

Employee Resistance to Organizational Change: Managerial Influence Tactics and Leader–Member Exchange

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The authors explored the relationship between managerial influence tactics and employee resistance to organizational change. Using attribution theory, the authors developed a series of hypotheses concerning the effects of influence tactics on employee resistance to change and the ways in which these relationships are moderated by leader–member exchange. Results, which are based on multisource data, suggest that employee resistance reflects both the type of influence a manager uses and the strength of leader–member exchange.

Keywords: organizational change, influence tactics, leader–member exchange, attribution theory

Organizations are cooperative systems that rely on the willingness of members to behave in ways that support the organization (Barnard, 1938). However, people's personal goals often differ from those of the organization, and a primary responsibility of managers is to persuade members to direct their efforts toward organizational goals (Cyert & March, 1963). The importance of employee cooperation may be particularly salient during organizational change—when an organization sets out to establish conditions that are different from the current conditions (Ford & Ford, 1995; Robertson, Roberts, & Porras, 1993). As the primary link between the organization's change strategy and the employees responsible for implementing that strategy, managers must be able to “unfreeze” employee beliefs that the status quo is acceptable and motivate employees to make the desired changes (Lewin, 1951). Yet, employees often resist organizational changes (Reger, Gustafson, Demarie, & Mullane, 1994), and reducing this resistance may be difficult given employees' disparate motives, interests, and needs.

The change management literature has explored the various strategies that managers use to reduce employee resistance to organizational change (e.g., Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979; Nutt, 1986). For example, managers may impose rewards or sanctions that guide employee behaviors (Poole, Gioia, & Gray, 1989), ask employees to help design the change (Nutt, 1986), or explain why the change is needed (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1999). Managers also may rely on others to persuade employees to support the change (Nutt, 1986) or give inspirational speeches to gain employee support (Armenakis et al., 1996).

Unfortunately, after decades of research on this topic, research is inconclusive about how these strategies affect employee resistance to change (Mossholder, Settoon, Harris, & Armenakis, 1995;

Robertson et al., 1993). For instance, inviting employees to participate in planning a change has been found to increase employee support for a change (e.g., Coyle-Shapiro, 1999) and to hinder such efforts (e.g., Bruhn, Zajac, & Al-Kazemi, 2001). Similarly, the use of sanctions or edicts to force employee support for a change has been effective in some cases (Poole et al., 1989) and ineffective in others (Nutt, 1986).

One possible explanation for the conflicting findings in the change literature is that employees may respond differently to managerial behaviors depending on how they interpret their manager's intent. In particular, attribution theory (Heider, 1958) posits that observers try to make sense of an actor's behavior by searching for a cause for the behavior. In their search for a causal explanation, individuals rely on an array of cues to determine an actor's underlying motives and to assess whether a behavior is caused by dispositional factors (i.e., caused by the actor) or situational factors (i.e., caused by the context or situation; Ferris, Bhawuk, Fedor, & Judge, 1995; Kelley, 1973). One of the most useful ways in which individuals may search for meaning is by comparing an actor's present behavior with past behaviors. Actions that are consistent with past behaviors typically are assigned a dispositional cause, whereas actions that are inconsistent with past behaviors are assigned a situational cause. For example, studies show that individuals tend to accept negative feedback when it comes from a well-liked source because they attribute good intentions to the source. Yet, when negative feedback comes from a source that is not liked, individuals tend to reject that feedback because they do not trust the source's intentions (Fedor, 1991).

The logic of attribution theory suggests that an employee's reaction to managerial influence attempts may reflect the quality of the interpersonal relationship he or she has with the manager (Ferris & Judge, 1991; Porras & Robertson, 1992). Indeed, research on leader–member exchange (LMX) suggests that employees develop unique relationships with their managers through an ongoing series of interpersonal exchanges (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975). This relationship shapes the expected behaviors of both parties. Interactions in high-quality LMX relationships are characterized by loyalty, emotional support, mutual trust, and

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liking (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Graen & Scandura, 1987). Interactions in low LMX relationships are transactional and impersonal, grounded in contractual exchanges between both parties.

Employees may selectively attune to and interpret managerial behaviors in ways that reinforce existing perceptions of the manager–employee relationship. For example, Schriesheim, Neider, and Scandura (1998) found that subordinate satisfaction was contingent upon their managers' use of delegation tactics and the strength of LMX. When levels of delegation were high, subordinates with high LMX reported the highest job satisfaction, whereas subordinates with low LMX reported the lowest satisfaction. The authors surmised that subordinates with a high-quality relationship with their supervisor viewed the delegated tasks as developmental and supportive, whereas subordinates with a poor relationship viewed the delegated tasks as trivial and punitive.

