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## UPWARD INFLUENCE TACTICS AS A FUNCTION OF LOCUS OF CONTROL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

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The study is based on a social psychological contingency perspective and was designed to test the hypothesis that the *interaction* between locus of control and superiors' leadership behavior and the goals of influence attempt makes a significant contribution to the variance in upward influence tactics. Sixty-nine engineering undergraduates participated in role-playing situations. Each subject was assigned to each of the six treatment conditions—three leadership behaviour (authoritarian/nurturant-task/participative) and two goals of influence attempt (organizational/personal) conditions. In addition, each subject took a locus of control scale prior to the experimental sessions. Data were analyzed by employing either a  $2 \times 3$  or  $2 \times 2$  factorial design—the first factor in each ANOVA analysis was the individual's locus of control (high/low), and the second factor (repeated ones) was either the superiors' leadership style or the goals of influence attempt conditions. The interaction hypothesis received only moderate support from the analysis. However, the main effects were as clear as one would expect. The implications of the findings are discussed, and the modifications in the basic hypotheses guiding research are proposed.

Power is defined as the capacity to influence others. It is considered to be a facilitating factor when an individual strives to influence others in the achievement of organizational goals (McClelland, 1970). A survey of literature (Porter, Allen & Angle, 1981) indicates that power relationship in general has received attention mostly under such general frameworks as leadership and group dynamics (Ansari, Kapoor & Rehana, 1984; Stitt, Schmidt, Price & Kipnis, 1983). The prime concern in such investigations has been downward or lateral influence processes. Unfortunately, research on the ways in which people at work influence their superiors (i.e., upward influence process) is relatively less. An organization is composed of

both superiors and subordinates, both of whom can influence each other's attempt: for the proper and effective functioning of the organization a kind of harmony and sound relation between the two are needed.

This research has especially been designed to understand the dynamics of upward influence process in contingency perspective—that is, the use of upward influence tactics as a function of the *interaction* between the characteristics of the individual and those of the situation. Each potential agent of upward influence brings to the organization a rich array of personal characteristics. Such individual factors could easily lead two different organizational members either to perceive an identical situation differently or, even if they share identical perception, to behave characteristically in different ways (Porter, et al., 1981). This, then, leads us

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to consider some particular personal characteristics that might help in predicting members' relative propensities to engage in upward influence attempt. One such individual factor widely investigated in social psychological research is locus of control (Rotter, 1954). "Internals" tend to view their outcomes as the result of ability or effort, while "externals" tend to attribute personal consequences to the result of innate task difficulty or to luck (Weiner, 1974). Although Rotter did not use the term power in the conceptualization of locus of control, the term internal-external control appears to be highly consistent with the concept of power as used in this study and as used by Heider (1958) and Thibaut and Kelley (1959). It should be noted that Seeman (1959) used the term powerlessness as an equivalent of external control. It is, therefore, assumed that the dimension of internal-external control reflects the latent power-continuum (Minton, 1957). Information is available to indicate that internals, the individuals who believe that their efforts can affect the outcomes that come to them, actively attempt to influence others (Porter et al., 1981). Hence, it is proposed that internals would tend to prefer overt influence tactics (e.g., reasons); externals (or chance-oriented) would tend to prefer covert methods of influence (e.g., ingratiation).

An individual acts on the basis of what he perceives to be appropriate or acceptable in a given social setting. He receives messages and cues from different sources in the social environment, which form the basis for his perception. An important source of information, according to Franklin (1975) and Likert (1967), is the manager. An individual often learns about the behavioral norms of his organization by observing his superiors' behaviour and his interaction with subordinates (Cheng, 1983). Subsequently, he constructs a reality about the organization environment and adapts his behavior accordingly (Festinger, 1950; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). In this study, three leadership style conditions—authoritarian (*F*), nurturant-task (*NT*), and participative (*P*)—were employed. It was Sinha (1980) who recommended the salience of *NT* style as an alternative model to the Indian culture. The following

