

Ingratiation in Organizations: A Bystander's Perspective

Arti Shankar, Mahfooz A. Ansari, & Seema Saxena
Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur

The study aimed at examining the effects of goals of the influence attempt and tactics of ingratiation on the bystander's evaluation of the ingratiation, the bystander's prediction of compliance by the target to the ingratiation attempt, and the acceptance of such behavior by the bystander. Sixty male engineering undergraduates participated in role playing situation and were assigned the role of bystanders to an interaction between an ingratiation and his or her immediate superior. Major findings were: (a) The goals of the influence attempt showed a significant main effect on only one aspect of bystander's evaluation, namely, rationality; (b) The tactics of ingratiation used strongly affected the evaluation by a bystander; (c) Evaluation was a function of the interaction between goals of the influence attempt and tactics of ingratiation.

Despite the norm of distributive justice, an individual continually searches for ways to increase his or her payoffs at less costs to himself or herself. The organizational literature suggests numerous ways by which people calculate payoffs, assess their social contexts, and manipulate the situation for their benefit at the expense of others. One such way is ingratiation. Ingratiation is a common everyday phenomenon practiced widely by individuals in the course of their social interaction with others. Yet, until recently, it had escaped the attention of social/organizational psychologists as an effective strategy for getting one's way with one's superiors, subordinates, and coworkers.

Researchers in the area of ingratiation (e.g., Jones, 1964; Jones & Wortman, 1973; Pandey, 1980) have thus far focused on those attributes of person and context that induce the occurrence, and influence the frequency of ingratiation. They have also tried to investigate the target's effect and reaction to such behavior. However few studies have focused on the bystander's perception of ingratiation. It is reasonable to expect that those who find themselves the target of ingratiation attempt may be less sensitive to implications of ulterior motives than bystanders when exposed to the same interpersonal episodes. The ingratiation engages the target's vanity in such a way that he or she blurs the motivational cues for the target that are readily available to the bystander (Jones, Stires, Shaver, & Harris 1968; Pandey & Bohra, 1986). The present paper is an attempt at getting a more

Reprint requests to Mahfooz A. Ansari, Professor of Psychology, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur, Kanpur 208 016, India.

global picture of ingratiation by focusing on the bystander's perception of the ingratiator.

Kelley's (1971) system of attributing dispositions to people suggests that perceivers are like naive psychologists. They shift through the events in environment to find the causes of the phenomenon they see; the aim of the bystander is to locate possible causes of an event. According to the theory of correspondent inferences (Jones & Davis, 1965), attribution by bystanders is a function of the intentionality behind a particular act and the role behavior of the stimulus person in the interaction.

Keeping the proposition of intentionality of the act in view, it has been found that ingratiation is a function of the recognition of an opportunity to promote one's self (Jones & Wortman, 1973). In an organizational context, promotion of one's self involves two types of goals--personal and organizational. Personal goals may include securing benefits, such as better work assignments or career advancement. Organizational goals include, among others, encouraging others to perform effectively, promoting ideas, or introducing new work procedures (Ansari & Kapoor, 1987; Cheng, 1983; Schmidt & Kipnis, 1984).

An overall observation of the above discussions seems to suggest that bystanders would be less attracted and evaluate more negatively an ingratiator who is working for personal goals than an ingratiator who is working for organizational goals. Moreover, we believe that a bystander would predict greater compliance from the target if he or she perceives the ingratiator to be working for organizational goals.

