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# Situational and dispositional factors as antecedents of ingratiation behaviors in organizational settings

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## **Abstract**

This study examined both situational and dispositional antecedents of four ingratiation behaviors: other-enhancing, opinion conformity, favor rendering, and self-promotion. The two situational variables (i.e., role ambiguity and leader-member exchange) and the four dispositional variables (i.e., self-esteem, need for power, job involvement, and shyness) were considered as antecedents to each of the ingratiation behaviors. Results from a sample of 136 full-time employees suggested that each of the ingratiation behaviors had a unique set of antecedents and that the dispositional variables explained significant additional variance beyond the variance explained by the situational variables.

## 1. Introduction

Impression management in organizational settings has been studied since Goffman (1959) introduced his dramaturgical interpretation of social interaction. While many impression management tactics have been identified and studied since this time, one in particular, ingratiation, has generated the most research attention (Gordon, 1996). Ingratiation has been broadly defined as an attempt by individuals to increase their attractiveness in the eyes of others (Wortman & Linsenmeier, 1977). Specifically, individuals enact ingratiation tactics to elicit an attribution of competence or likeability (Jones & Pittman, 1982). To accomplish this goal, a variety of ingratiation tactics can be employed such as the other-focused tactics of other-enhancement, opinion conformity, favor rendering, and the self-focused tactic of self-promotion (Jones, 1964; Kumar & Beyerlein, 1991). While a great deal of research has examined the outcomes of ingratiation under the broader umbrella of impression management, much less has explored what drives people to engage in ingratiation behaviors.

It is clear from examining models and reviews of ingratiation and more generally, impression management, that two of the major antecedents to these behaviors are the *situation* in which the ingratiation finds himself or herself and his or her *disposition* (Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997; Gilmore, Stevens, Harrell-Cook, & Ferris, 1999; Kristof-Brown, Barrick, & Franke, 2002; Liden & Mitchell, 1988). While advocates of the middle ground perspective would argue that both domains (situational and dispositional) contribute to our understanding and have to be considered simultaneously (Newton & Keenan, 1991; Schneider, 1987; Staw & Ross, 1985), few studies have empirically tested multiple elements of both of these antecedents in a single study. Given the expected importance of these antecedents to the ingratiation process, considering both situational and dispositional variables as simultaneous predictors of ingratiation behaviors should provide more insight into the ingratiation process than studying each separately (Ralston, 1985). Coupling this notion with prior prescriptions that greater emphasis be placed on investigating the person-situation debate (Borman, White, & Hedge, 1997; Hattrup & Jackson, 1996), we propose that approaching the study of ingratiation from the combined dispositional-situational perspective may, in fact, be highly appropriate (Newton & Keenan, 1991; Schneider, 1987; Staw & Ross, 1985). Similar to Chatman's (1989) model of person-organization fit, in the current study we analyze an additive model that incorporates the influence of both situational and dispositional factors on ingratiation behaviors in organizational settings.

Role theory, which explains organizational behavior by examining the nature of individual roles within organizations and the processes by which these roles are defined and developed (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Graen, 1976), can offer an explanation as to how both situational and dispositional influences affect one's decision to use ingratiation. Roles and role behaviors are developed through a set of processes that are dependent not only upon the individuals engaged in these processes, but situational influences as well. Role theory suggests that individuals who use ingratiation do so in an effort to shape the evolution of their roles and that these actions are contingent upon events leading up to the decision to engage in such behavior (situational

influences) as well as the characteristics of individual actors (dispositional influences) that predispose them to perform ingratiation (Scandura, Graen, & Novak, 1986). Given the potential contributions of role theory as a framework for analyzing antecedents to ingratiation, we seek to enhance existing knowledge of ingratiation by investigating its antecedents from a combined dispositional–situational perspective and further, by using role theory as a guide in our selection of the antecedent variables in this investigation.

This paper offers two contributions to the existing literature on ingratiation. First, it provides additional insights into the driving forces behind an individual's use of ingratiation. Such information can be useful in a number of ways. For example, past studies have yielded conflicting findings regarding dispositional antecedents of ingratiation (Gilmore et al., 1999; Kristof-Brown et al., 2002). While it is intuitive to expect positive relationships between certain personality variables (such as locus of control, Machiavellianism, self-monitoring, and self-esteem) and IM tactic use, some studies have found no relationship to exist (Anderson, Silverster, Cunningham-Snell, & Haddleton, 1999; Delery & Kacmar, 1998) where other studies have provided support for these relationships (Appelbaum & Hughes, 1998; Delery & Kacmar, 1998; Fletcher, 1990). Offering additional evidence about the relationships among certain dispositional variables and ingratiation may help clear up this confusion. The second major contribution offered by this study is the simultaneous examination of the influences of situational and dispositional variables in the ingratiation process. As previous studies rarely incorporated both situational and dispositional variables in their investigations of ingratiation, the results yielded by such studies are likely to be incomplete. Thus, by taking a comprehensive approach, this study may help to clarify our understanding of the ingratiation process.

Toward this end, the present study, under the theoretical umbrella of role theory, investigated the influence of the situational variables of role ambiguity and leader-member exchange (LMX) and the dispositional variables of self-esteem, need for power, job involvement, and shyness, on the use of the ingratiation behaviors of other-enhancing, opinion conformity, favor rendering, and self-promotion. Following a combined dispositional–situational approach, the additional contribution made by dispositional factors beyond situational factors in determining the use of ingratiation tactics will be considered to see if this more encompassing approach merits attention.