Likewise, we predict that it is not managerial influence tactics per se that determine employee behavior but how tactics are interpreted by employees, and that the strength of LMX can shape the interpretations by affecting the perceived intent of a manager's behavior. Consistent with attribution theory, perceptions of LMX may affect whether employees view the information conveyed by their manager as supportive and credible, or as manipulative and self-serving (Barry, 2001; Ferris & Judge, 1991; Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984). This logic could help explain why organizational change researchers find that a given influence behavior (e.g., inviting employees to participate in planning a change) may either increase (Coyle-Shapiro, 1999) or decrease (Bruhn et al., 2001) employee support.

The purpose of this article is to examine how employee resistance to organizational changes is related to managerial influence behaviors and the relationship the employee has with the supervisor who is the source of influence. To develop our hypotheses, we draw upon the influence tactics literature to identify a number of distinct behaviors that managers may use to reduce employee resistance to organizational changes (e.g., Falbe & Yukl, 1992; Kipnis, 1976). These tactics vary according to the degree of coercion a source uses to influence target behaviors. Specifically, with some tactics, managers try to manipulate or force a target's compliance with a request. With other tactics, managers attempt to gain a target's volitional compliance. Researchers alternatively refer to these two forms of influence as hard versus soft (Lamude & Scudder, 1995; Tepper, Eisenbach, Kirby, & Potter, 1998) or direct versus indirect tactics (Aguinis & Adams, 1998; Yukl, Fu, & McDonald, 2003).

In the present investigation, we focus on how employee resistance to change relates to both hard and soft tactics. The hard tactics we examine are *sanctions*, in which managers threaten to punish employees for noncompliance through reprimands or withholding desired rewards (Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990) and *legitimization*, in which managers explain that the change is consistent with organizational policies and/or organizational precedent (Yukl & Tracey, 1992). The two soft tactics include *ingratiation*, in which managers provide praise for employee efforts (Falbe & Yukl, 1992), and *consultation*, in which managers ask employees to provide suggestions or assistance in carrying out a change (Yukl & Seifert, 2002). We selected a combination of hard and soft tactics because they often produce divergent outcomes when studied in isolation. Whereas hard tactics tend to yield negative and/or ineffective outcomes, soft tactics tend to yield positive responses

(e.g., Higgins, Judge, & Ferris, 2003; Yukl & Tracey, 1992). By applying the lens of attribution theory, however, we are able to examine whether the outcomes associated with these divergent forms of influence actually vary as a function of LMX. As such, we hope to advance our understanding of managerial influence processes and employee reactions to change.

Hypotheses

Sanctions

Sanctions are tactics in which managers punish employees for noncompliance through reprimands or withholding desired rewards (Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990). In theory, sanctions should yield compliance because employees recognize their manager's power to confer or withhold rewards (Brass & Burkhardt, 1993). Yet, these tactics often are associated with negative outcomes (cf. Higgins, Judge, & Ferris, 2003). These divergent outcomes may reflect the fact that employees interpret the use of sanctions differently. Supervisors in low LMX relationships, for instance, tend to use antagonistic, dominant behaviors when communicating with employees (Fairhurst, 1993). The use of sanctions would be consistent with such an approach. Thus, low-LMX employees would likely interpret the intent behind the use of sanctions negatively, reflecting the perceptions they likely hold of the manager (Kelley, 1973). Employees may assume that coercion reflects the manager's dislike or mistrust of the employee (Yukl, 1994) or perceive their manager as a "petty tyrant" who abuses his or her authority (Ashforth, 1994). Such perceptions could further erode employees' sense of liking for the manager and trigger perceptions of unjust treatment, motivating employees to retaliate by withholding effort or actively resisting the change (Tepper, 2000).

In contrast, employees may be less likely to resist sanctions when they have a high-quality relationship with their manager. Strong LMX relationships are characterized by support, mutual trust, respect, and liking (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Interactions between employees and managers in strong LMX relationships typically reinforce positive affect and strengthen the relationship bond (Fairhurst, 1993). Thus, employees with strong LMX should consider a manager's use of sanctions as inconsistent with past behaviors. Attribution theory predicts that these employees will search for external causes for the coercive behaviors that position the manager as well-intentioned (Kelley, 1973). For instance, employees may conclude that the use of threats is necessary because the change is important or assume that force is needed or justified in some way (Tepper et al., 1998). Accordingly, at high levels of LMX, the use of sanctions should reduce employee resistance to change.