Person perception, especially for evaluative purposes, is a function of the role behavior of the stimulus person. In this paper, then, we also wish to examine how evaluation varies with changes in the use of ingratiation tactics by the ingratiator to get his or her way with the immediate superior. In this context, it should be mentioned that ingratiation is not a single strategy but it comprises a number of tactics. A review of the literature (Jones, 1964; Bohra & Pandey, 1984; Shankar, 1992; Wortman & Linsenmier, 1977) reveals eight classes of ingratiatory tactics. They are: (1) *Other Enhancement* (A high positive evaluation is done of the target person by the ingratiator while interacting with him or her); (2) *Self Enhancement* (The ingratiator creates such an image of himself or herself that will be perceived favorably by the target); (3) *Opinion Conformity* (The ingratiator conforms to each and every opinion of the target); (4) *Instrumental Dependency* (The ingratiator asserts his or her dependence on the target and thus seduces him or her for help); (5) *Name Dropping* (The target is told about the connections of the ingratiator with important people who could be useful to the target); (6) *Self Degradation* (The ingratiator creates a poor image of himself or herself, so that the target can take pity on the ingratiator and will help him or her); (7) *Third Party Directed* (The target is portrayed favorably to a third person in the hope that this third person will relay it to the target); (8) *Changing with the Situation* (The ingratiator changes or pretends to change himself or herself, so that his or her behavior is always consistent with the behavior of the target).

A close inspection of the above tactics reveals that though all the tactics have an implicit goal of attraction

management, they differ outwardly in terms of presentation (positive or negative), direction (target-directed or self-directed), or intensity (assertive or submissive). In terms of person perception, then, there are changes in the behavior of the ingratiator as he or she changes the tactics of ingratiation to influence his or her superior. This acceptance of changes, at least outwardly, leads us to hypothesize that *a bystander will be more attracted to and will evaluate more positively an ingratiator using positive presentational tactics. Moreover, he or she will predict greater compliance from a target if the tactics used are target directed.*

Thus far, we have treated independently the effects of goals of the influence attempt and tactics of ingratiation on a bystander's evaluation. Although we do not venture any definite hypothesis as to whether evaluation varies as a function of the interaction of the goals of the influence attempt and tactics of ingratiation, *we expect on exploratory basis some Interactions to emerge in the analysis.*

Method

Subjects

The subjects were 60 male final-year engineering undergraduates enrolled in an introductory organizational behavior course. They voluntarily participated in the study and received credit toward their course grade for participation in the research. They were in the age range of 19 to 21 years.

Design and Procedure

A 2 x 8 factorial design was employed, with two levels of goals of the in-

gratiatory attempt (organizational/personal) and eight levels of tactics of ingratiation (mentioned above). The second factor was a repeated one; that is, each subject was exposed to eight treatment conditions, with each condition having a goal of influence attempt and a tactic of ingratiation. The subjects were asked to read a one-page scenario which described the goal of the influence attempt and the tactic used by the ingratiator to realize this goal. They were assigned the role of a bystander and were asked to evaluate the ingratiator, the probability of compliance by the target, and the acceptance of such behavior. The presentation of the scenarios (tactics x goals) was done in random order to eliminate order/sequential effects on subjects' responses.

Experimental Manipulations

The manipulation of experimental variables was done through a one-page scenario consisting of three paragraphs. The first paragraph was an introduction to the organization. The second and the third paragraphs consisted of the manipulation of independent variables—goals and tactics--respectively. The first variable manipulated was the goals of the influence attempt (adapted from the work of Ansari & Kapoor, 1987; Cheng, 1983). In order to manipulate organizational goal, the subjects were told:

"Y is working as a supervisor in this office. Due to the festival rush, his or her group's workload has increased greatly. It has reached the point where Y is finding it difficult to meet company objectives. He or she decides to ask his or her manager (X) to hire additional personnel for his or her group."

The personal goal condition was manipulated through the following instructions:

"Y is working as a supervisor in this office. He or she obtains information that there exists a vacancy for the post of senior supervisor in his or her department for which he or she feels he or she is eligible. Besides him or her, there are some other supervisors in his or her department who are equally competent and qualified. Because competition is intense enough, every supervisor is trying to impress the manager (X) in order to be promoted."