## **2. Impression management and ingratiation behaviors**

Impression management has been defined as the process through which individuals seek to influence the image others have of them (Rosenfeld, Giacalone, & Roridan, 1995). The manipulation of one's image is accomplished by enacting impression management tactics. The tactics can be used to highlight the positive qualities of the individual or to focus the conversation on the other person. Most scholars agree that ingratiation is one particular form of impression management (Liden & Mitchell, 1988). In fact, several studies of impression management operationalized this construct using measures of ingratiation (i.e., Bolino & Turnley, 2003; Ellis, West, Ryan,

& DeShon, 2002; Kristof-Brown et al., 2002; Turnley & Bolino, 2001; Wayne & Liden, 1995). As past research has focused on similar antecedents for both impression management and ingratiation, and because ingratiation is a form of impression management, extant theory and research efforts in both of these areas will be drawn upon to develop our hypotheses.

### 2.1. *Ingratiation*

Ingratiation, according to Tedeschi and Melburg (1984), refers to a set of assertive tactics that are enacted by individuals to gain the approbation of superiors who control significant rewards for them in organizational settings. There are two main goals of ingratiation. The first is to be liked which is accomplished through other-focused ingratiation tactics and the second is to appear competent which is achieved through self-focused ingratiation tactics (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Based on the work of Jones (1964) and Jones and Wortman (1973) four dimensions of ingratiation have been identified, three other-focused (other-enhancement, opinion conformity, and favor rendering) and one self-focused (self-promotion).

*Other-enhancements* include flattery, verbal praises, or expressing an interest in the target's personal life in order to increase the attraction between the target and actor (Deluga & Perry, 1994; Stevens & Kristof, 1995; Wayne & Kacmar, 1991). The ingratiator finds ways to express a positive evaluation of the target to convey the impression that he or she is highly regarded.

When an ingratiator openly agrees with the target or expresses opinions that are similar to those held by the target, he or she is employing *opinion conformity* (Kumar & Beyerlein, 1991; Liden & Mitchell, 1988; Ralston & Elsass, 1989). These behaviors range from simple agreement with opinions to more elaborate attempts at trying to articulate the position held by the target as though it were one's own.

*Favor rendering*, as the name suggests, occurs when an actor offers or actually performs a nonrequired task for the target. This action creates a debt owed by the target due to the norm of reciprocity (Deluga & Perry, 1991) and increases the affect the target has for the actor (Jones & Pittman, 1982; Wayne & Kacmar, 1991; Wortman & Linsenmeier, 1977).

The category of *self-promotion* has been considered a self-focused form of ingratiation (Jones, 1964; Liden & Mitchell, 1988). Several behaviors would fall under this category such as: self-description, describing oneself in a manner that enhances one's attractiveness (Jones, 1964); self-presentation, making verbal statements about one's attributes to increase the likelihood of being attractive to the target (Deluga & Perry, 1994; Kumar & Beyerlein, 1991; Wayne & Liden, 1995); and self-enhancing, communications intended to persuade the target of the actor's positive qualities, traits, motives, or intentions (Wayne & Ferris, 1990; Wayne & Kacmar, 1991).

Research has clearly shown the benefit of using ingratiation behaviors to secure the attribution of competence (self-focused) or increase affect (other-focused). For example, ingratiation has been found to increase performance appraisal ratings (Wayne & Kacmar, 1991), interview offers (Kacmar, Delery, & Ferris, 1992), and the quality of the supervisor-subordinate relationship (Deluga & Perry, 1991; Wayne

& Ferris, 1990; Wayne & Liden, 1995). What is less clear are the antecedents that drive an actor to exhibit impression management behaviors, and more specifically ingratiation tactics. We believe the answer to this question can be found by examining both situational and dispositional antecedents of ingratiation. The tenants of role theory supply the underlying theoretical rationale for selecting the situational and dispositional variables examined in this study.

### **3. Role theory**

As role theory suggests, organizational members accomplish their work through enacting roles. Individuals learn their roles and how to successfully enact them through a series of interactions and exchanges with others in the organization (Graen, 1976). Because others in the organization have vested interests in the role performance of those around them, during these exchanges they exert pressure on the role incumbents in the form of role expectations in accordance with their self-interests (Dienesch & Liden, 1986).

Role theory has been used in the past to explain the influence of ingratiation on several organizational outcomes such as leader-member exchange and performance ratings (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Wayne & Liden, 1995). Past research also has identified impression management as an important consequence of processes in which organizational roles are defined (Wayne & Green, 1993). In addition, role theory has been used to theoretically explain the importance of a number of situational and individual variables (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997). For example, researchers have examined its relationship with numerous contextual variables such as work group composition, leader power, organizational policies, and organizational culture (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). Past studies also have established links between several dispositional and demographics traits and role defining processes which include gender (Duchon, Green, & Tabor, 1986), locus of control (Kinicki & Vecchio, 1994; Phillips & Bedeian, 1994), and positive/negative affectivity (Day & Crain, 1992). Thus, by using role theory to frame the current investigation, we have both theoretical and empirical justification to investigate numerous situational and dispositional variables that may explain why individuals will be more likely to use ingratiation behaviors when developing their role behaviors.

By combining role theory with impression management theory, we were able to identify two key contextual variables—role ambiguity and LMX—and four key dispositional variables—self-esteem, need for power, job involvement, and shyness—that warranted inclusion in our study. Role ambiguity and LMX are central variables in the current analysis for they are not only important contextual influences in developing work roles, they also have been identified as key correlates of impression management (Wayne & Liden, 1995).

