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The moderating role of trust on the relationship between ingratiatory communication strategies and interactional fairness

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THE MODERATING ROLE OF TRUST ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN

INGRATIATORY COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

AND INTERACTIONAL FAIRNESS

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THE MODERATING ROLE OF TRUST ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN

INGRATIATORY COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

AND INTERACTIONAL FAIRNESS

Erick P. Dragsten,

University of Nebraska, 2001

Advisor: Wayne Harrison, Ph.D.

Previous research has shown that when perceptions of both procedural justice and distributive justice are low, increasing perceptions of interactional fairness can serve to reduce negative consequences that an organization may face, including subtle forms of retaliation, or what are known as organizational retaliatory behaviors (ORB). In an organizational setting personal attempts to improve perceptions of interactional fairness, under conditions of low distributive and procedural justice, can take on ingratiatory-like qualities when the source attempting to boost these perceptions of interactional fairness uses flattery, expresses excessive empathy, or excessive sympathy. Research has shown that ingratiatory actions such as these become more transparent as the level of trust surrounding them decreases, and if the actions are perceived as transparent the source risks creating an unfavorable impression. The purpose of this study was to determine if the level of trust present in an organization would interact with attempts to improve perceptions of interactional fairness through ingratiatory-like actions in predicting the perceived level of interactional fairness and the likelihood of ORB. It was predicted that under conditions of low trust attempts to improve perceptions of interactional fairness through ingratiatory-like communications would decrease perceptions of interactional fairness and lead to a higher likelihood of ORB, relative to a more neutral communication style. Conversely, it was

predicted that under conditions of high trust this same style of communication would increase perceptions of interactional fairness and decrease the likelihood of ORB, relative to a more neutral communication style. Finally, it was predicted that all effects on ORB would be mediated by perceptions of interactional fairness. Participants each read one of four narratives after being led to believe that the narrative was a transcript of a phone conversation with a former University of Nebraska at Omaha student who was asked to describe some of his recent work experiences. Participants were told that the purpose of the study was to investigate the job quality of former students who majored in psychology. Results revealed effects of both trust and communication style on perceptions of interactional fairness and ORB. Regardless of the level of trust present in an organization, participants perceived less interactional fairness and a higher likelihood of ORB when an ingratiatory communication style was used than when a neutral communication style was used. Perceptions of interactional fairness were found to mediate the relationship of trust to likelihood of ORB and the relationship of communication style to ORB. The implications of these results highlight the danger of using a communication style that contains ingratiatory elements, such as excessive flattery and sympathy under conditions of low procedural and distributive justice, in the hopes of boosting perceptions of interactional fairness. A supervisor who chooses to use this type of communication style when communicating news of a work related event that will negatively impact his or her subordinates, under similar conditions to those depicted in this study, runs the risk of decreasing his or her subordinates' perceptions of interactional fairness and increasing the likelihood that they will engage in ORB.

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Table of Contents

Tables

Figures

Chapter 1

Introduction

Management is often faced with the unenviable task of maintaining organizational

morale even in the most turbulent of times. In many organizations, events such as

downsizing, job automation, demotions, transmotions, and pay cuts are often well beyond

the typical middle level manager's control. However, because of the closer contact

between middle level managers and workers than between executives and workers, it is

often the middle level manager who is responsible for making sure the workers affected by

these threatening events do not retaliate against the organization (Bies, Martin, &

Brockner, 1993; Brockner, 1990). Having closer contact with subordinates puts middle

level managers in a difficult position because they are often responsible for maintaining

worker morale in the face of unfair organizational policies designed by top level

executives. How can middle level mangers help to ensure optimal worker performance

when faced with organizational injustice? In order to answer this question, it is first

necessary to explain the different forms organizational injustice might take, as well as how

members of the organization react to injustice.