typical characteristics that the Indian subordinates bring to their organizations led to the formulation of the *NT* style: (i) the Indian subordinates tend to depend excessively on their superiors with whom they want to cultivate personalized rather than contractual work relationship; (ii) they readily accept the authority of their superior and yield to his demands; (iii) work is not valued in itself; and (iv) yet the subordinates are willing to work even extra hard as a part of their efforts to maintain personalized relationship with the superior. Under such conditions, according to Sinha (1980), a nurturant-task leader will be more effective. The *NT* leader "cares for his subordinates, shows affection, takes personal interest in their well-being, and above all, is committed to their growth" (p.55). He, however, makes his nurturance contingent on subordinates' task accomplishment. The *NT* style has got meaningful support from the later findings, and the distinctions between the *F*, *NT*, and *P* styles are clearly spelled out, as well (Ansari, 1986; Sinha, 1980, 1983). While we do have some evidence as to how managers with different leadership styles influence their subordinates (e.g., Ansari, et al., 1984; Stitt, et al., 1983), we know very little as to how subordinates influence their superiors under different leadership style conditions. However, a few studies merit attention. Cheng (1983) and Ansari and Rehana (1986) hypothesized that individuals working under a rational organizational climate would employ rational tactics, and those working under a political climate would use political tactics. Substantiating their hypothesis through experimental data, they concluded that the use of a particular strategy is a function of the context (climate) of the organization of which the individual is a part. In another experimental study (Ansari & Kapoor, 1986), it was observed that subordinates had a greater tendency to choose such tactics as blocking, upward appeal, and ingratiation to influence their authoritarian manager; while they were likely to employ rational persuasion as power tactics in order to influence their nurturant-task and participative managers. In line with these studies, it is anticipated that subordinates will vary their behavioural strategies with respect to the leadership styles of their superiors.



Why do people intend to influence their superiors? This question relates to the second contextual factor, i.e., the goals of influence attempt. Broadly speaking, the goals of influence attempt may be of two types—personal and organizational. Personal goals may include securing benefits such as better work assignments or career advancement. On the other hand, power may be used to pursue organizational goals, for example, to encourage others to perform effectively, to promote new ideas, or to introduce new work procedures (Schmidt & Kipnis, 1984). Thus, managers seek to influence their superiors in order to achieve a variety of individual and organizational goals (Madison, Allen, Porter, Renwick & Mayes, 1980; Mowday, 1979; Schein, 1977). The recent studies by Kipnis and his colleagues (Kipnis & Schmidt, 1983; Kipnis, Schmidt & Wilkinson, 1980) and Ansari and his colleagues (Ansari & Kapoor, 1986; Ansari & Rehana, 1986) clearly point to the fact that managers vary their strategies in relation to their own objectives. For example, in order to secure personal benefits from a superior, they often use "soft" words, impression management, and ingratiation. In contrast, managers often use assertiveness as a power strategy in order to pursue organizational goals. Thus, it is hypothesized that subordinates will vary their strategies to influence their superiors as a function of the goals of influence attempt.

The main objectives of this study can be summarized as follows:

- (i) To investigate the effect of interaction between agents' personal characteristics (i.e., locus of control) and the leadership styles of their immediate superiors on the use of upward influence tactics;
- (ii) To investigate the effect of interaction between agents' personal characteristics (i.e., locus of control) and the goals of influence attempt on their use of upward influence tactics.

Evidence (Ansari & Kapoor, 1986) exists that the interaction between the objectives of influence attempt and superiors' leadership styles makes little or no variation in the use of upward influence tactics. It was

reasoned that implicit notion about leadership may not vary as a function of influence goals. Perhaps individuals possess a single implicit theory of leadership behavior that does not include other situational factors (Graves, 1985). Furthermore, Ansari and Kapoor (1986) and Graves (1985) suggested two alternative explanations with regard to the absence of interaction that should be considered. First, it is possible that both superiors' leadership behavior and influence goals are themselves contextual factors; and second, there is a possibility that the relationship between these contextual variables might be curvilinear—hence, the absence of significant interaction. Following these explanations, then, the present investigation examined the interaction of each of the two contextual variables, separately, with the locus of control, which is considered to be the personal characteristics of the individual in upward influence attempt.

