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Abstract

This research examined the extent to which subordinates' perceptions of supervisory relationship quality affected how frequently they use different types of tactics in their self-reported upward influence attempts. Based on their responses to the Leader-Member Exchange Scale (1982), three hundred and thirty-seven respondents from five different organizations were classified into an in-group or out-group supervisory relationship. As a part of a larger study, a typology of upward influence messages was created based on the extent to which: (l) 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 persuasion, strategic persuasion, and manipulation. MANOVA results indicated that in-group subordinates used significantly more open persuasion and strategic persuasion, and significantly less manipulation in their upward influence attempts than did out-group subordinates. Results are discussed in terms of the communicative aspects of the leader-member exchange construct.

Leader-member exchange is a way to conceptualize the nature of superior-subordinate role relationships in organizations. This framework recognizes that supervisory relationships are rarely equivalent and that they develop in ways that cast subordinates in in-group or out-group roles (e.g., Dansereau, Graen & Haga, 1975; Graen & Cashman, 1975). In-group subordinates are more involved in communicating and administering activities, and seem to enjoy greater work-related support and responsiveness from their supervisors. Out-group subordinates tend to develop more formal, restricted relationships with their supervisors and perform fairly routine tasks in their workgroups (Graen, 1976). While some re-conceptualization of the leader member exchange construct has occurred (see Dienesch &

Liden, 1986; Graen & Scandura, 1987), it is generally agreed that leader-member relationships are embedded in groups and that these relationships are not necessarily equivalent.

Since the leader-member exchange framework is grounded in a theory of organizational role-making (Graen, 1976), it at least implies that communication is central to the development of nonequivalent supervisory relationships. However, the framework stops short of explicating how or if communication differs across relationships of varying quality. The purpose of the present study is to examine the extent to which subordinates' in-group or out-group status affects the frequency with which they use three types of upward influence tactics: open persuasion, strategic persuasion, and manipulation.

Upward Influence and Leader-Member Exchange

Upward Influence
In recent years, organizational participants have been observed and have described themselves using a variety of upward influence messages (see Schilit & Locke [1982] for a review). At this time, little consensus exists among researchers as to what constitutes the critical, underlying dimensions of upward influence. A review of the most widely used upward influence typologies reveals that there are almost as many different organizing frameworks for these messages as there are published works. For example, Allen, Madison, Porter, Renwick, and Mayes (1979) view influence methods as either proactive or reactive tactics. Others view influence as generally political or nonpolitical activity (Madison, Allen, Porter, Renwick, & Mayes, 1980; Porter, Allen & Angle, 1981). In addition, while Weinstein (1979) categorizes upward influence in terms of direct or indirect methods, Perreault & Miles (1978) characterize influence as strategies which derive from either formal or informal bases of power within the organization.

Further, only a few typologies have been developed to specifically measure influence outside the range of one's formal authority and thus seem to apply more directly to upward influence activity (e.g., Porter et al., 1981). Other classifications of organizational influence activity are based on collections of tactics designed to measure influence in all directions (Kipnis, Schmidt & Wilkinson, 1980), and thus may obscure that which may be unique about upward influence. Finally, without exception, existing typologies neglect the potentially important role of message reception behaviors in the process of attempting upward influence.

Due to the lack of agreement on important dimensions underlying influence attempts, a relative lack of attention to what may be unique about upward influence in particular, and the failure to incorporate message reception behaviors in upward influence typologies, the following framework is proposed.

Proposed Typology of Upward Influence Tactics
Upward influence attempts are motivated by a desire for some alternative condition than what presently exists in the organization (e.g., Weinstein, 1979). Subordinates may express their influence attempts openly. However, because of the perceived ability of supervisors to control the satisfaction of subordinates' needs in the organization (e.g., Kelly, 1951; Co-

hen, 1958; Athanassiades, 1973, 1974), subordinates may tend to pursue their desired outcomes in edited and self-protective ways. Any framework for organizing upward influence tactics should consider: (1) the subordinate's desired outcomes and whether or not these are explicitly stated, and (2) the means employed to express these messages and the explicitness with which they are expressed.

Adapted from a model of political behavior in organizations, the proposed typology clusters previously identified influence methods according to whether the means of influence and the desired outcome are openly expressed or left undisclosed (Porter et al., 1981). In addition, this typology has been extended to include subordinate listening behaviors in upward influence attempts. Finally, since the present research focuses exclusively on superior subordinate communication, the typology pays particular attention to the upward influence tactics that workers select in face-to-face interaction with their supervisors rather than methods such as coalition formation which are viable approaches for getting one's way, but which mainly involve communication with co-workers.