Hypothesis 1. LMX moderates the linkage between the use of sanctions and employee resistance to change. When LMX is low, the use of sanctions should relate positively to employee resistance to change; when LMX is high, sanctions should relate negatively to employee resistance to change.

Legitimization

Managers using legitimization tactics seek to establish the credibility of a request by claiming the authority or right to make it or by verifying that it is consistent with organizational policies,

practices, or traditions (Yukl & Seifert, 2002). When used in downward influence attempts, past research reveals that legitimization tactics are ineffective, having no impact on task commitment or perceptions of managerial effectiveness (Falbe & Yukl, 1992; Yukl, Falbe, & Youn, 1996; Yukl & Tracey, 1992).

We propose that a relationship between legitimization tactics and employee resistance may exist when the strength of LMX is taken into account because employees may use their relationship with the manager to ascribe meaning to otherwise benign statements. For instance, employees in strong LMX relationships may interpret legitimization tactics as attempts by their manager to reduce uncertainty by demonstrating that the change is endorsed by those higher in the organization (Reno, Cialdini, & Kallgren, 1993). Because change initiatives introduce uncertainty into the work environment (Reger et al., 1994), employees tend to look to others for guidance on appropriate behaviors (Mansour-Cole & Scott, 1998). Legitimization tactics would thus serve as a positive resource for those employees receptive to such guidance. Research also demonstrates that the mobilizing potential of legitimating accounts depends on whether listeners identify themselves with the message (Creed, Scully, & Austin, 2002). Hence, employees with a high level of trust and confidence in their managers should be motivated to interpret the manager's legitimizing accounts in a positive and productive fashion.

In contrast, employees in poor LMX relationships may view a manager's use of legitimization tactics as calculative and consistent with the impersonal approach the manager has taken in the past. For instance, employees may perceive that, by relying on organizational rules and policies, the manager is trying to divert personal responsibility from action (Ashforth & Lee, 1990). This could undermine perceptions of trust, especially if employees sense that they are being manipulated (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979). It is also possible that employees with low LMX infer a lack of power or resources on the part of their managers, so that the legitimating managers must rely on authority figures or precedent to exert influence (Brass & Burkhardt, 1993). Attributions of powerlessness would likely encourage employees to resist the change request.

Hypothesis 2. LMX moderates the linkage between legitimization tactics and employee resistance to change. When LMX is low, the use of legitimization should relate positively to employee resistance to change; when LMX is high, the use of legitimization should relate negatively to employee resistance to change.

Consultation

Managers using consultation tactics invite employees to provide suggestions or assistance in carrying out a change (Yukl & Seifert, 2002). Consultation tactics typically are associated with positive outcomes, including high levels of task commitment and perceptions of managerial effectiveness (Higgins et al., 2003; Yukl & Tracey, 1992). These tactics may be particularly effective because they involve employees in the change process, giving employees a greater sense of control over their work (Bies & Shapiro, 1988). Consultation also affords employees an opportunity to voice their opinions regarding a change and to ensure that outcomes of the change align with their own goals and values (Yukl, 1994). De-

spite the potential benefits of involving employees, some research suggests that this tactic does not always yield positive results, particularly when employees do not trust their managers (Coyle-Shapiro, 1999; Mayer & Gavin, 2005; Spreitzer & Mishra, 1999).

Attribution theory suggests that the strength of LMX may affect how employees respond to consultation tactics. Employees in strong LMX relationships should consider their managers' use of consultation tactics to be consistent with the supportive nature of their relationship and interpret the actions as trustworthy. Moreover, in strong LMX relationships, employees are more likely to be involved and provide information needed for task accomplishment (Graen & Scandura, 1987). These employees should be motivated to support rather than resist the influence attempt (Allen & Rush, 1998; Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1999). Conversely, employees in low LMX relationships are accustomed to antagonistic behaviors and may view consultation tactics as insincere and motivated by opportunistic intentions (Allen & Rush, 1998; Eastman, 1994). For example, Johnson, Erez, Kiker, and Motowidlo (2002) showed that individuals with poor reputations who engage in supportive behaviors are viewed as self-serving and insincere. Similarly, for employees in low LMX relationships, a manager's use of consultation tactics may be perceived as self-serving attempts to gain employee favor, or even to highjack employee ideas, rather than as an attempt to improve the change initiative. Such perceptions would likely cause these influence attempts to backfire and prompt employees to resist the influence attempt.

Hypothesis 3. LMX moderates the linkage between consultation tactics and employee resistance to change. When LMX is low, consultation tactics should relate positively to employee resistance to change; when LMX is high, consultation tactics should relate negatively to employee resistance.