Tactics were manipulated by describing each tactic of ingratiation based on its definition (provided earlier). For an illustration, the tactic of other enhancement was manipulated by telling the subjects:

"While interacting with his or her boss X, Y tries to seek the positive evaluation of X to enhance X's self-esteem; that is, Y is using flattery to influence X".

In a similar manner, the other seven tactics of ingratiation were depicted (manipulated).

Dependent Measures

To measure the bystander's evaluation of an ingratiation, the subjects were asked to rate the ingratiation on a 7-point semantic-differential scale consisting of six bipolar adjectives: rational-irrational, ambitious-nonambitious, manipulative-nonmanipulative, assertive-humble, risky-nonrisky, and adjusted-nonadjusted. To check the compliance of the target with the ingratiation, the

subjects were asked to indicate on a 7-point scale (1 = *very likely*; 7 = *very unlikely*) the likelihood of X conforming to the demands of Y. Finally, to measure the private acceptance of such behavior, the subjects were asked to check on a similar 7-point scale their approval of the behavior of Y.

Results and Discussion

The general proposition that evaluation by a bystander of ingratiation is a function of the goals of the influence attempt and the tactics of ingratiation was tested in a 2 x 8 ANOVA. Table 1 shows the mean scores on the evaluation, prediction of compliance by the target, and the acceptance of such behavior by bystanders.

The results reveal no significant main effects of goals of the influence attempt except for evaluation of the ingratiation in terms of rationality, $F(1, 210) = 6.25, p < .01$. Evaluation for rationality (see Table 1) was more for pursuit of organizational goals than for personal goals, a finding that could be attributed to a perception by bystanders of greater probability of detection following personal benefits to the ingratiation.

Ingratiation tactics had significant main effects for all evaluation aspects (except for rationality), thus providing rather strong support for the second hypothesis. It follows from Table 1 that an ingratiation using tactics like changing with the situation and other enhancement is evaluated as more manipulative, $F(7, 406) = 2.83, p < .01$, than if he or she uses tactics like self enhancement. It may be so because the first two tactics seek to influence the target's perception about himself or herself whereas the last tactic seeks to influence the target's perception of the ingratiation.

Table 1

Mean Scores on Evaluation: Goals x Tactics

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<i>Ps Goals</i>								
DE	2.47	4.50	4.10	3.67	2.07	2.93	3.10	5.63
OC	3.30	4.67	4.33	3.00	1.97	2.93	3.63	5.47
TP	2.33	4.37	3.70	3.00	2.23	3.10	3.33	4.50
CS	2.27	4.00	4.20	3.63	1.87	1.97	3.20	4.17
SE	3.40	3.60	3.43	3.47	2.17	3.53	3.50	3.37
SD	3.07	4.37	3.73	4.53	2.77	3.30	4.30	4.90
ND	2.53	2.70	3.90	4.47	1.97	3.90	2.87	4.33
ID	3.17	4.80	4.37	3.03	2.73	3.50	4.40	5.07
<i>Og Goals</i>								
DE	2.20	4.07	3.53	3.33	2.20	2.93	2.57	5.00
OC	3.00	4.90	4.17	2.83	2.77	2.83	3.27	4.83
TP	2.53	4.00	3.70	3.10	2.83	3.47	3.50	5.10
CS	2.30	4.33	3.37	2.17	2.53	2.50	2.80	4.00
SE	3.83	2.70	3.73	4.27	2.47	3.57	4.07	4.27
SD	2.97	4.57	3.97	4.00	2.93	3.50	3.50	4.67
ND	2.97	3.20	3.60	3.80	2.30	2.80	3.10	3.93
ID	2.47	4.47	3.40	2.50	2.60	2.87	3.30	4.10
By Factor								
<i>Goals</i>								
Ps	2.82	4.13	3.97	3.60	2.22	3.15	3.54	4.69
Og	2.78	4.03	3.68	3.33	2.58	3.03	3.26	4.48
<i>Tactics</i>								
SE	2.33	4.28	3.82	3.50	2.13	2.95	2.83	5.32
OC	3.15	4.78	4.25	2.92	2.37	2.88	3.45	5.15
TP	2.43	4.18	3.70	3.05	2.53	3.28	3.42	4.80
CS	2.28	4.17	3.78	3.20	2.20	2.13	3.00	4.08
SE	3.62	3.15	3.58	3.87	2.32	3.57	3.78	3.82
SD	3.02	4.47	3.85	4.27	2.85	3.47	3.90	4.75
ND	2.75	2.95	3.75	4.13	2.13	3.35	2.98	4.18
ID	2.82	4.63	3.88	2.77	2.67	3.18	3.85	4.58