Open Persuasion

When subordinates use open persuasion to affect their supervisors' thinking, their influence attempts are overt and their desired outcomes are fully disclosed. With the use of this tactic type, subordinates listen empathically and openly argue for some desired course of action that is made explicit during the influence attempt. Open persuasion involves giving reasons and providing factual support for one's point of view (Kipnis et al., 1980; Porter et al., 1981). Subordinates use open persuasion to tell their supervisors what they actually think and to support their ideas with pertinent information and facts.

Strategic Persuasion

Strategic upward influence attempts are characterized by the use of either open influence methods, or clearly stated desired outcomes. With the use of strategic persuasion, subordinates are only partially open as they verbally pursue a desired outcome. Influence attempts with open means and closed ends involve the use of foot-in-the-door and door-in-the-face techniques (see Burgoon & Bettinghaus, 1980, pp. 158–159). Both of these techniques involve manipulating the size of the initial request in an influence attempt. When subordinates use this form of strategic persuasion, it is obvious that an influence attempt is occurring, yet their preferred outcomes are never explicitly stated. Subordinates' listening behavior can be thought of in terms of degree of openness in means and ends as well. For example, subordinates may listen carefully to what their supervisors say, but they may do so in order to incorporate their supervisors' perspectives in subsequent influence attempts.

Influence attempts involving closed means and open ends include manipulating the use of information, managing one's self-presentation and using ingratiation behaviors (Kipnis et al., 1980; Porter et al., 1981). "Managing" information in upward influence attempts includes positively distorting communication (e.g., Rosen & Tesser, 1970; O'Reilly & Roberts, 1974) and overwhelming supervisors with information (Allen et al., 1979). Managing one's self-presentation in an organization involves pointing out previous personal accomplishments to create and maintain the impression of competency and loyalty (Allen et al., 1979),

or carefully managing the public presentation of winning and losing so as not to threaten one's boss (Browning & Gilchrist, 1980). With the use of ingratiation behaviors, subordinates emphasize what they have in common with their supervisors and deemphasize their differences (Wortman & Linsenmeier, 1977). This can be a particularly effective covert influence method since the extent of interpersonal influence is typically related to the perceived similarity between interactants (e.g., Falcione, McCroskey & Daly, 1977). Other-enhancement behaviors (Jones, Gergen & Jones, 1963) are additional examples of ingratiation and include acting very humbly while in the presence of one's boss and making a point of complimenting him or her (Allen et al., 1979; Kipnis et al., 1980).

Manipulation

More than either of the two previous tactic types, the use of manipulation involves disguising the attempt to exercise upward influence. Manipulative upward influence tactics are comparatively more deceptive than strategic persuasion since the use of manipulation involves hiding both the means of influence and the desired outcomes. Using manipulative messages involves concealing from one's supervisor the real reasons and the ultimate desired outcomes motivating an influence attempt (Porter et al., 1981). For example, subordinates may enhance their image by discussing the mistakes of co-workers with a supervisor, or listen manipulatively by encouraging their supervisors to talk, even though they aren't listening to what their supervisors are saying. Manipulative tactics are distinct from strategic persuasion in that the methods of influence and the desired outcome both remain hidden.

In summary, the proposed framework attempts to integrate existing measures of upward influence, and is based on the assumption that subordinates are more or less open in their attempts to affect their supervisors' thinking. The present study investigates the extent to which subordinates' perceptions of leader-member exchange affect the frequency with which they use open persuasion, strategic persuasion and manipulation.

Leader-Member Exchange and Communication

Communication researchers have begun to explore how communication directly affects or is affected by the quality of leader-member exchange. This work reveals: (1) greater conversational dominance on the part of managers in out-group leader-member exchanges (Fairhurst, Rogers & Sarr, 1986), and (2) greater evidence of mutual persuasion (including challenges to the supervisor's authority) in an in-group leader-member conversation than in an out-group one (Fairhurst &Chandler, 1989).

The results of this research suggest that the nature of upward influence may vary in relationships of varying quality as well. If out-group subordinates are more conversationally submissive than their supervisors, they also may be less active in attempting open and strategic upward influence since the use of these tactics involves a fairly high level of verbal activity. If out-group subordinates attempt upward influence, it might be through the use of less verbal, manipulative upward influence tactics, such as simply proceeding with one's own plans rather than discussing them with a supervisor.