Ingratiation

Ingratiation tactics are behaviors in which managers provide praise and flattery for employee efforts (Falbe & Yukl, 1992). By praising employees, managers demonstrate that they respect and care for their subordinates, which should make them seem more likeable to employees (Bass, 1985). Past research confirms that ingratiation tends to be associated with positive outcomes, including task commitment (Yukl & Tracey, 1992). However, these tactics can also fail if viewed as politically motivated (Ferris et al., 1995; Liden & Mitchell, 1988), as might occur when employees have a poor relationship with their manager and attribute their compliments to self-serving, external needs. Thus, as with consultation tactics, employees in strong LMX relationships should consider their managers' use of ingratiation tactics to be consistent with the supportive nature of their relationship and interpret the actions as sincere and trustworthy. These employees should be motivated to support rather than resist the influence attempt (Allen & Rush, 1998; Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1999). Employees in low LMX relationships, accustomed to more antagonistic behaviors, may view flattery as duplicitous and manipulative, which evokes resistance to organizational changes (Allen & Rush, 1998; Eastman, 1994).

Hypothesis 4. LMX moderates the linkage between ingratiation tactics and employee resistance to change. When LMX is

low, ingratiation tactics should relate positively to employee resistance to change; when LMX is high, ingratiation tactics should relate negatively to employee resistance.

Method and Results

Sample and Procedures

To examine the linkages between the four influence tactics, resistance to change, and LMX, we surveyed employees from two companies, which were involved in organizational changes during the prior year. OIL, a leading marketer, distributor and producer of automotive and industrial products and services, employs more than 10,000 employees world-wide.¹ Study participants from OIL worked in the company's U.S.-based headquarters and were involved in the company's implementation of a new project-based software program. BANK is a rapidly growing financial services company employing approximately 350 employees in the southeastern United States. Participants from BANK were selected on the basis of their involvement in a similar software change.

Organizational insiders at OIL (vice president, human resources) and BANK (chairman and chief executive officer) helped facilitate the data collection process. Each contact sent an introductory e-mail message to employees stating that they were selected to participate in a survey regarding the software change that had occurred in their organization. A second e-mail message delivered a week later contained a brief description of the change that participants would be evaluating and the hyperlink to the on-line survey. Respondents reported the extent to which their manager relied on various influence tactics to obtain their support for the change and their perceptions of LMX. Separate emails were sent to supervisors asking them to report how each of their employees responded to the change. All correspondence stressed that employee participation was voluntary and that responses were confidential.

For the OIL sample, a total of 101 of 115 employee surveys were received, representing a response rate of 88%. Of the 29 managers in the sample, 25 (86%) completed surveys evaluating employee responses to the change for at least one of their employees, providing a total of 99 supervisor surveys. From these responses, 82 matched pairs of employee-supervisor responses were identified. Of the respondents, 50% ($n = 50$) were male. The median age range was 35–39 years. Most employees ($n = 61$) had been with their organization for 12 or more years. Only 5 employees had fewer than 4 years of experience with their company. Respondents represented eight departments of the company, including sales (38%), customer service (18%), and plant operations (16%).

From BANK, a total of 66 of the 77 employees completed surveys, representing an 86% response rate. Each of the 27 supervisors in the sample evaluated at least one of their employees, providing a total of 72 supervisor surveys. From these responses, 55 matched pairs were identified. Among the respondents, 83% were female, and the median age was 35–44 years. Approximately half ($n = 26$) had been with the bank 1–6 years. Of the employees, 25% had more than 15 years experience. Seven departments were represented, including operations (31%), retail banking (30%), and commercial lending (15%).

Because the changes that we examined at OIL and BANK were comparable (both involved a transition to a new software pro-

gram), and because our method of data collection and the survey instruments used at both sites were identical, we combined the two groups for our analyses (total $n = 137$).

Measures

A complete list of items is provided in the Appendix.

Managerial influence tactics. We measured consultation, ingratiation, and legitimization using items from the Influence Behavior Questionnaire (IBQ; Yukl & Seifert, 2002). Items that measure sanctions were not available on the IBQ; hence, we used items from the Profile of Organizational Influence Strategies (Kipnis & Schmidt, 1982), which assesses a manager's attempt to influence employee behaviors by punishing employees (e.g., withholding pay, threatening job loss). For example, we asked respondents to report the extent to which their managers "threatened to fire employees if they did not support the change." Responses to all items ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*completely*). Coefficient alphas for each scale ranged from .86 (sanctions) to .96 (consultation).

Resistance to change. We asked each employee's direct supervisor to report employees' resistance to change. We assessed resistance to the change using three items from Tyler (1999) (e.g., "this employee refused to support the change"). The coefficient alpha for this scale was .79.