With respect to the dispositional variables, it seems intuitively sound to consider the dispositional trait, need for power, as an antecedent to ingratiation because one can establish or enhance a power base by enacting ingratiation tactics (Ralston & Elsass, 1989). Moreover, past studies have suggested that individuals who ingratiate do

so in order to build or protect their self-esteem (Liden & Mitchell, 1988). We also expect that the extent to which an employee is involved in his/her job will be crucial in shaping role expectations. Furthermore, it will be interesting to determine whether “living, eating, and breathing” one’s work (i.e., job involvement) will deter an individual’s proclivity to engage in ingratiation. However, a dispositional variable that is rarely studied as an antecedent to ingratiation in business research is shyness. Although shyness has been linked to impression management in psychology (Leary & Buckley, 2001; Leary & Schlenker, 1981; Schlenker & Leary, 1985), this trait is rarely examined in business management literature and may play a significant role in whether an individual engages in ingratiation behaviors. In the following sections we examine each of these antecedents in more detail beginning with the situational variables.

#### **4. Situational antecedents**

The situational perspective of behavior suggests that changes in the work environment will lead to changes in job attitudes and affective responses (Mischel, 1968). Because the situation may lend itself to certain behaviors depending on context, researchers believe situational characteristics to be important in influencing behaviors (e.g., Eder & Buckley, 1988; Ferris & Judge, 1991). The situational perspective is illustrated in most models of impression management by including a direct path from situational factors to the use of impression management tactics (Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997; Gilmore et al., 1999; Liden & Mitchell, 1988). In the sections that follow, we apply role theory in an effort to explain how the two situational factors of role ambiguity and leader-member exchange, may influence the use of ingratiation behavior.

##### *4.1. Role ambiguity*

Work is accomplished in organizations by individuals fulfilling roles. For each role in an organization there are expectations associated with it (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964). If the person hired is taking over an existing role, the expectations for fulfilling that role have been pre-established and should be readily available. If, however, the position is new to the organization, information about the expectations for the role may not be forthcoming (Graen, 1976). Further, it may be that the individual was hired to “recreate” the role, making role expectations unclear. In equivocal situations such as these, negative consequences can occur. One such negative outcome is role ambiguity.

Role ambiguity is the lack of necessary information available about a given organizational position or the lack of role clarity (Kahn et al., 1964). Several models of ingratiation and impression management include role ambiguity as a situational predictor variable (e.g., Gilmore et al., 1999; Liden & Mitchell, 1988). Ralston (1985), applying an expectancy theory framework, suggested that when role ambiguity was high individuals would be more inclined to use ingratiation strategies as a means of ensuring rewards they value. He attributed the rise in ingratiation behaviors to the ambiguous environment blurring the link between task completion and obtaining

goals. Individuals will turn to ingratiation because they are unwilling to rely on their own judgment of whether they have completed the ill-defined task well enough to earn a reward. Since the ambiguity is related to the task at hand, individuals in a highly ambiguous work environment may engage in self-focused ingratiation tactics (self-promotion) in order to ensure the perception of task competence and position themselves to receive valued rewards (Ferris & Judge, 1991). However, in environments of low role ambiguity, the performance—reward link is clear, allowing individuals to have some confidence in their ability to successfully perform their tasks. Secure in the fact that they have performed well enough to receive a reward, individuals will be more likely to turn their attention to other focused tactics as a means to further influence their superiors and gain additional rewards. Therefore, we expect that individuals will be likely to employ other-focused ingratiation tactics in environments defined by low role ambiguity. Therefore, we predict

**Hypothesis 1a.** Low role ambiguity will be positively related to other-focused (other-enhancements, opinion conformity, and favor rendering) ingratiation behaviors.

**Hypothesis 1b.** High role ambiguity will be positively related to self-focused (self-promotion) ingratiation behaviors.

#### *4.2. Leader-member exchange*

A second situational variable considered to influence the engagement of ingratiation behaviors is leader-member exchange (LMX) (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Graen & Scandura, 1987). The roots of LMX also can be traced to role theory. LMX theory posits that subordinates enact various roles in their jobs, and their supervisors have a direct influence on which roles they fulfill. Individuals selected for the more important roles share a close relationship with their supervisor and enjoy a high quality LMX relationship while the remaining subordinates are considered to have a more distant, low quality LMX relationship (Liden et al., 1997). Subordinates in a high quality LMX relationship experience a more positive relationship with the supervisor that includes a high level of trust, frequent interaction, strong support, and more rewards, both formal and informal, than do subordinates in low quality LMX relationships (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Graen & Scandura, 1987).

Although ingratiation has most frequently been examined as an antecedent to LMX relationships (e.g., Dienesch & Liden, 1986), there is evidence that these constructs can exist in a symbiotic relationship. Because of the focus of past research on LMX as an antecedent to ingratiation, it may appear that once individuals have developed a high quality LMX relationship with their supervisors they no longer put forth effort ingratiating them. However, this is not necessarily the case. As role theory suggests, upon establishing mutual role expectations individuals may feel pressure to maintain their role behaviors in order to preserve their desired status. In other words, the type of working relationship that exists between a subordinate and a supervisor should influence the type of ingratiation behaviors employed (Deluga & Perry, 1991; Dockery & Steiner, 1990; Wayne & Green, 1993). For example,



Wayne and Green (1993) found that subordinates in a high quality LMX relationship who already receive special treatment from the supervisor, still engage in other-focused impression management behaviors such as other-enhancement, opinion conformity, and favor rendering. Ingratiation attempts by subordinates who already enjoy a high quality LMX relationship are most likely used to maintain or solidify the quality of their relationship. On the other hand, subordinates in low quality LMX relationships may use ingratiation attempts in the hope of increasing the quality of their relationship with their supervisor. However, ingratiation attempts enacted by individuals with a lower status (e.g., subordinates in low quality LMX relationships) are viewed with suspicion limiting their effectiveness (Gurevitch, 1984). Once a subordinate in a low quality LMX relationship learns that his or her other-focused ingratiation attempts are not producing the desired effects, s/he will most likely cease using them.