Distributive Justice

Some of the earliest work in organizational justice focused on how workers

interpret the fairness of the outcomes they receive (Cropanzano & Folger, 1996;

Greenberg, 1990; Greenberg & Folger, 1983). In the simplest terms, this outcome

orientation dealt with whether or not people perceived the outcomes they received as fair

or not, based on the level of their inputs. Adams's equity theory (1963, 1965) predicted

that perceptions of injustice would occur when the ratio of a person's outcomes to inputs

was greater or lesser than the outcome to input ratio of a similar other. Equity theory

proposed that either behavioral or psychological change would be a direct result of

inequitable ratio comparisons. Thus, when people felt that they were being underpaid for

the amount of work they were doing, compared to others performing similar duties, the

underpaid workers could either change their own inputs (behavioral), change their

outcomes (behavioral), change their perceptions of the other workers' outcome to input

ratios (psychological), or change their perceptions of their own outcome to input ratio

(psychological). Provided a worker makes one of these changes the inequity will be

resolved and perceptions of injustice should subside. The entire process of how people

perceive and react to the fairness of outcome distributions came to be known as

distributive justice. Distributive justice received a great deal of research attention for about

a decade or so until investigators began to notice that not only do people react to the

fairness of outcome distributions, they are also greatly affected by the processes that bring

about the outcomes (Folger & Greenberg, 1985; Greenberg & Folger, 1983; Lind & Tyler,

1988).

Procedural Justice

New findings shifted the focus of organizational justice research from looking at

the effects of decision outcomes to investigating the processes involved in how the

decisions were made (Greenberg, 1990). The new emphasis on the perceived fairness of

the policies and processes used to make decisions became known as procedural justice.

During his study of courtroom fairness, Tyler (1984) noted that while distributive justice

tended to be related to overall outcome satisfaction, defendants' evaluations of the judicial

system were better predicted by their perceptions of fairness regarding the actual judicial

procedures. To illustrate Tyler's findings, consider a typical lawsuit in which the plaintiff

is suing the defendant for injuries suffered during an automobile accident. In this scenario, even if the ruling goes in favor of the plaintiff, as long as the processes involved in the trial were fair, you might expect the defendant to express dissatisfaction with the outcome but not with the judicial system itself. Barrett-Howard and Tyler (1986) extended these results to the workplace where they found that perceptions of fairness regarding organizational policies, and not the distribution of outcomes, had the greatest effect on employees' overall affective attitudes about an organization. As a major movement in organizational justice research, procedural justice can be summed up as the perceived ability of organizational policies and procedures to suppress bias, create consistent allocations, rely on accurate information, allow for corrections, represent the concerns of all recipients, and be based on the prevailing moral and ethical standards (Leventhal, 1980). Despite the needed additions to distributive justice that research on procedural justice brought about, the entire justice picture was still somewhat incomplete.

Interactional Justice

By investigating only procedures and outcome distributions, researchers ignored one very important aspect of workplace justice, the everyday human interactions. Neither procedural nor distributive justice directly explores how a worker's daily interpersonal treatment might affect his/her attitude toward an organization. Clearly interpersonal treatment is one of the most salient characteristics in the workplace and perhaps also the most controllable. According to Bies and Moag (1986), the fairness of interpersonal treatment or interactional justice refers to perceptions of the quality of treatment workers receive during the enactment of organizational procedures. Mikula, Petrik, and Tanzer (1990) reported that a great deal of perceived injustice in the workplace does not concern

distributive or procedural issues but instead refers to the manner in which workers are treated interpersonally during interactions and encounters. The courtroom example referred to earlier will help to illustrate the role of interactional justice. In this scenario the ruling was in favor of the plaintiff and the procedures used were perceived as fair, thus the plaintiff is likely to perceive at least a moderate level of distributive and procedural justice. However, what would happen if the judge were rude to the plaintiff when stating the verdict? For example, what if the judge were to severely chastise the plaintiff for wasting the court's time? Similarly, what if the plaintiff's attorney continuously arrived late to court, promised the plaintiff a guarantee of more money then could possible be awarded, or failed to provide the personal service promised and paid for (such as the common practice of having an assistant handle the case)? Because of derogatory remarks made by the judge, a lack of honesty on the part of the plaintiff's attorney, or other such improper treatment, the plaintiff may still feel that the entire situation was less than fair even after winning the verdict. According to Bies and Moag (1986), people's perceptions of interactional fairness will be influenced by honesty, courtesy, timely feedback, and a respect for rights. The manner in which a person is treated (the level of interpersonal sensitivity) will color his or her justice perceptions. However, interpersonal sensitivity is only one aspect of interactional justice. Along with interpersonal sensitivity, the manner in which procedures are enacted will also have an impact on perceptions of interactional justice.