Leader-member exchange. To assess the strength of LMX, we used Graen and Scandura's (1987) LMX VII scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The coefficient alpha for this scale was .94.

Results

Means and standard deviations for each of the variables in our study are shown in Table 1, with internal reliabilities along the diagonal. As shown in Table 1, respondents indicated that supervisors relied most heavily on consultation ($M = 4.50$) and least heavily on sanctions ($M = 1.89$). Table 1 also reveals several significant relationships between the different tactics, LMX, and employee resistance to change. For instance, consistent with past research on influence tactics, resistance is positively related to sanctions ($r = .18$) and legitimization ($r = .21$), whereas consultation tactics are associated with less resistance ($r = -.26$).

Before testing our hypotheses, we examined the validity of the measurement model for the four influence tactics, LMX, and employee resistance by conducting a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using LISREL 8.51 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2001). Using maximum likelihood estimation, we specified a model in which each of the items used to measure a given construct loaded on its respective factor. Results suggested that the model achieved an acceptable fit: The root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA; Steiger, 1990) was .044, falling below the minimum criteria (.06) for acceptable errors of approximation (Browne & Cudeck, 1993). The comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990) was .98, surpassing the .95 criterion suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999). Item loadings ranged from .595 to .926 ($p < .01$), sug-

¹ OIL and BANK are pseudonyms used to protect the privacy of participating organizations.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among Study Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Company			—									
2. Age	4.31	1.61	-.65**	—								
3. Gender	0.61	0.49	.35**	-.24**	—							
4. Tenure	4.85	2.04	-.35**	.60**	-.17**	—						
5. Sanctions	1.89	1.39	-.20**	.12	-.10	-.03	(.86)					
6. Legitimization	3.80	1.91	-.29**	.14	-.17**	-.06	.37**	(.88)				
7. Consultation	4.50	1.87	.21**	-.17*	.00	-.08	.08	.20**	(.96)			
8. Ingratiation	4.33	1.83	-.18*	.09	-.08	.01	.32**	.46**	.55**	(.91)		
9. Resistance	1.71	1.00	-.32**	.34**	-.05	.17**	.18*	.21**	-.26**	-.04	(.79)	
10. LMX	5.32	1.36	.10	-.02	-.08	.02	.07	-.20**	.42**	.42**	-.16*	(.94)

Note. N = 166. LMX = leader-member exchange. Tests for correlations are two-tailed. Internal consistency reliabilities are presented along the diagonal in parentheses.

* p < .05. ** p < .01.

gesting that the items represented their intended constructs (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

On the basis of these results, we proceeded to test our hypotheses using moderated multiple regression analysis (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). In order to maximize statistical power (.95) and detect medium effect sizes (.15 or greater) with our limited sample size, we conducted separate regression equations for each of the four tactics. Following Aiken and West (1991), we centered the predictor variables before calculating the interaction terms in order to reduce problems associated with multicollinearity and to facilitate the interpretation of results. We controlled for age, gender, and tenure to take into account the demographic differences between employees at the two companies. We also controlled for company to take into account any differences in culture, leadership, and change experiences at BANK and OIL.

Results, shown in Table 2, indicate that the addition of the interaction terms increased R² significantly for three of the tactics, accounting for a meaningful amount of the variance in employee resistance (Jaccard, Turrisi, & Wan, 1990). Hypothesis 1 predicted

that the positive relationship between sanctions and resistance would diminish as LMX increased, but strengthen as LMX decreased. As Table 2 suggests, we found evidence of an interaction between sanctions and LMX. The nature of the interaction was partially consistent with our hypothesis. Results suggest that for employees with low LMX, a supervisor's use of sanctions relates positively to resistance (p < .05). For those with high LMX, the use of sanctions is unrelated to resistance. The top graph in Figure 1 depicts the nature of the LMX moderator, showing the resistance levels for high and low LMX (set one standard deviation above and one standard deviation below the mean; Aiken & West, 1991).

Hypothesis 2 predicted that for employees with low LMX, the use of legitimization would be positively related to resistance, but for employees with high LMX, legitimization would be negatively related to resistance. Table 2 indicates a significant interaction: As shown in the middle graph of Figure 1, for employees with low LMX, legitimization tactics relate positively to resistance (p < .05). For those with high LMX, legitimization tactics are unrelated to resistance. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was partially supported.