Conversely, Wayne and Green (1993) found no relationship between high quality LMX relationships and the use of self-focused impression management strategies such as self-promotion. This may be due to the fact that supervisors of subordinates in high quality LMX relationships recognize their accomplishments without prompting from the subordinate. On the other hand, ingratiation focusing on one's self may be a useful tool when trying to create, rather than maintain, a high quality exchange between a supervisor and subordinate. This suggests that subordinates in low quality LMX relationships may use self-focused tactics in order to appear worthy of a promotion to a high quality relationship. Therefore, we propose

**Hypothesis 2a.** Higher quality leader-member exchange will be positively related to other-focused (other-enhancements, opinion conformity, and favor rendering) ingratiation behaviors.

**Hypothesis 2b.** Lower quality leader-member exchange will be positively related to self-focused (self-promotion) ingratiation behaviors.

## 5. Dispositional antecedents

The importance of dispositional variables to the process of impression management and more specifically ingratiation, once again can be seen by their inclusion in many models of ingratiation or impression management (Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997; Gilmore et al., 1999). However, only a modest amount of empirical research has been conducted to test this notion (Kristof-Brown et al., 2002). From a dispositional perspective, people are generally believed to engage in ingratiation activities not because of the context of the situation but because they possess personality traits that predispose them to engage in such behaviors (Jones & Pittman, 1982; Liden & Mitchell, 1988). In the present study, using role theory as a guide, we examine four dispositional factors, self-esteem, need for power, job involvement, and shyness, that are believed to be related to using other-focused ingratiation tactics to fulfill one's need to be liked or self-focused ingratiation tactics to appear competent.

### *5.1. Self-esteem*

Self-esteem is an attitude one holds about the self (Baumeister, Tice, & Hutton, 1989). Individuals with low self-esteem possess a less favorable, but more realistic picture of their attributes than do individuals with high self-esteem (Baumgardner, Kaufman, & Levy, 1989). For example, individuals with low self-esteem are more likely to believe that they will fail when compared to those with high self-esteem (Tice & Baumeister, 1990). However, regardless of one's level of self-esteem, research has shown that people embrace positive and repel negative information about themselves as a means of enhancing and protecting their self-esteem (Baumgardner et al., 1989; Rosenfeld, 1990). What differs between individuals low and high in self-esteem is how they go about protecting and enhancing their self-esteem, and this can shape role exchange as well as impression management in numerous ways.

From an impression management perspective, research has shown that individuals with low self-esteem will utilize more self-protective strategies while those with high levels of self-esteem will use more self-enhancing strategies (Baumeister et al., 1989). Applying this rationale to the present study suggests that individuals with low self-esteem will use more other-focused impression management tactics (e.g., other-enhancing, opinion conformity, and favor rendering) than will individuals with high self-esteem because they are self-protective in nature. For example, individuals with low self-esteem are more likely to agree with another's opinion rather than stating their own to protect themselves from disagreements with others. On the other hand, self-focused tactics (i.e., self-promotion) are more likely to be used by those high in self-esteem because they offer individuals an opportunity to "toot one's own horn," something only individuals high in self-esteem would be likely to do. Therefore, we predict

**Hypothesis 3a.** Low self-esteem will be positively related to other-focused (other-enhancements, opinion conformity, and favor rendering) ingratiation behaviors.

**Hypothesis 3b.** High self-esteem will be positively related to self-focused (self-promotion) ingratiation behaviors.

### *5.2. Need for power*

The second dispositional variable considered is the need for power. The need for power is a basic desire to influence and lead others to control a person's own environment. One way through which influence over others can be accomplished is by creating bases of power (e.g., referent, expert). Power bases can be established by enacting certain ingratiation tactics (Ralston & Elsass, 1989). For example, self-promotion can be used to develop one's expert power base by making others aware of one's knowledge and experience in a particular assigned role. Thus, we expect that individuals with a high need for power will engage in self-focused ingratiation tactics in order to develop sufficient bases of power that will enable them to maximize control over their environments (Ralston & Elsass, 1989). Conversely, it may be more difficult for high need for power individuals to engage in other-focused tactics as these

tactics tend to be associated with subservience (Jones & Wortman, 1973). However, the same cannot be said for low need for power individuals. Individuals who have a low need for power do not care to expand their power bases. Therefore, these individuals should be more willing to use other-focused ingratiation tactics because they are not driven by the need for power themselves and will allow the target to be more powerful (Ralston & Elsass, 1989). These individuals may be more disposed to engage in subservient, other-enhancements, especially in instances when the underlying goal is to simply be liked by the target (Jones & Pittman, 1982). This is consistent with the central hypothesis of Heider's (1958) balance theory, which states that subordinates will be driven to achieve a balance of sentiment between themselves and their supervisors. Thus, in the work context, subordinates with a low need for power may be motivated to use other-focused behaviors as a means of balancing the affect between them. Based on this rationale, we predict

**Hypothesis 4a.** Low need for power will be positively related to other-focused (other-enhancements, opinion conformity, and favor rendering) ingratiation behaviors.

**Hypothesis 4b.** High need for power will be positively related to self-focused (self-promotion) ingratiation behaviors.

### *5.3. Job involvement*

The third dispositional variable we considered, job involvement, is the degree to which individuals actively participate in their jobs (Allport, 1943; Blau & Boal, 1987). Involvement here deals with the individual's psychological state in that it focuses much more on the individual incumbent of a job as opposed to a more situational perspective which looks at the characteristics of the job. Once again, role theory can be used to explain the expected relationship between ingratiation and job involvement. Job involvement is a form of role involvement. The stronger the individual's involvement in his/her job, the more important the job and rewards earned on the job become (Keller, 1997; Stewart-Belle & Lust, 1999). High involvement in one's job role will lead an individual to engage in self-focused (self-promotion) behaviors in order to be viewed as competent in the job in which he or she is so involved and to help ensure that he or she is positioned to receive the rewards associated with a job well done. Individuals with high levels of job involvement will be willing to make greater investment in any job-related activity that they perceive will help them to secure valued rewards in their current jobs or gain advancement into a better position. Thus, such individuals are expected to be more willing to engage in other-focused behaviors, as well. Through the use of other-focused ingratiation behaviors, individuals may secure work-related recognition and rewards that will most likely not come through job performance alone. Based on this logic, we propose

**Hypothesis 5.** High job involvement will be positively related to other-focused (other-enhancements, opinion conformity, and favor rendering) and self-focused (self-promotion) ingratiation behaviors.