The following research question is posed to further explore the relationship between subordinates' perceptions of leader-member exchange and the frequency with which they use various types of upward influence tactics with their supervisors:

RQ1: What differences, if any, exist in the frequency with which in-group and out-group subordinates report using open persuasion, strategic persuasion and manipulation in their upward influence attempts with supervisors?

Methodology

Research Setting

Organizations
Data for this study were collected from five different organizations located in a large metropolitan area in the southwestern United States. Organizations ranged in size from 100 employees to several thousand and included a computer software development firm (n = 93), a public utility company (n = 95), a large state agency (n = 42), an aerospace technology company (n = 81), and an insurance company (n = 53).[1]

Respondents
Each subject who participated in the study had a supervisor to whom s/he reported. The subject population was approximately 53% male, with a little over 75% falling between the ages of 20–39. Only 5% had not finished high school, a little over half had completed high school (54%), almost a third held undergraduate college degrees (32%), and 6% had earned graduate college degrees. About one-fifth of the participants (22%) had 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.

Data-Collection Procedures and Instruments
Prior to data collection, the researcher asked a liaison person in each of the five organizations to notify employees of the purpose of the study, when and how data would be collected and how data would be handled and reported. Groups of 10–20 respondents were scheduled at approximately 45 minute intervals and administered a questionnaire.

The Leader-Member Exchange Scale (Graen, Liden & Hoel, 1982) was used to measure subordinates' perceptions of the quality of their supervisory relationship. This scale is comprised 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).

Three upward influence scales were constructed based on a review of the upward influence literature and research related to listening behavior and the use of persuasive appeals in a variety of interpersonal communication situations. All three scales measured frequency of use based on a five-point Likert response format, using *never* (1) to *always* as anchors. The original scales were tested in a pilot study and items revised for use in the present study (Krone, 1985). Sixteen items measured open persuasion, fifteen measured strategic persuasion, and thirteen measured manipulation. Data collected from each of

these scales was subjected to individual principal components factor analysis. A factor analysis of the Open Persuasion Scale resulted in a nine item, one-factor solution which explained 44% of the total item variance. A factor analysis of the Manipulation Scale resulted in a ten-item, one-factor solution which accounted for 37% of the total item variance. A factor analysis of the Strategic Persuasion Scale, however yielded a two-factor solution. The first factor (Strategic Persuasion A) contained seven items and accounted for 29% of the variance, while the second factor (Strategic Persuasion B) contained five items and explained 11% of the variance. Strategic Persuasion (A) contained 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). Strategic Persuasion (B) 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 in the course of attempting influence (e.g., stressing common opinions, arguing for ideas in terms of what is important to the supervisor). (Items included on each scale are available from the author.)

A reliability analysis conducted on each of the four measures indicated that two scales are internally consistent (alpha = .84 for the Open Persuasion Scale; .81 for the Manipulation Scale). Both Strategic Persuasion Scales are approaching acceptable levels of reliability (alpha = .71 for (A) and .65 for (B)).

Data Analysis

Prior to examining the research question, a median split was computed for data secured from the Leader-Member Exchange Scale (median = 14.51, sd = 3.11). Using this procedure, participants were assigned to 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 research question.

Results

Results of the multivariate analysis of variance revealed significant differences in the types of upward influence tactics reported by in-group vs. out-group subordinates (Mult.F = 7.44, df = 4,332, p < .00001, R^2 = .03). Results of the univariate analyses revealed significant differences between groups for three of the four tactic types; open persuasion (F = 18.47, df = 1,335, p < .0002, eta^2 = .05), strategic persuasion (b) (F = 10.68, df = 1,335, p < .001, eta^2 = .03), and manipulation (F = 5.34, df = 1,335, p < .02, eta^2 = .02). No significant differences were found between groups for the use of strategic persuasion (a) (F = 1.26, df = 1,335, p < .263, eta^2 = .004).

An inspection of the group means in Table 1 suggests that subordinates who perceive higher quality exchanges with their supervisors also reported using significantly more open persuasion (X = 33.71, sd = 5.25), strategic persuasion (b) (X = 14.97, sd = 3.12), and significantly less manipulation (X = 13.88, sd = 3.85) in their upward influence attempts than did subordinates who perceived lower quality exchanges (open persuasion X = 30.95, sd = 6.48; strategic persuasion (b) X = 13.73, sd = 3.83, and manipulation X = 14.93, sd = 4.47).