The manner in which a procedure is implemented or communicated can have a distinct interactional quality to it. According to Tyler and Bies (1990), not only are perceptions of fairness influenced by the interpersonal treatment or interpersonal

sensitivity shown by a decision maker, these perceptions will also be influenced by whether or not the formal decision making procedure was properly enacted. When enacting a procedure a key aspect to ensuring that it will be perceived as fair is to provide a sound explanation or justification for its purpose. In other words, the procedure does not stand alone and may be perceived as more or less fair depending on how it is explained and what type of justification is given.

The procedural enactment component of interactional justice is best illustrated when one provides an account for the procedure's existence. Essentially, people are not only affected by the outcome of a decision, they are also interested in knowing why it was made. According to Bies, Shapiro, and Cummings (1988), to ensure that a procedure is perceived as fair, one should try to provide a quality explanation that adequately supports the procedure and that conveys sincerity on the part of the person giving the explanation. Using the courtroom example, even if the final verdict favors the plaintiff, without proper justification for the procedures leading up to the verdict, certain unanswered questions may still influence perceptions of fairness. For example, if the plaintiff were awarded less money then he or she had expected and did not receive a proper justification or explanation, it is likely that this shortcoming will negatively impact the plaintiff's perceptions of fairness. In this example the judge may have based the verdict on procedures; yet, by not communicating the rationale behind the decision the judge may have violated the procedural enactment component of interpersonal justice. If issues of interactional fairness are ignored, perceptions of injustice will be heavily amplified especially if a person also perceives either the procedures, distribution of outcomes, or both as unfair (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997).

Interactional justice seems to have its most powerful effect when used in conjunction with the other forms of organizational fairness. To illustrate this point, think about an automobile plant's top executives meeting and coming to the conclusion that production line workers will have to take pay cuts in order to keep the organization from going bankrupt. In addition, let us assume that the procedures used to determine who has to take a pay cut were designed to ensure that the executives salaries would be spared at the expense of the line workers' pay. Even though executives at the top levels of the organization came up with the plans or procedures that were involved with deciding who must take the pay cuts, middle managers, who interact with the line workers, are most likely going to be placed in charge of implementing these procedures and breaking the bad news to their subordinates (Brockner, 1990). Clearly this is a delicate situation and many line workers will feel that they received unfair outcomes, so the manner in which the immediate supervisor interacts with these workers while explaining the procedures behind the new pay cut plan will be critical. Managers must realize that mistreating workers on an interactional level will only compound the negative effects already brought on by perceptions of an unfair procedure or distribution of outcomes. On the other hand, by treating the workers fairly and expressing concern for those affected by the pay cut, managers can act as a buffer against the negative effects of the pay cut (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). To better explain how interactional justice buffers against the negative effects brought about by unfair procedures or outcomes a brief overview of the nature of these negative effects is provided.

A vast amount of research has been conducted examining extra-role behaviors that employees undertake for the benefit of the organization (Bateman & Organ 1983; Folger,

1993; Moorman, 1991; Moorman, Niehoff, & Organ, 1993; Organ, 1988). Behaviors that are not explicitly rewarded by the organization, such as working late when it is not required and skipping lunch to help a co-worker, are what are known as extra-role or organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB). OCBs are often difficult to recognize thus making them almost impossible to explicitly reward, even though they are a clear asset to an organization (Bateman & Organ, 1983). Because OCBs are extremely beneficial, organizations need to find ways to encourage employees to engage in these behaviors. Researchers have found that one of the best approaches to promoting OCBs is for the organization to ensure that its employees perceive that they are being treated fairly (Greenberg, 1990; Organ, 1988). Simply put, the more fairly a employee believes an organization is treating him or her, the more likely this person will perform OCBs. However, if perceptions of fairness in the workplace increase the likelihood of OCBs, what happens when an organization's practices are perceived as being unfair?

