press.

Campbell, D. T. (1958). Systematic error on the part of human links in communication systems. *Information and Control, 1,* 334–369.

Cheng, J. (1983). Organizational context and upward influence: An experimental study of the use of power tactics. *Group and organization studies, 8,* 337–355.

Cohen, A. (1958). Upward communication in experimentally created hierarchies. *Human Relations, 77,* 41–53.

Dalton, D. R., Todor, W. D., Spendolini, M. J., Fielding, C. J., & Porter, L. W. (1980). Organizational structure and performance: A critical review. *Academy of Management Review, 5,* 49–64.

Dienesch, R. M., & Liden, R. C. (1986). Leader-member exchange model of leadership: A critique and further development. *Academy of Management Review, 11,* 618–634.

Dillard, J. P., Hunter, J. E., & Burgoon, M. (1984). Sequential request persuasive strategies: Meta-analysis of foot-in-the-door and door-in-the-face. *Human Communication Research, 10,* 461–488.

Erez, M., Rim, Y., & Keider, I. (1986). The two sides of the tactics of influence: Agent vs. target. *Journal of Occupational Psychology, 59,* 25–39.

Fairhurst, C. T., & Chandler, T. A. (1989). Social structure in leader-member interaction. *Communication Monographs, 56,* 215–239.

Fairhurst, C. T., Rogers, L. E., & Sarr, R. A. (1987). Manager-subordinate control patterns and judgments about the relationship. In M. McLaughlin (Ed.). *Communication yearbook 10* (395–415). Beverly Hills: Sage.

Falcione, R. L., McCroskey, J. C, & Daly, J. A. (1977). Job satisfaction as a function of employees' communication apprehension, self-esteem and perceptions of their immediate supervisors. In B. Rubin (Ed.), *Communication yearbook 1*, (pp. 363–366). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Feynman, R. P. (1988). An outsider's inside view of the Challenger inquiry. *Physics Today*, February.

Goffman, E. (1959). The presentation of self in everyday life. New York: Doubleday & Co., 1959.

Graen, C. (1976). Role-making processes within complex organizations. In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.), Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology (pp. 1455–1525). Chicago: Rand McNally.

Graen, C., Liden, R., & Hoel, W. (1982). Role of leadership in the employee withdrawal process. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 67*, 868–872.

Hage, J., & Aiken, M. (1967). Relationship of centralization to other structural properties. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 12*, 72–92.

Hage, J., & Aiken, M. (1969). Routine technology, social structure and organizational goals. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 14*, 366–376.

Hage, J., Aiken, M., & Marrett, C. (1971). Organization structure and communication. *American Sociological Review, 36*, 860–871.

Harrison, T. M. (1985). Communication and participative decision making: An exploratory study. *Personnel Psychology, 38*, 93–116.

Jablin, F. M., & Krone, K. J. (1987). Organizational assimilation. In C. Berger & S. Chaffee (Eds.), *Handbook of communication science* (pp. 711–746). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Karasek, R. A. (1979). Job demands, job decision latitude, and mental strain: Implications for job redesign. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 24*, 285–308.

Kelly, C. M. (1974). Empathic listening. In R. S. Cathcart & L. A. Samover (Eds.), *Small group communication: A reader* (4th edition, pp. 296–303). Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown.

Kipnis, D., Schmidt, S. M., & Wilkinson, I. (1980). Intraorganizational influence tactics: Explorations in getting one's way. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 65*, 440–452.

Krone, K. J. (1985). Subordinate influence in organizations. The differential use of upward influence messages in decision making contexts. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Texas at Austin.

Krone, K. J., & Ludlum, J. T. (1990). An organizational perspective on interpersonal influence. In J. P. Dillard (Ed.), *Seeking compliance: The production of interpersonal influence messages* (pp. 123–142). Scottsdale, AZ: Corsuch Scarisbrick, Publishers.

Lamude, K. C., Daniels, T. D., & White, K. D. (1987). Managing the boss: Locus of control and subordinates' selection of compliance-gaining strategies in upward communication. *Management Communication Quarterly, 1*, 232–259.

Marwell, C., & Schmitt, D. R. (1967). Dimensions of compliance-gaining behavior: An empirical analysis. *Sociometry, 30*, 350–364.

Mechanic, D. (1962). Sources of power of lower participants in complex organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 23*, 137–156.

Michener, H. A., Plazewski, J. C, & Vaske, J. J. (1979). Ingratiation tactics channeled by target values and threat capability. *Journal of Personality, 47*, 36–56.

Mowday, R. T. (1978). The exercise of upward influence in organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 23*, 137–156.

O'Reilly, C. A., & Roberts, K. H. (1974). Information filtration in organizations—Three experiments. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 11*, 253–265.

Pfeffer, J. L., Salancik, C. R., & Leblebici, H. (1976). The effect of uncertainty on the use of social influence in organizational decision making. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 21,* 227–245.

Poole, M. S. (1988). Communication and the structuring of organizations. Prepared for L. Browning (Ed.) *New frontiers of organizational communication*.

Porter, L. W., Allen, R. W., & Angle, H. L. (1981). The politics of upward influence in organizations. In L. L. Cummings & B. Staw (Eds.), *Research in organizational behavior* (pp. 109–149). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Read, W. H. (1962). Upward communication in industrial hierarchies. *Human Relations, 15,* 3–15.

Roberts, K. H., & O'Reilly, C. A. (1974). Failures in upward communication: Three possible culprits. *Academy of Management Journal, 17,* 205–215.

Rosen, S., & Tesser, A. (1970). On reluctance to communicate undesirable information: The MUM effect. *Sociometry, 33,* 253–263.

Schilit, W. K., & Locke, E. A. (1982). A study of upward influence in organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 27,* 304–316.

Schneider, B. (1987). The people make the place. *Personnel Psychology, 40,* 437–453.

Seibold, D. R., Cantrill, J. C., & Meyers, R. A. (1985). Communication and interpersonal influence. In M. L. Knapp & C. R. Miller (Eds.), *Handbook of interpersonal communication* (pp. 551–611). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Simon, H. A. (1957). *Administrative behavior*. New York: Macmillan.

Weinstein, D. (1979). *Bureaucratic opposition: Challenging abuses at the workplace*. New York: Pergamon Press.

Wortman, C. B., & Linsenmeier, J. W. (1982). Interpersonal attraction and techniques of ingratiation in organizational settings. In B. Staw & C. Salancik (Eds.), *New directions in organizational behavior* (pp. 133–178). Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing Co.

Young, J. W. (1978). The subordinate's exposure of organizational vulnerability to the superior: Sex and organizational effects. *Academy of Management Journal, 21,* 113–122.