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations for Subordinates' Use of Upward Influence Tactic Type by Their Perceptions of Leader-Member Exchange

| | Subordinates' Perceptions of Leader-Member Exchange | | | | | |
| | Low | | | High | | |
Tactic Type	Mean	SD	(n)	Mean	SD	(n)
Open Persuasion	30.95	6.48	164	33.71	5.25	173
Strategic Persuasion (a)	13.86	4.30	164	13.38	3.72	173
Strategic Persuasion (b)	13.73	3.83	164	14.97	3.12	173
Manipulation	14.93	4.47	164	13.88	3.85	173

Discussion

The results of this research suggest some pattern in how subordinates' perceptions of leader-member exchange quality affect their selection of upward influence tactics. Specifically, in-group subordinates select open persuasion and strategic persuasion (b) more frequently than do out-group subordinates, while out-group subordinates select manipulative upward influence tactics more frequently than do in-group subordinates.

That in-group subordinates report an increase in arguing more openly for their ideas and opinions is consistent with the results of Fairhurst and Chandler (1989). Perceptions of a higher quality supervisory relationship may result in less upward distortion in subordinates' upward influence attempts. Believing that their supervisors are essentially *on their side* in the organization may prompt subordinates to engage in less self-editing and to express their viewpoints more freely. Subordinates in higher quality exchanges may feel less compelled to protect themselves from potentially nonsupportive or retaliatory responses.

An increase in the use of strategic persuasion (b) among in-group subordinates may be explained by the extent to which the effective use of these tactics requires some understanding of the supervisor's point of view and an ability to adopt the supervisor's perspective in the course of attempting to influence his or her opinion. Compared to out-group members, in-group subordinates probably have increased knowledge of their supervisors' attitudes and beliefs concerning important issues. Understanding their supervisors' typical responses across a variety of situations may enable subordinates to increasingly incorporate the supervisor's point of view in their upward influence attempts.

While subordinates in both groups report using open persuasion most frequently, the fact that out-group subordinates report using significantly more manipulation in their upward influence attempts than do those in higher quality relationships warrants discussion. Unilateral, downward influence is more characteristic of out-group leader-member relationships, in which subordinates more often yield to supervisory directives. Subordinates in outgroup supervisory relationships may experience less success arguing openly for their ideas. They may find it necessary to supplement their more obvious influence attempts with some covert action. Manipulative upward influence tactics are generally less communicative than are open influence attempts. Their use involves avoiding talking to a supervisor, simply proceeding with some preferred course of action, or maneuvering behind a supervisor's back to obtain desired outcomes. In a supervisory relationship where obvious

and open upward influence attempts are less successful or counter-normative, subordinates may pursue their desired outcomes more covertly. In addition, while the use of manipulative upward influence tactics could possibly jeopardize higher quality supervisory relationships (i.e., a supervisor could detect a subordinate's deception and respond negatively), the use of this upward influence tactic may be less risky in out-group relationships where subordinates would have less to lose if caught in their deception.

Limitations of the Study

The results of this study are somewhat limited by the fairly small percentage of variance that leader-member exchange explains in the upward influence measures. Clearly, other personal, situational and organizational factors must operate to create variability in upward influence tactic choice (see Krone, forthcoming; Krone & Ludlum, 1990; and Ludlum & Krone, 1990). The results of this research do strongly suggest however, that the quality of supervisory relationship should be considered along with other potentially important factors in future studies of organizational influence.

Finally, the quality of leader-member exchange was assessed by measuring only subordinate perceptions of the relationship. While it has been suggested that subordinates' LMX scores are the more reliable means for assessing supervisory relationship quality (Scandura, Graen, & Novak, 1986), it still may be important to know if subordinates' upward influence attempts would differ across *pure* dyads (those in which both parties agree on the nature of their relationship) and *mixed* ones (those in which parties disagree). Future research might examine relationship quality and influence choices from the perspective of both supervisors and subordinates.

Despite these limitations, the results of this study do provide additional evidence that in-group and out-group supervisory relationships are communicatively different. Among other things, the quality of a supervisory relationship helps to explain how subordinates' upward influence attempts vary. That subordinates sometimes argue openly and empathically for their ideas with supervisors, or in other cases proceed more covertly, can be explained in part, by the nature of their relationships with their supervisors.

Note

1. A power analysis (p < .05) indicates that with this sample size there will be a .10 probability of detecting small effects, a .39 probability of detecting medium effects and a .77 probability of detecting large effects (Cohen, 1977).

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