Organizational Retaliatory Behavior

A lack of fairness perceptions in the workplace can lead to either the withholding of OCBs or actual retaliation. For example, if I believe that I have been unfairly passed over for a promotion I may stop working extra hours, helping my fellow co-workers, and withholding OCBs, or I may take more severe action and strike back at the organization. This second option of striking back seems to imply that I perceive a great injustice has been done. The act of retaliation when faced with injustice appears to function as a more extreme measure of reducing the inequity created by an unfair distribution of outcomes, organizational procedures, or interpersonal treatment (DeMore, Fisher, & Baron, 1988).

When an organization treats its employees poorly, that organization must be prepared to deal with the negative consequences that may result. Specifically, perceptions of injustice lead to feelings of anger and resentment toward the organization and may further lead to retaliation. Acts of retaliation might involve severe behaviors such as theft and sabotage or more indirect, hidden, acts such as absenteeism and reductions in productivity (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). The severity of the retaliation depends, in part, on the position of power the victim of the injustice is in. When the victim has relatively little power, no means of severely injuring the organization, and is highly dependent upon the organization, researchers have found that acts of retaliation tend to be subtle and indirect. Just as OCB can be defined as the subtle little things an employees does above what is expected of him or her to benefit the organization, organizational retaliatory behaviors (ORB) can be defined as the subtle or indirect actions an employee performs to harm an organization. Both OCB and ORB can be viewed as mechanisms for alleviating inequitable situations or reactions to perceived procedural, distributive, or interactional fairness. Although OCB has been a commonly used dependent variable in the organizational justice literature, ORB seems to be a better measure of how employees with less power within an organization react to more severe forms of perceived injustice. The following example should help to clarify when to expect the withholding of OCB's and when to expect ORB's in response to perceived injustice.

Suppose you and a co-worker, who performs the same job as you, both submit a vacation request to your supervisor. In addition, assume that both of you have received similar performance evaluations and are both equally eligible for the vacation. A week later your supervisor informs you that your request was rejected because he cannot afford

to let two employees go on vacation at the same time and that only your co-workers will be able to take a vacation. Being denied the vacation that you were eligible for, and deserving of, would probably upset you. However, I would doubt that being denied a vacation request would cause you to strike back at your supervisor or your organization. Instead, you might choose to no longer put in extra hours or offer to assist your supervisor when it comes time to train new employees. These actions represent the withholding of OCB's. You are obviously upset about being unfairly denied vacation time, but the circumstances of this injustice are not nearly severe enough to merit retaliation. However, using this same example, assume that you were passed over for a very important promotion that was given to a co-worker with the same qualifications. Under these circumstance the perceived injustice would probably be severe enough to merit a retaliation. You could retaliate by sabotaging the company's computer system or by destroying important equipment. However, after these acts of retaliation you would probably have to quit or face being fired. On the other hand, if you cannot afford to lose your job (dependent upon the organization) or do not posses the power to inflict major damage on the organization (in a position of low power), you may opt for a less severe form of retaliation, one that you could get away with without losing your job. Less severe forms of retaliation, such as minor theft of organizational property (paper and small office supplies) or calling in sick when you are not actually ill, represent common reactions to more severe forms of perceived injustice when the victim is dependent on or does not have the power to severely injure the organization. Thus, when the goal of research is to examine reactions to more severe forms of perceived organizational injustice, such as pay cuts and job terminations, ORB, and not the withholding of OCB, is the more appropriate dependent variable.