Note. Abbreviations: A = Manipulation; B = Assertion; C = Rational; D = Risky; E = Ambition; F = Adaptive; G = Compliance; H = Acceptance; OE = Other Enhancement; OC = Opinion Conformity; TP = Third party Directed; CS = Changing with the Situation; SE = Self Enhancement; SD = Self Degradation; ND = Name Dropping; ID = Instrumental Dependency; Ps = Personal; Og = Organizational.

Perception of the ingratiation as assertive is more (as seen in Table 1) for the use of tactics like self enhancement than for the use of tactics like instrumental dependency and opinion conformity, $F(7,$

406) = 10.14, $p > .01$. This could be because assertion implies promotion of one's self in an aggressive manner. And, since the self is promoted more in self enhancement than in the last two tactics (outwardly at least), the use of the first tactic (i.e., self enhancement) is rated as more assertive. In a somewhat similar manner (see Table 1), an ingratiation is considered more risk-oriented, $F(7,406) = 9.89$, $p < .01$, if he or she uses tactics like self degradation and name dropping than tactics like opinion conformity and instrumental dependency. In fact, there is more risk involved in the use of name dropping because there is a greater chance of discovering false connections (Pandey, 1984).

On the ambition measure (see Table 1), the ingratiation is evaluated as more ambitious for using tactics like other enhancement and name dropping than for using tactics like instrumental dependency and self degradation, $F(7, 406) = 14.62$, $p < .01$. Such an evaluation may follow from a knowledge that other enhancement and name dropping are positive presentational tactics used for acquisitive considerations (i.e., tactics used for gain), whereas instrumental dependency and self degradation are generally used for protective considerations (i.e., tactics used following poor performance). Somewhat similarly, the ingratiation is considered more adjusted, $F(7,406) = 6.27$; $p < .01$, for the use of tactics like opinion conformity and changing with the situation than for the use of self presentational tactics like self enhancement and self degradation. This might be related to the finding that target gratification tactics are used more effectively and frequently in Indian organizations than self presentational tactics (Shankar, 1992).

The likelihood of compliance by the target as predicted by the bystander appears to be more, $F(7,406) = 7.59$, $p < .01$, for tactics like other enhancement and name dropping than for tactics like instrumental dependency and self enhancement. The bystander might have evaluated greater compliance following those tactics in which the target is getting some tangible benefits--for example, social connections which are highly valued in a resource limited society like India (Pandey, 1980).

Ross, Greene, and House (1977) have noted that there is a tendency to assume false consensus based upon the assumption that people in general are just like the perceiver. According to the theory of correspondent inference, if the behavior is not like the behavior of the perceiver, the behavior is generally not socially desirable for him or her. Thus, in accordance with this theory, we tried to evaluate which specific tactics of ingratiation are accepted in the Indian society. Results revealed that ingratiation was evaluated, $F(7, 406) = 5.50$, $p < .01$, as most acceptable for tactics like self enhancement, whereas least approval was shown for tactics like self degradation.