#### 5.4. *Shyness*

The final dispositional factor we will consider is that of shyness. While shyness has not been previously considered in the ingratiation literature we believe it is a variable that could play a significant role in determining whether such behaviors are enacted. Shyness is discomfort or inhibition in the presence of others (Cheek & Buss, 1981). According to the self-presentational theory of social anxiety (Leary & Schlenker, 1981; Schlenker & Leary, 1985), shy individuals experience heightened levels of social anxiety when they are motivated to manage their impressions for other people but doubt they will succeed in their impression management efforts. This theory postulates that shy people are inhibited because they fear making undesirable impressions and feel uncomfortable in such situations. Thus, shy individuals will be especially motivated to manage their impressions while at the same time experience great doubt in their ability to do so. Shy individuals struggle to achieve social acceptance (Leary & Buckley, 2001). It may be reasoned that in this effort the preeminent goal of an anxious individual becomes avoiding disapproval rather than actively seeking social approval (Shepperd & Arkin, 1990). Ingratiation can be used in a variety of ways to achieve this goal. First, ingratiation, or more specifically the other-focused tactic of opinion conformity, can be used to minimize the risk of rejection by expressing divergent opinions or attitudes (Santee & Maslach, 1982). Agreeing with others also will increase affect for the ingratiation making it more difficult to disapprove of him or her (Heider, 1958; Jones & Pittman, 1982). Second, by enacting other-enhancing ingratiation tactics, the conversation is focused on the target and away from the speaker. By keeping the spotlight focused on others, a shy individual can avoid saying or doing anything that might lead to disapproval by others. However, individuals who are not shy may wish to take center stage. To do this they can enact self-focused ingratiation tactics to promote themselves in the presence of others. Thus, we believe that individuals who are shy will engage in other-focused ingratiation tactics to avoid the disapproval of others while individuals who are not shy will elect to use self-focused tactics to promote themselves. Therefore, we predict

**Hypothesis 6a.** High levels of shyness will be positively related to other-focused (other-enhancements, opinion conformity, and favor rendering) ingratiation behaviors.

**Hypothesis 6b.** Low levels of shyness will be positively related to self-focused (self-promotion) ingratiation behaviors.

### 6. Value added of dispositional factors beyond situation factors

The current approach to predicting ingratiation requires both situational and dispositional variables be considered simultaneously. To date, the context of the situation with respect to impression management and ingratiation has received more research attention than dispositional factors and is commonly believed to be the more

important of the two (e.g., Eder & Buckley, 1988; Ferris & Judge, 1991; Gilmore et al., 1999). However, in Liden and Mitchell's (1988) model of ingratiation behaviors, both antecedents to ingratiation—internal (i.e., disposition) and external characteristics (i.e., situation)—were deemed to be important predictors. Situational variables are under the control of the target but dispositional variables are a part of the actor and by considering both a more complete picture is given. We believe that including both factors in one model is an important next step in ingratiation research and predict that the dispositional variables will explain additional variance beyond the situational factors. Thus, including the dispositional variables will explain a unique component of ingratiation behaviors that cannot be captured by only considering the situation. Hence,

**Hypothesis 7.** Dispositional factors will explain additional significant variance beyond situational factors as antecedents to other-focused and self-focused ingratiation behaviors.

## 7. Method

### 7.1. Sample

A total of 136 (response rate of 35%) state lottery employees responded to a survey distributed on company time. Of those who provided demographic information, 54% were males and 46% were females, 72% were Caucasian, the average age was 43 years, and average organizational tenure was 6.77 years.

### 7.2. Procedure

The surveys, which included a letter written by the director of the state lottery and a return envelope pre-addressed to the researchers, were distributed to individuals employed by the lottery located throughout the state via the agency's inter-organizational mail service. This survey was the employee opinion component of the annual organizational assessment. The director's letter stressed accuracy and timeliness in completing and returning the surveys and assured anonymity. In an effort to solicit as many responses as possible, email reminders were sent to all employees by the agency director 2 and 4 weeks after the surveys were mailed.

### 7.3. Measures

All anchors for all of the scales were strongly disagree on the low end (1) and strongly agree on the high end (5). The reverse coded items were recoded such that high values represented high levels of the constructs.

#### 7.3.1. Ingratiation

The scale we used to measure ingratiation was the Measure of Ingratiation Behaviors in Organizational Settings (MIBOS) developed by Kumar and Beyerlein (1991).

It consists of 24 items that assess the 4 dimensions of ingratiation: other-enhancement ( $\alpha = .82$ ), favor rendering ( $\alpha = .81$ ), opinion conformity ( $\alpha = .79$ ), and self-promotion ( $\alpha = .71$ ). In its developmental phases, this scale was tested on samples of working students as well as manufacturing employees to provide evidence in support of convergent and discriminant validity (Kumar & Beyerlein, 1991). Sample items from each dimension include: "Tell him/her that you can learn a lot from his/her experience," "Go out of your way to run an errand for your supervisor." "Let your supervisor know the attitudes you share with him/her," and "Try to make sure he/she is aware of your successes" respectively. To confirm the factor structure of the scale, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis using LISREL 8.3. The model included four latent variables, one for each ingratiation dimension, composed of the relevant items. Results ( $X^2 = 278.22$ ,  $p = 0.0$ ,  $X^2/df = 1.48$ , GFI = .85, CFI = .90, and RMSEA = .06) illustrated adequate fit for the 4-factor model.