In a recent experiment Skarlicki and Folger (1997) used ORB as a measure of employees' reactions to violations of organizational justice. Their research looked at the effectiveness of a three-way interaction of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice at predicting ORB. The researchers believed that the automatic anger response triggered by an unfair distribution of outcomes might be buffered by perceptions of either high procedural or interactional fairness. One of the more interesting results of this study indicated that the two-way interaction of distributive and procedural justice was not significant at high levels of interactional justice. Normally this two-way interaction would show that when perceptions of both procedural and distributive justice are low, the end result would be a high level of perceived injustice. Thus, it appeared that improving perceptions of interactional justice, or more specifically the interpersonal sensitivity component of interactional justice, guarded against the negative reactions one would typically expect when distributive and procedural justice are both low (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996). The results of this research imply that increasing perceptions of interactional fairness through displays of sensitivity and concern toward employees would be a wise decision if an organization is concerned about preventing ORB. The example of a supervisor faced with the challenge of breaking the news of a pay-cut to his or her subordinates helps to illustrate this implication in action. In this scenario, the atmosphere is likely to be quite volatile and the employees faced with the pay cut may perceive that they have received a very unfair outcome. In addition, if the procedure used to determine the pay-cuts are also deemed unfair, the supervisor must communicate the bad news in such a manner that his or her subordinates will be the least angered. One of the biggest concerns for the supervisor will be to ensure that the subordinates' anger does not lead to retaliation

against the organization that treated them unfairly. Perhaps the most obvious and automatic strategy used in situations such as these, is simply to express concern and act in an interpersonally sensitive manner when breaking the news or to try and provide a justification.

Whether intentional or not, a supervisor who communicates an unfair outcome brought on by unfair procedures in an interpersonally sensitive manner will hopefully decrease the likelihood that his or her subordinates will retaliate in most situations (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). What the supervisor is doing is simply an extension of impression management. Impression management refers to a person's attempts to control the images about him or herself that are projected onto a target during social interactions (Schlenker, 1980). By treating employees in an interpersonally sensitive manner, the supervisor is influencing the employees' perceptions of him or herself, the organization, or both. If the supervisor is perceived as an extension of the organization, which is often the case (Levinson, 1965), then his or her actions should help to project a less negative impression of the organization as well.

Impression Management

Impression management (IM) behaviors can take several forms including verbal statements, nonverbal or expressive behaviors, modifications of one's physical appearance, and integrated behavior patterns (Schneider, 1981). In the previous example, verbal statements were used to help smooth the situation. These verbal impression management behaviors are typically divided into either proactive image construction or reactive image repair techniques. Reactive image repair or defensive IM tactics typically involve

justifications or excuses, whereas proactive image construction or assertive IM tactics involve either self-promotion or ingratiation.

Defensive IM tactics are commonly used to excuse or justify negative outcomes or procedures and protect the image of the source. These reactive excuses or justifications, which minimize responsibility for an injustice or minimize perceptions of injustice, are similar to what researchers refer to as social accounts (Bies, 1987; Bies & Shapiro, 1988; Konovsky & Folger, 1991; Shapiro, Buttner, & Barry, 1994). Examples of social accounts include redirecting the blame away from the account giver (causal accounts), providing information on how a negative event could have been worse (referential accounts), and stating that a negative event was necessary for the achievement of a superordinate goal (ideological accounts). Research has shown that social accounts will be more or less successful depending on the nature of the negative event or justice violation. Referring back to the pay cut example, the supervisor might be well advised to avoid the use of an account if his or her goal is to protect the image of the organization, especially if the pay cut is known to have been caused by mismanagement and the procedures used to determine the pay cut are already perceived as unfair. A social account in this situation will be too transparent to have its intended effect. A safer alternative action would be for the supervisor to treat the victims of the pay cut with dignity and respect when communicating the bad news. By expressing concern for the victims, the supervisor may help to reduce the negativity of the situation.