An analysis of the interaction of goals by tactics showed that, out of a total of eight possible interactions, there were five that touched the significance level. The results reveal that more ambition is attributed to an individual if the bystander perceives the ingratiator to be working for organizational goals while the tactic used is self degradation $F(7,406) = 9.50$, $p < .01$. Evaluation of the ingratiator was rated the most as an assertive, $F(7,406) = 10.18$, $p < .01$, and as a rational individual, $F(7,406) =$

6.21, $p < .01$, if the ingratiator was perceived to be working for personal goals and tactic involved was instrumental dependency. Similarly, compliance by the target was judged to be the most if the goal was personal and tactic used was instrumental dependency, $F(7,406) = 5.42$, $p < .01$, while the acceptance was most if the tactic used was other enhancement and the goal was personal, $F(7,406) = 2.88$, $p < .01$.

The above interactions are full of complexities and difficult to explain. There is a possibility of obtaining more number of significant interactions with 16 cells in a 2 x 8 ANOVA. Another possible interpretation for such results could be that since person perception is also a function of the characteristics of the perceiver, these characteristics could have mediated in the evaluation process by bystanders.

The present findings generally support the hypotheses that the ingratiator's goals of the influence attempt and his or her use of ingratiatory tactics make a significant contribution to the variance in the bystander's evaluation of the ingratiator, the target's compliance, and the bystander's acceptance of ingratiation. However, because of our use of role playing technique, these results should be viewed with caution. Nonetheless, the results support person perception literature (Jones & Davis 1965) that the role of the stimulus person (ingratiator) affects markedly the traits that are attributed to him or her. The results are also in partial congruence with the knowledge that the perceiver (bystander) interprets the behavior of the other person in terms of the content of the interaction, and thus the intentionality behind an act (i.e., goals of the influence attempt) influences

(although weakly) the perceived evaluation of the actor. However, since person perception is also a function of the characteristics of the perceiver, future research in this area should focus on the characteristics of the bystander as a possible factor mediating bystander's evaluation of ingratiation.

References

- Ansari, M. A., & Kapoor, A. (1987). Organizational context and upward influence tactics. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 40*, 29-39.
- Bohra, K. A., & Pandey, J. (1984). Ingratiation towards strangers, friends, and bosses. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 122*, 217-222.
- Cheng, J. L. C. (1983). Organizational context and upward influence: An experimental study of the use of power tactics. *Group and Organization studies, 8*, 337-355.
- Kelley, H. H. (1971). *Attribution in social psychology*. Morristown, NJ: General Learning Press.
- Jones, E. E. (1964). *Ingratiation: A social psychological analysis*. New York: Appleton-CenturyCrofts.
- Jones, E. E., & Davis, K. (1965). From acts to dispositions: The attribution process in person perception. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 2*, 219-266.
- Jones, E. E., & Wortman, C. (1973). *Ingratiation: An attributional approach*. Morristown, NJ: General Learning Press.
- Jones, E. E., Stires, L. K., Shaver, K. J., & Harris, V. A. (1968). Evaluation of an ingratiation by target person and bystanders. *Journal of Personality 36*, 349-384.
- Pandey, J. (1980). Ingratiation as expected and manipulated behavior in Indian society. *Social Change, 10*, 15-17.
- Pandey, J., & Bohra, K. A. (1986). Perceptual structure of dyadic as the function of ingratiation styles of person. *Social Behavior and Personality, 14*, 23-28.
- Ross, L., Greene, D., & House, P. (1969). The false consensus effect: An egocentric bias in social perception and attribution processes. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 12* 271-288.
- Schmidt, S. M., & Kipnis, D. (1984). Managers' pursuit of individual and organizational goals. *Human Relations, 37*, 781-794.
- Shankar, A. (1992). *Ingratiation in organizations: Tactics, measure, and correlates*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Kanpur, India: Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur.
- Wortman, C. B., & Linsenmier, J. A. (1977). Interpersonal attraction and techniques of ingratiation in organizational settings. In B. M. Staw & G. R. Salancik (Eds.), *New directions in organizational behavior* (pp. 133-178) Chicago, IL: St. Clair.

Manuscript received on September 29, 1992.