### *7.3.2. Role ambiguity*

Role ambiguity was measured using five items from the Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman's (1970) scale. "I feel certain about how much authority I have at work" is a sample item. The internal consistency for this scale was .70.

### *7.3.3. Leader-member exchange*

The 7-item leader-member exchange (LMX) scale from the subordinate's perspective was used to measure perceptions of the quality of the supervisor-subordinate relationship (Scandura et al., 1986). A sample item from this scale is "My supervisor understands my problems and needs." The internal reliability estimate was .89.

### *7.3.4. Self-esteem*

The 9-item self-esteem scale ( $\alpha = .73$ ) employed in the present study was developed by Rosenberg (1965). A sample item is "I feel that I have a number of good qualities."

### *7.3.5. Need for power*

Need for power was measured using 5-items from Steers and Braunstein's (1976) Manifest Needs Questionnaire. A sample item is "I strive to gain more control over the events around me at work." The internal consistency of these items was .71.

### *7.3.6. Job involvement*

Three items were used to measure job involvement. Two of the items were from Buchanan's (1964) involvement scale and one item was from Lobel and Clair (1992). A sample item is "I am very much personally involved in my work." The items combined to produce an internal reliability of .71.

### *7.3.7. Shyness*

The 6-item shyness scale used in the present study was developed by Scheier and Carver (1985). A sample item is "It takes me time to overcome my shyness in new situations." The internal reliability estimate for this scale was .75.

## 8. Results

The means, standard deviations, and correlations for the variables of interest can be found in Table 1. As expected, the four ingratiation tactics were very highly correlated with one another. While job involvement was significantly correlated with the four ingratiation tactics, none of the other antecedents illustrated a consistent pattern of intercorrelations with either the antecedents or the outcome variables.

### 8.1. *Common method variance*

As with all self-report data, there is the potential for the occurrence of method variance. To test for the extent of method variance in the current data we implemented the procedure recommended by Widaman (1985) and used by Williams, Cote, and Buckley (1989). Following this approach, four models are estimated, a null measurement model, a model with a single method factor, a multi-factor “trait” measurement model, and a trait measurement model with an additional method factor. If a method factor exists, a model with a method factor will fit the data significantly better than a model with no method factor. In addition, this analysis allows for the partitioning of variance accounted for by different factors and unique sources. More specifically, the sum of the squared loadings can be used to index the total amount of variation due to trait factors, method factors, and unique variance.

Results from these analyses indicated that while the method factor slightly improved model fit, it accounted for an extremely small portion (6%) of the total variance, much less than the amount of method variance (25%) observed by Williams et al. (1989). The results of these analyses suggest that the model tested does benefit from the addition of a method factor. However, the gain in fit is quite small and more importantly the method factor appears to account for very little variation in the data. Therefore, the results suggest that common method variance is not a pervasive problem in this study and that the relationships observed represent substantive rather than artifactual effects.

### 8.2. *Test of the hypotheses*

Four separate hierarchical regression equations were run to test the relationships of interest in this study, one for each of the four ingratiation dimensions (i.e., other-enhancement, favor rendering, opinion conformity, and self-promotion) as the dependent variable. In step one, the control variables of gender and organizational tenure were entered. These variables were included as controls given that previous research has suggested that relationships exist between them and ingratiation behaviors (e.g., Gordon, 1996; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). In the second step, the situational variables of role ambiguity and leader-member exchange were entered as a block. The dispositional variables of self-esteem, need for power, job involvement, and shyness were entered on the third step, also as a block. Based on the directional relationships hypothesized, one-tailed tests were conducted.

Table 1  
Means, standard deviations, and correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Role ambiguity	2.19	.70	—									
2 Leader-member exchange	3.63	.89	-.25*	—								
3 Shyness	2.44	.80	.08	.09	—							
4 Self-esteem	4.58	.45	-.21*	.02	-.19	—						
5 Need for power	3.63	.75	-.15	.06	-.38*	.13	—					
6 Job involvement	2.86	.82	-.02	.15	-.09	-.10	.24*	—				
7 Other-enhancing	2.33	.78	.17	.25*	.10	-.30*	-.18*	.34*	—			
8 Opinion conformity	2.34	.74	.17	-.09	.15	-.32*	-.09	.24*	.73*	—		
9 Favor rendering	2.22	.83	.15	.15	.18*	-.36*	-.16	.21*	.73*	.69*	—	
10 Self-promotion	2.50	.87	.15	-.06	.12	-.23*	.08	.22*	.44*	.54*	.46*	—

Note.  $N = 136$ .

Scale anchors (1, strongly disagree; 5, strongly agree).

\*  $p < .05$ .



For comparison purposes, the results for all four regression equations are shown in Table 2. The first outcome examined was other-enhancing. The control variables did not yield a significant amount of explained variance indicating that they were not predictive of other-enhancing behaviors. The change in  $R^2$  for the situational variables was significant. The situational antecedent, role ambiguity (H1a) was not significantly related to other-enhancing behaviors, but LMX (H2a) did explain a significant amount of variance in the predicted direction. Results indicated that the combined effect of the dispositional variables also was significant with self-esteem (H3a), need for power (H4a), and job involvement (H5) explaining significant additional variance in the use of other-enhancing behavior in the expected direction. No support was found for H6a as there was no significant relationship between shyness and other-enhancing behaviors. Finally, as predicted, the dispositional variables explained a significant additional 14% of variance in other-enhancing behaviors (H7).