As was mentioned earlier, assertive IM tactics typically take the form of either self-promotion or ingratiation. Self-promotion involves using positive statements to describe oneself in order to elicit desired character attributes, whereas ingratiation is used to

increase interpersonal attraction through either other-enhancement or opinion conformity

(Stevens & Kristof, 1995). Once again using the example of a supervisor having to

communicate the news of a pay cut, by acting in an interpersonally sensitive manner the

supervisor's actions may actually take the form of other-enhancement or opinion

conformity. If the supervisor chooses to verbally express empathy with the victim of the

pay cut, this will likely take the form of a statement such as, "I know what you must be

going through," or "I can relate to your anger," both examples that are very similar to

opinion conformity. In addition, if the supervisor chooses to bolster the victim's sense of

self-worth with a statement such as, "You do such fine work, so please don't think of this

as a reflection of your performance", he or she is clearly using other-enhancement.

Ingratiation is likely to be a common and often successful IM tactic, whether intentional of

not, used by supervisors who are concerned about their employees' negative reactions to

procedures and outcomes that might be perceived as unfair.

Ingratiation

According to Jones and Wortman (1973, p. 2), ingratiation refers to "a class of

strategic behaviors illicitly designed to influence a particular other person concerning the

attractiveness of one's personal qualities." Ingratiation attempts are designed to achieve

some hidden ulterior motive by increasing ones attractiveness in the eyes of a target. For

example, if I am a supervisor placed in charge of getting my subordinates to work extra

hours for little if any pay benefit, I may try flattering them by complimenting them on the

great job they have been doing or telling them how much they mean to the organization,

before asking for the extra work. Even after the request has been accepted and the behavior

performed, I may continue the ingratiation by empathizing with them, telling them I

understand what they are going through and how hard it must be to take on the extra work. In both of these cases, my motive is to get extra work out of my subordinates with as little resistance or resentment as possible, which I accomplished through ingratiation. An interesting twist on this scenario is that the source of the ingratiation attempt may actually believe that his or her actions are entirely benevolent and not a form of trickery used to obtain compliance (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Because ingratiation is often unintentional, in the previous example I may not realize that my attempts to console my subordinates were indirectly manipulative. Whether or not the ingratiation attempt is intentional is irrelevant here; what is important is that this is a commonly used technique for getting others to comply with what often amounts to undesirable demands. Unfortunately, not all attempts at ingratiation lead to the desired outcomes.

What exactly determines the success of an ingratiation attempt? According to Jones, Jones, and Gergen (1963), ingratiation attempts made by those who are highly dependent upon the target, use excessive flattery, clearly stand to benefit from some action taken by the target, appear to be less than trustworthy, or generally appear to have some ulterior motive beyond simple good will, might be viewed with suspicion. In addition, Fodor (1973) found that ingratiation attempts made under conditions of high organizational stress, such as during a period of downsizing or pay cuts, are typically not very successful. In the event that an ingratiation attempt is met with suspicion, not only will this attempt likely fail, it may even bring about a dislike for the source (Jones & Pittman, 1982). In order to avoid this boomerang effect, the ingratiator should try not to use ingratiation as a means of IM when such an attempt would be expected and thus quite transparent. This creates what Jones and Pittman (1982) call the ingratiator's dilemma: the

more important it is for an ingratiator to gain a target's attraction, the less likely it is that he or she will succeed. Adding to this statement, not only will the attempt likely fail, it may actually bring about the aforementioned boomerang effect and lead to dislike for the ingratiator.

Ingratiation and Organizational Justice

Considering the forms ingratiation typically takes (conformity, favors, other-enhancement, and self-enhancement), other-enhancement and self-enhancement appear to have very salient interactional qualities. Interactional fairness and ingratiation both deal with interpersonal treatment; thus perceptions of interactional justice may be heavily influenced by ingratiation attempts. For example, if an ingratiation attempt is not linked to its ulterior motive, the flattery received will contribute to perceptions of interactional fairness. However, if the ingratiation attempt is seen as blatant, the resultant boomerang effect might actually decrease perceptions of interactional fairness. Thus, ingratiation might be seen as an effective IM technique to manipulate perceptions of interactional justice.