Considering the relative paucity of research work in contingency framework on this problem area, it is difficult to advance any definite hypotheses. However, in view of the above discussions, two broad sets of conjectures were framed for empirical verifications.

(1) The use of upward influence tactics will be a function of the interaction between the locus of control of the individual respondents and the leadership behavior of their superiors. For example, in the light of previous studies mentioned above, it is expected that those individuals scoring higher on internal locus of control would tend to use rational strategies (e.g., reasons, persuasion) more under the nurturant-task or participative leadership style conditions than under the authoritarian condition; those scoring lower on this scale would tend to use such political tactics as upward appeal and blocking more under authoritarian condition than under the nurturant-task and participative style conditions.

(2) The use of upward influence tactics will be a function of the interaction between the locus of control of the individual respondents and their goals of influence attempt. For example, it is anticipated that those scoring lower on chance and



Table 1  
Mean Scores on Strategies—Locus of Control vs. Style conditions

Strategy	Styles	Locus of Control					
		Internal		Chance		Powerful others	
		Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
Rational Persuasion	F	25.92	26.65	26.75	26.32	27.80	26.64
	NT	27.75	31.71	30.48	28.54	29.95	29.86
	P	28.17	31.54	30.79	28.64	30.23	30.23
Upward Appeal	F	9.17	9.17	8.52	9.22	8.43	9.16
	NT	7.88	6.33	5.98	7.76	6.36	7.82
	P	7.54	5.69	5.69	7.44	5.93	6.98
Ingratiation	F	10.15	9.98	9.06	11.30	8.98	10.89
	NT	9.19	8.75	7.83	10.08	8.30	9.61
	P	9.04	8.85	7.83	9.78	8.54	9.30
Blocking	F	6.25	5.81	6.02	6.30	5.96	6.43
	NT	5.08	4.35	4.17	5.50	4.29	5.36
	P	5.29	3.63	3.98	5.54	4.13	5.32

F=Authoritarian; NT=Nurturant-task; P=Participative.

perceptual manipulation, and the study's internal validity hinges on the degree to which the subjects accurately perceived the styles of their superiors. The  $2 \times 3$  ANOVA showed a highly significant main effect of style on all the three items, and neither main effect of goals of influence attempt nor interaction was noted. Subjects saw the authoritarian manager,  $F(2,340)=207.90$ ,  $p < .01$ , as more authoritarian ( $X=4.55$ ) than as nurturant-task ( $X=2.84$ ) or participative ( $X=1.80$ ) type. Similarly, they rated their nurturant-task manager,  $F(2,340)=84.21$ ,  $p < .01$ , as more nurturant-task type ( $X=4.29$ ) than as authoritarian ( $X=2.78$ ) or participative ( $X=3.33$ ). Finally, the participative manager was perceived more,  $F(2,340)=292.52$ ,  $p < .01$ , as participative ( $X=4.18$ ) than as

nurturant-task type ( $X=2.66$ ) or authoritarian ( $X=1.37$ ).

#### *Effects of Locus of Control Under Leadership Conditions*

The first interaction hypothesis was tested by employing a  $2 \times 3$  factorial design (last factor repeated), with two levels of locus of control (high/low) and three levels of style conditions (authoritarian/nurturant-task/participative). Table 1 shows the mean scores on upward influence strategies of the interaction between locus of control and the leadership conditions.