The second regression equation used the ingratiation tactic of opinion conformity as the dependent variable. Here again, the control variables did not prove to be significant. Also, there was no significant relationship found between opinion conformity and either of the situational variables, role ambiguity (H1a) or leader-member exchange (H2a). However, the dispositional variables did yield significant relationships. As can be seen in column 2 of Table 2, self-esteem (H3a) and job involvement (H5) were significant and in the hypothesized directions, but need for power (H4a) and shyness (H6a) were not. Supporting H7, the dispositional variables explained an additional 10% of the variance over and above the variance explained by the situational and control variables.

Table 2  
Impact of antecedents on ingratiation behaviors

	Other-enhancing		Opinion conformity		Favor rendering		Self-promotion	
	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$
<i>Control variables:</i>								
Gender	.006		.062		.043		.141	
Organizational tenure	-.121	.017	-.076	.021	-.085	.028	-.137	.029
<i>Situational variables:</i>								
Role ambiguity	.109		.114		.126		.172 <sup>a</sup>	
Leader-member exchange	.161 <sup>a</sup>	.072 <sup>a</sup>	-.089	.051	.137	.067 <sup>a</sup>	-.022	.047
<i>Dispositional variables:</i>								
Self-esteem	-.190 <sup>a</sup>		-.203 <sup>a</sup>		-.238 <sup>b</sup>		-.107	
Need for power	-.220 <sup>a</sup>		-.065		-.186 <sup>a</sup>		.187 <sup>a</sup>	
Job involvement	.389 <sup>c</sup>		.306 <sup>c</sup>		.219 <sup>b</sup>		.279 <sup>b</sup>	
Shyness	.016	.208 <sup>c</sup>	.130	.148 <sup>c</sup>	.076	.144 <sup>c</sup>	.222 <sup>a</sup>	.136 <sup>b</sup>

Note. Standardized coefficients shown.  $R^2$  change significance shown at each step.

<sup>a</sup>  $p < .05$ .

<sup>b</sup>  $p < .01$ .

<sup>c</sup>  $p < .001$ .

Next, favor rendering was considered as the dependent variable. As with the previously considered other-focused tactics, there was no effect for the control variables. Although, the combined effect of the situational variables was significant, role ambiguity (H1a) and leader-member exchange (H2a) were not. The dispositional variables did yield a significant effect with self-esteem (H3a), need for power (H4a), and job involvement (H5) each explaining significant variance in the predicted direction. However, shyness (H6a) was not significant. Finally, the dispositional variables explained an additional 8% of variance beyond the situational and control variables (H7).

The final ingratiation behavior examined was the self-focused behavior of self-promotion. Once again, the control variables did not produce a significant model. Although the combined effect for situational variables was not significant, role ambiguity (H1b) did explain a significant amount of variance in the use of self-promotion in the predicted direction. However, leader-member exchange (H2b) was not significant. The dispositional variables of need for power (H4b), job involvement (H5), and shyness (H6b) played a significant role in explaining variance in self-promotion. However, high levels, rather than low levels, of shyness, were related to self-promotion, which is opposite of our original prediction. Further, H3b (self-esteem) was not supported. Finally, the dispositional variables explained an additional 9% of variance in self-promotion beyond the situational and control variables (H7).

## **9. Discussion**

The findings of this study support the combined person-situation perspective that argues the need to consider both situational and dispositional variables when examining antecedents of ingratiation behaviors. For each of the four behaviors examined the dispositional variables explained variance above and beyond the variance explained by the situational factors. In addition, the antecedents that explained each of the ingratiation behaviors were unique. This suggests that the antecedents that would influence someone to engage in ingratiation behavior differ by tactic and future research should study the ingratiation process in this light.

One contribution offered by this study was the introduction of several variables that had not previously been tested as antecedents of ingratiation behaviors. Inclusion of each of these variables was supported by theory. One such dispositional variable was job involvement. While this variable has not been previously considered in the ingratiation research, it appears to play an important role in the engagement of ingratiation, as it was a significant predictor of all four ingratiation behaviors studied. As role theory predicted and our results supported, individuals who are involved in their job may be more inclined to employ ingratiation than those less involved in their jobs. Another unique contribution is the fact that shyness had not been considered previously as a dispositional antecedent to ingratiation.

Our results also shed light on areas where previous research findings were not clear or consistent. For example, the relationship between self-esteem and ingratiation has not been well established in the literature (Baumeister et al., 1989). The pres-

ent study's findings suggest a strong, negative relationship between self-esteem and other-focused ingratiation. This finding is consistent with our predictions that low self-esteem individuals will use other-focused tactics because they are self-protective in nature. However, the expected relationship between high self-esteem and self-focused behaviors was not found which suggests that previous research may have been confounding the ingratiation behaviors. That is, lumping both other- and self-focused impression management tactics into one measure may have masked the true relationships among these variables. All of these findings suggest the need to employ a more comprehensive, but refined approach when studying the antecedents of ingratiation behaviors.

One of the most interesting findings of this study is that while each of the six antecedents considered in this study were significantly related to at least one ingratiation behavior they did not operate the same across all four behaviors. Of the situational variables considered, role ambiguity was only significantly related to the self-focused behavior of self-promotion. One interpretation of this finding is that individuals may realize that self-promotion tactics can be used to create the attribution of competence in an ambiguous environment. For example, highlighting one's organizational skills in an unorganized environment may produce an image of competence.