Ingratiation, when successful, should increase perceptions of interactional fairness. However, when people are aware of the ingratiation attempt, they may feel tricked or betrayed, and there should be a decrease in their perceptions of interactional fairness. Thus, ingratiation is a double-edged sword, and as such, those using it must be aware of both its benefits and risks. Clearly, it would be advisable for those using ingratiation as a IM technique to first get an accurate estimation of what circumstances surround the interaction. If the circumstances surrounding a potential ingratiation attempt are not very favorable, then such an attempt should be avoided because it will be far too transparent.

Linking ingratiation and interactional fairness has important managerial implications when dealing with situations where managers have little control over organizational procedures or outcomes. In these situations, the one form of justice that may still be under a manager's control is the perception of interactional fairness, or how an employee perceives his or her treatment by the manager. By having pleasant interactions, extending compliments, and expressing concern for an employee's well being, a manager may increase his or her subordinates' perceptions of interactional fairness. In addition, if the manager is considered to be an extension of the organization, then these perception should transfer to the organization as well (Levinson, 1965).

Numerous researchers examining organizational justice discuss the benefits of having a perceived high level of interactional justice (Bies & Moag, 1986; Blodgett, Hill, & Tax, 1997; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). The Skarlicki and Folger (1997) article, discussed earlier, seems to have particularly important implications. Specifically, if you apply the Skarlicki and Folgers findings (interactional justice works to buffer negative consequences or ORBs associated with low procedural and distributive justice), to the scenario described at the beginning of this paper (middle management being in a position where there is little control over procedures or outcomes), the ability to influence perceptions of interactional fairness can be seen as a major tool managers have to prevent retaliatory actions against the organization. In addition, if successful ingratiation leads to a state of high perceived interactional fairness, this might be a wise tactic to use to prevent ORB. However, before drawing strong conclusions, one must keep in mind all of the factors that can influence the success of an ingratiation attempt.

Organizational Climate

As was mentioned earlier, ingratiation attempts made by those who are highly

dependent upon the target, use excessive flattery, clearly stand to benefit from some action

taken by the target, appear to be less than trustworthy, or generally appear to have some

ulterior motive beyond simple good will, might be viewed with suspicion (Jones, Jones, &

Gergen, 1963). In addition, ingratiation attempts made under conditions of high

organizational stress, such as during a period of downsizing or pay cuts, are typically not

very successful (Fodor, 1973). Many of the factors that influence the success of an

ingratiation attempt, such as trust (when applied broadly to an organizational level) and the

degree of organizational stress, contribute to what is known as organizational climate.

According to Pritchard and Karasick (1973), an organization's climate is the relatively

stable and enduring quality of its internal environment that helps to distinguish it from

other organizations. Organizational climate is the common perception members have of an

organization which is partially created by the behaviors and policies of the organization's

top management and acts as a source of pressure for directing the activity of its members.

The nature of an organization's climate has the potential to play an important role in

determining whether or not an ingratiation attempt will succeed. Intentionally or

unintentionally using ingratiation to improve perceptions of interactional justice in the

wrong organizational climate could be disastrous.

Organizational Trust

Koys and DeCotiis (1991) have been able to narrow down organizational climate

into eight dimensions: autonomy, cohesiveness, trust, pressure, support, recognition,

fairness, and innovation. Of these eight, research shows that trust has a direct influence on

how a target interprets attempts at ingratiation (Jones, Jones, & Gergen, 1963).

Organizational climates vary on a continuum ranging from extreme trust to extreme

suspicion. In an organizational context, trust is the belief members of an organization have

about the current and future actions of the organization, based on past experiences with

that organization (Brockner & Siegel, 1995). Members of an organization that has a history

of breaking agreements and treating its employees unfairly will probably view the

organization's future actions with suspicion. Conversely, members of an organization that

has a history of treating its employees well, by keeping promises and following through

with agreements, will probably trust future actions taken by the organization.

According to Petty and Cacioppo (1986) source trustworthiness influences the

acceptance of persuasive messages. Adding to this, one could certainly view ingratiation as

an indirect form of persuasive communication. Using the Elaboration Likelihood Model, it

is easy to see how a trusting organizational climate would increase the chances for a

successful ingratiation attempt (Hendrickson, 1996). Under conditions of high trust there is

very little motivation for a person to search for ulterior motives behind attempts at

persuasion; therefore these communications tend to be processed rather superficially.