Table 2
Influence Tactics, Resistance to Change, and the Moderating Role of Leader-Member Exchange

Independent variable	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3: Test of interaction terms							
	β	95% CI	β	95% CI	β	95% CI	β	95% CI	β	95% CI	β	95% CI
Company	-.38	-.81, .06	-.11	-.58, .35	-.12	-.58, .34	-.12	-.58, .33	-.08	-.58, .35	.10	-.36, .06
Age	.16*	.01, .31	.14*	-.00, .29	.13	-.02, .28	.14*	-.00, .29	.15*	-.00, .30	.17*	.03, .32
Gender	.13	-.22, .48	.13	-.21, .48	.18	-.17, .52	.17	-.17, .52	.14	-.21, .49	.17	-.16, .51
Tenure	-.02	-.12, .08	.00	-.09, .10	.01	-.09, .10	.01	-.08, .11	.00	-.09, .10	.01	-.09, .10
LMX			-.06	-.20, .08	-.06	-.20, .07	-.08	-.22, .06	-.07	-.22, .08	-.20**	-.36, -.05
Sanctions			.09	.04, .21	.12	-.01, .25	.10	-.02, .23	.09	-.04, .21	.11	-.01, .23
Legitimization			.10*	.00, .20	.10*	.01, .20	.10*	.01, .20	.10*	.01, .20	.12**	.02, .21
Consultation			-.11*	-.22, .00	-.11*	-.22, .00	-.10	-.21, .01	-.22*	-.22, .00	-.12*	-.23, -.01
Ingratiation			-.01	-.02, -.18	-.01	-.13, .11	-.01	-.13, .11	-.01	-.13, .12	.04	-.08, .16
LMX × Sanctions					-.09*	-.18, -.00						
LMX × Legitimization							-.07*	-.13, -.01				
LMX × Consultation									-.01	-.09, .06		
LMX × Ingratiation											-.13**	-.21, -.06
R ²		.135**		.219**		.243**		.249**		.220**		.288**
ΔR ²				.084*		.024*		.030*		.001		.069**

Note. N = 137. LMX = leader-member exchange.

* p < .05. ** p < .01.

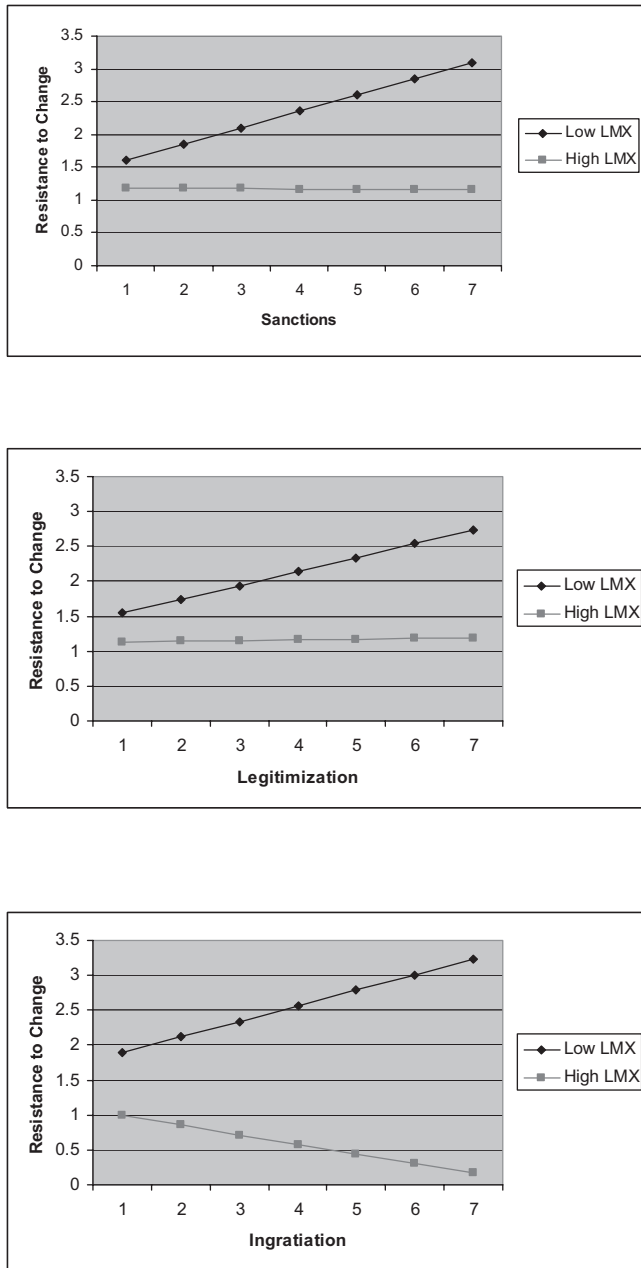


Figure 1. Interaction effects of leader–member exchange (LMX) and managerial influence tactics.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the negative relationship between consultation tactics and employee resistance would become stronger as LMX increases but diminish as LMX decreases. Table 2 indicates no evidence of a significant interaction effect for consultation and LMX. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was not supported. However, the main effect of consultation on resistance was significant. This suggests that, controlling for company effects and demographic differences, the use of consultation tactics is associated with less resistance to change.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that the negative relationship between ingratiation and resistance to change would become stronger as