The findings clearly support the main hypothesis in the internal locus of control area showing its significant statistical interaction with leadership behaviour on three strategies—rational persuasion,  $F(2,188)=3.45$ ;  $p < .05$ , upward appeal,  $F(2,188)=5.03$ ;  $p < .01$ , and blocking,  $F(2,188)=4.02$ ;  $p < .05$ . Such interaction effect was not evident on ingratiation strategy. The first significant interaction reveals that those who were high on internal locus of control tended to choose more often rational persuasion strategy to influence their nurturant-task

none of the power strategy variables was significantly correlated (even at .05 level) with any of the check items, thus suggesting that the observed effects of independent variables were uncontaminated by the check items. Because the study employed repeated-measures design, the observed effects might be attributed to the demand characteristics effects. In order to check for these effects, the first set of materials given to the subjects was analyzed. It was found that effects over all were repeated for the first trial data which can be interpreted as an evidence



in current literature (Falbo, 1977; Falbo & Peplau, 1980; Kipnis *et al.*, 1980; Singh, 1986). An attempt was made to include both rational (e.g., reasons, persuasion, etc.) and non-rational (e.g., ingratiation, blocking, etc.) types of tactic items. The subject was asked to indicate on a 5-point scale (1=never; 5=very often), how frequently he will take each action in order to get his way. The set of items with their appropriate scores were, then, submitted to a principal components, varimax (orthogonal) rotation using  $R^2$ 's as communality estimate (Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner & Bent, 1975). The solution was constrained using the criterion of eigen value greater than 1.00, and meeting the criteria of factor loadings not less than .35 on the defining component and no cross-loading greater than .25. The factor analysis results constrained to only four neat and usable factors, accounting for 88.4% of the total variance. The first component (37.2% of the variance), employing 8 items, was referred to as *Rational Persuasion* ( $X=28.57$ ;  $SD=6.11$ ;  $\text{Alpha}=.82$ ) (Sample Items: "I'll use logic to convince him/her" and "I'll repeatedly persuade her/him about the topic of issue"). The second factor identified as *Upward Appeal* ( $X=7.58$ ;  $SD=3.21$ ;  $\text{Alpha}=.83$ ) consisted of 3 items, explaining 29.1% of the variance (Sample Item: "I'll get the support of some one higher up to help me"). The third component, explaining 13.2% of the variance, constituted 3 items, and was named *Ingratiation* ( $X=9.33$ ;  $SD=2.93$ ;  $\text{Alpha}=.70$ ) (Sample Item: "I'll use the words which will make her/him feel good"). The last factor, *Blocking* ( $X=5.26$ ;  $SD=2.38$ ;  $\text{Alpha}=.67$ ), employed 3 items explaining 9.0% of the variance (Sample Item: "I'll engage in a work slow down until she/he does what I want"). In sum, the dependent measures documented fairly high-reliability coefficients (Nunnally, 1978). Intercorrelations among the extracted factors were not very high (average  $r=.19$ ). Only two correlations were significant ( $p<.01$ )—the Upward Appeal scale correlated positively with Ingratiation ( $r=.33$ ) and Blocking ( $r=.37$ ) scales. This evidence indicates that the factors may be taken as orthogonal dimensions.

### Design and Procedure

Each subject was assigned to six treatment conditions—each condition having a leadership style (authoritarian/nurturant-task/participative) and a goal (organizational/personal) of influence attempt. The subject in each condition was asked to read a one-page scenario which described the style of his manager along with a goal of influence attempt. Thereafter, he was asked to tell on the next page how frequently he would take each action in order to get his way. This was a two-phase experiment. Each phase consisted of three conditions: a goal of influence attempt versus three leadership styles. An interval of about two weeks was given between the two phases. The presentation of scenarios (styles versus goals) was done in random order in order to eliminate order/sequential effects on subjects' responses. The study employed either  $2 \times 3$  design, with two levels of locus of control (high/low) and three levels of leadership style (authoritarian/nurturant-task/participative) conditions, or  $2 \times 2$  design, with two levels of locus of control (high/low) and two levels of goals (organizational/personal) of influence attempt conditions. In each case, the last factor was repeated.

### RESULTS

#### Manipulation Checks<sup>3,4</sup>

Built into the stimulus scenarios were the three manipulation check items describing three styles. Subjects rated each item on a 5-point scale (1=quite false; 5=quite true) whether it was true or false for their manager. This was the critical

<sup>3</sup>Manipulation check items: (1) He/she emphasizes obedience and respect for authority. He/she is basically an autocratic manager; (2) She/he is task-and-efficiency-oriented manager with a blend of nurturance. She/he is a realist and wants to get the job done anyhow; (3) Although he/she is concerned with efficiency, he/she cares more for his/her subordinates than for the work. He/she is basically a democratic manager.