The situational variable of leader-member exchange was only significant for the other-focused behavior of other-enhancing. As predicted, this relationship was positive indicating that individuals who already share a positive relationship with their supervisor are more likely to engage in other-enhancing behaviors than those who enjoy a less favorable relationship with their supervisor (Wayne & Green, 1993). This finding is consistent with the ingratiation dilemma (Jones & Pittman, 1982; Ralston & Elsass, 1989). That is, when an ingratiation status is lower than the target's, the motivation to ingratiate increases, but the probability that the ingratiation tactics will work decreases. Thus, individuals who do not enjoy a high quality LMX relationship with their supervisor most likely recognize that ingratiation attempts will not be successful and refrain from using them.

Similarly, the dispositional variables employed in this study had unique relationships with the ingratiation behaviors. The variable of self-esteem was significantly and negatively related to all of the ingratiation behaviors except self-promotion. The consistently negative relationships signify that low self-esteem is driving the results. Specifically, individuals with low self-esteem use all of the other-focused ingratiation tactics, but not the self-focused behavior. That is, individuals with low self-esteem may have a difficult time bragging about themselves, but can easily fall into the subservient role and position others as the center of attention. The significant relationships between need for power and the other-focused ingratiation behaviors of other-enhancing and favor rendering suggest that individuals with a high need for power may be less inclined to use other-focused tactics. It may be that recognizing important qualities in others and conforming to their opinions are difficult behaviors for an individual with a high need for power to enact. The dispositional variable of shyness predicted only self-promotion, and, interestingly, the relationship was positive. Shy individuals do not wish to make an undesirable impression and ac-

tively seek to avoid disapproval (Leary & Buckley, 2001). Thus, shy individuals may use self-promotion tactics to draw attention to their work behaviors in an effort to produce positive reactions from others.

Finally, the dispositional variable of job involvement was found to be an important predictor of all four types of ingratiation behaviors, both other- and self-focused. In each case, the more involved an individual was in his or her particular job the more likely he or she was to use any form of ingratiation available. These findings offer some confirmation of our contention that the reward power inherent in the supervisor's role makes him or her a target of all types of ingratiation behaviors designed to secure rewards valued by job involved individuals (Jones & Pittman, 1982; Ralston & Elsass, 1989).

In addition to looking at each antecedent individually, this study explored whether dispositional variables could explain additional variance above and beyond that explained by traditional situational variables by employing a combined dispositional-situational perspective. Confirming our prediction, in each of the four ingratiation behaviors considered in this study, the dispositional variables explained a significant 8–14% of the variance beyond that explained by the situation. These findings beg for future researchers to consider both dispositional and situational variables when studying the process of ingratiation. However, the unique results for each tactic suggest that care should be used when selecting antecedents for future ingratiation studies as not all antecedents worked the same and should not be considered interchangeable.

As with all empirical research there are limitations with the current study. One limitation is that the lack of longitudinal data prevented an assessment of causality. Given that acquiring the attributions sought when using ingratiation tactics may take time, studying this phenomenon longitudinally may be a more accurate approach. A second limitation is the sample included people from only one organization, perhaps limiting the generalizability of our findings. Only replications with other samples will be able to determine the extent of this limitation. Another limitation is that only six antecedents were considered in this study. While there was a strong theoretical rationale for including these variables, these are only a small sample of the possible factors that could influence ingratiation behaviors. While the current study was a much needed beginning into this inquiry, future research should consider other dispositional variables such as the big five personality variables and situational variables like organizational design and types of personnel policies when examining the process of ingratiation (Barrick & Mount, 1993; Kristof-Brown et al., 2002; Liden & Mitchell, 1988). Another interesting topic for future research is to examine the impact of supervisor gender and tenure with supervisor on the use of ingratiation by subordinates. Although past research has examined the impact of subordinate gender on this process (Ferris, Frink, Bhawuk, Zhou, & Gilmore, 1996; Singh, Kumra, & Vinnicombe, 2002) and the demographic similarity of supervisors and subordinates (Wayne & Liden, 1995), supervisor gender and tenure with supervisor have not been examined to date and may have interesting effects on the ingratiation process. For example, some ingratiation tactics may be more appropriate for men than for women or the length of tenure with supervisor may impact the

selection and effectiveness of the ingratiation behaviors. Finally, future research could benefit from using other measures of impression management (e.g., Bolino & Turnley, 1999) to gain further insights into both situational and dispositional antecedents.

Despite the limitations, this paper also has several strengths. One strength is that it is one of few empirical studies to examine multiple antecedents of ingratiation behaviors in a single study. In addition, using an additive model allowed us to include both situational and dispositional variables, something that has not previously been examined in relation to ingratiation behaviors. Finally, the examination of both self and other-focused ingratiation behaviors in one study is a strength. Most past studies, have combined these dimensions therefore confounding the unique relationships antecedents have with different ingratiation behaviors.

The goals of ingratiation, to appear competent to the supervisor or to be liked by the supervisor (Jones & Pittman, 1982), are important avenues for career development. These goals can be accomplished by using either other-focused or self-focused ingratiation tactics (Jones & Wortman, 1973). Our results indicate that, individuals with low self esteem, low need for power, those involved in their jobs, or who have positive relations with their supervisor can effectively engage in other-focused ingratiation behaviors. Furthermore, individuals in ambiguous situations, who are shy, or have a high need for power, can effectively engage in self-focus ingratiation behaviors. As existing research suggests, the career benefits for engaging in ingratiation behaviors include positive performance appraisals (Wayne & Kacmar, 1991), premier job assignments (Liden & Mitchell, 1988), promotions, and raises (Wayne & Liden, 1995).

Over the past forty years a great deal has been learned about the process of ingratiation. Little by little each study has added to the foundation of knowledge in this area. We believe that our study illustrates the importance of thinking comprehensively, but specifically, about the ingratiation process. From a comprehensive perspective, researchers would be well served to study global models of the process of ingratiation. However, researchers need to be extremely specific when selecting the variables of interest to ensure that a blanket approach, one that assumes that all variables impact the ingratiation process the same, is not used.

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