LMX increases but diminish as LMX decreases. Table 2 indicates a significant interaction for ingratiation and LMX, and the nature of this relationship is consistent with our hypothesis. Specifically, for employees with low LMX, as the use of ingratiation increases, resistance increases ($p < .05$). For those with high LMX, the use of ingratiation tactics is related to lower employee resistance ($p < .05$). These relationships, depicted in the bottom graph of Figure 1, support Hypothesis 4.

Discussion

Although effective change management represents a critical organizational competency, most change efforts fail to reach their intended objectives (Beer, 2003). Management scholars recognize that successful change efforts require managers to overcome employee resistance to change. Although much has been written about the ways managers can reduce employee resistance, results regarding the utility of these suggestions vary across studies.

The present study used attribution theory to help reconcile past findings and demonstrated that the effectiveness of some managerial influence tactics depends on the strength of LMX. Results suggested that employees may use the quality of their relationship with managers to interpret the meaning and intent of some influence tactics. For example, the null relationship between ingratiation tactics and resistance found in past research actually may reflect the offsetting effects of LMX. When employees experience high levels of LMX, the use of ingratiation tactics is related to lower resistance. However, for employees with low levels of LMX, a manager’s use of ingratiation tactics is associated with greater resistance. Likewise, results showed that LMX transformed the linkage between resistance to change and both sanctions and legitimization tactics. Specifically, these two “hard” forms of influence are associated with greater resistance to change when used in a low-quality LMX relationship. However, for employees with high LMX, the use of sanctions and legitimization is unrelated to resistance.

Results regarding the moderating role of LMX largely support the application of attribution theory to the study of managerial influence. Although researchers have acknowledged the role of attribution processes in the interpretation of helping behaviors (cf. Bolino, 1999) and in the choice of leader behaviors (Green & Mitchell, 1979), the influence literature has not theorized how attribution processes may affect employees’ interpretation of managerial influence behaviors. Our findings suggest that employees interpret influence tactics in a way that reinforces their existing perceptions of the manager–employee relationship. Employees who enjoy a positive relationship with their manager may attribute the use of sanctions and legitimization tactics to situational factors, which reduces the likelihood that they would resist such efforts. Employees in low LMX relationships, accustomed to antagonistic exchanges with their managers, may view the use of influence tactics suspiciously and be more likely resist the requested behavior. These findings complement Rousseau and Tijoriwala (1999), who showed that under conditions of low trust, employees make attributions for others’ behaviors that are consistent with past dysfunctional experiences.

Limitations and Strengths

Our investigation has some limitations that should be noted. First, the changes that employees reported occurred in the past. Asking respondents to report on past events can introduce recall effects and hindsight biases (Pohl & Hell, 1996). To minimize these problems, we deliberately focused on specific changes that occurred at OIL and BANK within the year. These efforts notwithstanding, it would be useful for future research to confirm our findings in the context of current organizational changes.

Measurement error also represents a possible limitation. Even though employees' resistance was reported by their managers, influence tactics and LMX were reported by employees, raising concerns about self-report bias. For example, it is possible that employees' perceptions of LMX biased their reports of the influence tactics used by their manager. Evidence of this self-report bias would be gleaned from low variance in our measures of the four influence tactics within a given level of LMX. Fortunately, this issue did not appear to be a problem in our data. The correlations between LMX and the influence tactics were not very high (average $r = .28$). Moreover, we compared reports of the four influence tactics across employees, with high, medium, and low levels of LMX, and we found considerable variance in influence tactics within each level of LMX, bolstering our confidence that employee perceptions of managerial influence tactics are independent of their perceptions of LMX.

Finally, some of the logic underlying our hypotheses includes descriptions of variables that we did not measure in our study. For instance, we theorized that employees with low LMX will be more likely to resist change when their manager uses legitimization tactics because they might infer that reliance on organizational policies to exert influence reflects a lack of power. Whereas our hypothesis was supported, we did not explicitly test the mediating role of "perceived power," so we cannot state unequivocally that these perceptions boosted resistance. We encourage future researchers to examine these mediating processes.