<sup>4</sup>The issue concerning the possible confounding effects because of the presence of the manipulation check items was resolved by examining the correlations between the check items and the dependent measures. Analysis indicated that



ence the authoritarian manager. But, both—the high and low internals—were least likely to employ this strategy to influence their authoritarian boss. The second and the third interactions suggest that both the high and low internals had a greater tendency to employ upward appeal and blocking as power tactics in order to influence their authoritarian boss, while the high internals were least likely to use these strategies to influence their participative or nurturant-task manager. The statistical interactions of the other two locus of control dimensions with leadership behaviour were not significant on any of the dependent measures.

Certain main effects of the independent variables were also noted in line with our expectations. Those who were high on chance and powerful others orientations were likely to choose such tactics as upward appeal,  $F(1,100)=7.47$ ;  $p<.01$ ;  $F(1,110)=5.11$ ;  $p<.05$ , respectively, ingratiation,  $F(1,100)=18.66$ ;  $p<.01$ ;  $F(1,110)=13.92$ ;  $p<.01$ , respectively, and blocking,  $F(1,100)=8.36$ ;  $p<.01$ ;  $F(1,110)=6.55$ ;  $p<.05$ , respectively. The main effects of style conditions were all highly significant ( $p<.01$ ) and were as consistent as in the previous studies on all the four dependent measures. Subjects were likely to employ more of a rational persuasion strategy in order to influence their

participative and nurturant-task managers, while they had a greater tendency to employ such tactics as upward appeal, ingratiation, and blocking to influence their authoritarian manager.

#### *Effect of Locus of Control Under Influence Goal Conditions*

A  $2 \times 2$  (last factor repeated) factorial design, with two levels of locus of control (high/low) and two levels of goals of influence attempt conditions (organizational/personal), was employed to test the second interaction hypothesis. Mean scores on upward influence strategies are displayed in Table 2.

Results showed two highly significant interactions of the influence goal conditions on rational persuasion strategy—one with the chance orientation,  $F(1,151)=20.52$ ;  $p<.01$ , and the other with powerful others orientation,  $F(1,166)=31.46$ ,  $p<.01$ . Taken as a whole, these interactions indicate that subjects who were low on chance and powerful others orientations showed a greater tendency under organizational goal condition to employ rational persuasion as power tactics in influencing their manager. Yet, they were least likely to adopt this strategy in order to enhance their personal goal (i.e., career development). None of the other intera-

Table 2

Mean Scores on Strategies—Locus of Control vs. Goals of Influence Attempt Conditions

Strategy	Goals	Locus of Control					
		Internal		Chance		Powerful others	
		Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
Rational Persuasion	O	28.26	31.65	32.04	28.55	32.20	29.71
	P	26.29	28.28	26.64	27.12	26.49	28.11
Upward Appeal	O	8.78	7.82	7.65	5.81	6.08	7.35
	P	7.61	6.31	8.71	7.57	7.73	8.68
Ingratiation	O	9.15	9.06	8.10	10.08	8.60	9.57
	P	9.76	9.33	8.37	10.69	8.62	10.30
Blocking	O	5.97	4.89	5.08	6.24	5.23	6.08
	P	5.11	4.31	4.37	5.32	4.36	5.32

O=Organizational; P=Personal.



experimental and field studies. Both Kipnis, *et al.* (1980) and Cheng (1983) found the frequent use of reasons (or rationality) as power tactics in organizations so far as influencing the superior is concerned. The same is true for the present study. In addition, the ordering of the use of power strategies is quite similar between this study and those of Kipnis, *et al.* (1983), Cheng (1983), and Ansari and Rehana (1986). This fact may be considered as partial evidence for the external validity of the present experimental findings.

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