Our investigation is also characterized by a number of strengths. First, we were able to test our hypotheses using 137 employee-supervisor dyads of two different organizations that recently underwent comparable organizational changes. The diverse sample increases our confidence that the results are not artifacts of the culture within a given firm or of a specific type of change. We examined supervisor reports of employees' resistance behaviors, as supervisors are in an excellent position to judge employees' reactions to change initiatives, and the results are more credible than if the data came solely from employee self-reports. Accordingly, our data collection strategy helps mitigate concerns about self-report biases, priming, and self-generated validity.

Implications and Future Research

Our study has important implications for managers. Namely, when determining how to influence employees and reduce resistance to change, managers should consider the relationship they have with targeted employees. When strong LMX has been established, ingratiation tactics can be used to reduce resistance, but this approach can backfire in low LMX contexts. The use of sanctions and legitimization tactics appear to have a similar effect on employees with low LMX: Attempts by managers to coerce compli-

ance or divert responsibility by pointing to organizational regulations may ignite resistance to change for employees who do not trust their managers.

To our knowledge, this study is the first to investigate influence tactics in the context of understanding employee resistance to organizational change efforts. There are several important avenues for future research in this domain. First, the current study should be extended to examine the effects of cross-cultural differences on employee interpretations and responses to managerial influence tactics. Research suggests that organizational changes and managerial influence behaviors may be perceived differently across cultures (Fu & Yukl, 2000). For example, individuals from high power-distance cultures, characterized by authoritarian relationships, may not be as averse to sanctions or legitimization as individuals from low power-distance cultures (Hood & Logsdon, 2002). Researchers and practitioners would benefit from studying how cultural values affect the relationship between influence tactics and employee responses to change.

Additionally, past research has indicated some evidence of an association between organizational culture and managerial influence tactics (Steensma, Jansen, & Vonk, 2003), and it is possible that an organization's culture helps determine which managerial behaviors employees view as appropriate. In attribution theory terms, employees may compare their managers' behaviors with the behaviors of other managers in the organization (Kelley, 1973). In their search for a causal explanation, employees would likely interpret influence attempts that deviate from the organizational norm (i.e., low in "consensus") differently from those that reflect the norm.

Conclusion

This study extends existing research by demonstrating that employee resistance to change may not only reflect the type of influence tactic used by their managers but also the nature of the relationship between the employee and manager. These results may help explain why some researchers find that certain managerial behaviors, such as the use of sanctions or force, reduce resistance to change efforts, whereas others find that similar approaches increase resistance. Because change has become a fixture in many organizations, understanding the sources of employee resistance is particularly important to managers faced with the daunting task of facilitating change efforts.

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(Appendix follows)

Appendix

Items Used to Assess Managerial Influence Tactics

Variable	Items
Sanctions	Punished employees who did not support the change effort. Threatened to fire employees if they did not support the change. Verbally reprimanded any employee who appeared to be resisting the change.
Legitimization	Said that the change was consistent with organizational rules and policies. Verified that the change was legitimate by referring to a document (e.g., policy manual, memo). Said that the change had been approved by someone with proper authority.
Consultation	Asked employees to suggest ways to improve the proposed change. Asked employees to help plan the implementation of the change. Described the change's objective and asked us what we could do to help achieve it.
Ingratiation	Said that we were the most qualified employees to get the change implemented. Praised employees' past accomplishments when asking us to support or implement the change. Praised employees' skills or knowledge when asking us to support or implement the change.
LMX	My working relationship with my supervisor is very effective. I always know how satisfied my supervisor is with what I do. My supervisor would use his/her power to help me solve work-related problems. I always know where I stand with my supervisor. My manager understands my job problems and needs. My manager recognizes my potential well. My supervisor would "bail me out" at his/her expense.
Resistance	[This employee] refused to support the change. [This employee] delayed implementation of the change. [This employee] gave excuses why he or she couldn't support or implement the change.

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Correction to Behfar et al. (2008)

In the article "The Critical Role of Conflict Resolution in Teams: A Close Look at the Links Between Conflict Type, Conflict Management Strategies, and Team Outcomes," by Kristin J. Behfar, Randall S. Peterson, Elizabeth A. Mannix, and William M. K. Trochim (*Journal of Applied Psychology*, 2008, Vol. 93, No. 1, pp. 170–188), Figure 2 on p. 184 (*Theoretical Contributions* section) is missing information about the numbers of teams and statements for the two groups using particularistic strategies. For the decreasing and consistently low performance/decreasing and consistently low satisfaction group, there were 14 teams and 40 statements; for the decreasing and consistently low performance/increasing and consistently high satisfaction group, there were 11 teams and 46 statements.

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