However, when trust is lacking, there may be a great deal of suspicion, and persuasive

messages will be analyzed more critically through a central processing route. One would

expect that the more closely a target analyzes an ingratiation attempt, the less likely it will

be that the attempt will succeed. Thus organizational trust may play a key role in

determining the success of ingratiation or similar attempts to improve perceptions of

interactional justice.

The recommendation given by Skarlicki and Folger (1997), increasing levels of interactional justice to help prevent ORBs brought on by low procedural and distributive justice, is in need of a slight modification. If a person intentionally or unintentionally uses IM tactics, such as ingratiation, to increase perceptions of interactional justice, then that person should have a solid understanding of the climate surrounding the ingratiation attempt. One would expect that attempts to improve perceptions of interactional justice through acts of intentional or unintentional ingratiation in a trusting organizational climate will be successful and lead to a decrease in the likelihood of ORB (targets are not processing these interactions as thoroughly). However, in a climate lacking trust, these same attempts may be viewed as blatant ingratiation (the target analyzes the interaction more thoroughly). In a climate lacking trust, one would expect an increase in ORB, due to the boomerang effect brought on by rather transparent ingratiation. Essentially the target would be affected by perceptions of low procedural and distributive justice, compounded with perceptions of low interactional justice caused by the unsuccessful ingratiation attempt. Figure 1 illustrates a model of this proposed relationship. From this model one can see that the relationship between ingratiation and interactional fairness is moderated by organizational trust and that interactional fairness moderates the relationship between low distributive/procedural justice and ORB.

Referring back to the pay cut scenario, a middle level manager who uses ingratiatory statements to break news of the pay cut to his or her subordinates will increase the subordinates' perceptions of interactional fairness, only if the attempt is not transparent. The best strategy the manager in this situation could use to ensure that the attempt is not transparent would be to have an understanding of the organization's climate.

Figure 1

<u>Research model</u>
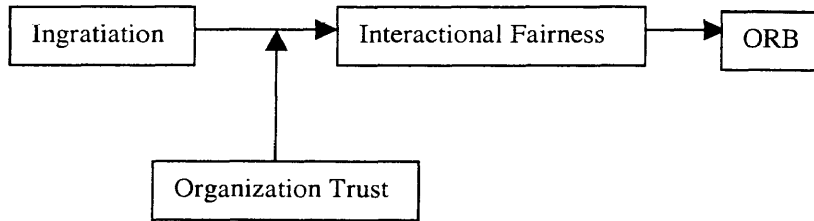
Under conditions of low DJ and low PJ

If the organization has a history of violating its employees' trust, the manager may be better off communicating news of the pay cut in a more neutral style (a simple matter-of-fact declarative statement that communicates a message without any expressed emotions or concern for what the statement implies). In other words, if the probability is high that ingratiatory like comments will be perceived as transparent, then using these comments will only decrease the perceived level of interactional fairness. In this circumstance, using a neutral style of communication may not improve perceptions of interactional fairness, however, it will not decrease them to the extent that a transparent ingratiation attempt would.

Purpose and Hypotheses

The purpose of this experiment is to examine whether or not organizational trust moderates the relationship between ingratiation and the perceived level of interactional fairness, when both procedural and distributive justice are low. I believe that the level of trust present in an organization's climate will significantly influence the success of attempts to improve interactional fairness through ingratiation, when employees perceive low procedural and distributive justice.

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant two-way interaction between communication style (neutral vs. ingratiation) and organizational trust (high vs. low) when both procedural and distributive justice are low and interactional fairness is the dependent variable (see Figure 2).

At high levels of organizational trust, ingratiation will lead to an increase in perceptions of interactional fairness, relative to a neutral communication style. Conversely, at low levels of organizational trust, attempts to increase perceptions of interactional

Figure 2

<u>Hypothesis 1</u>

Communication Style

justice through ingratiation will lead to a decrease in perceptions of interactional fairness, relative to a neutral communication style.
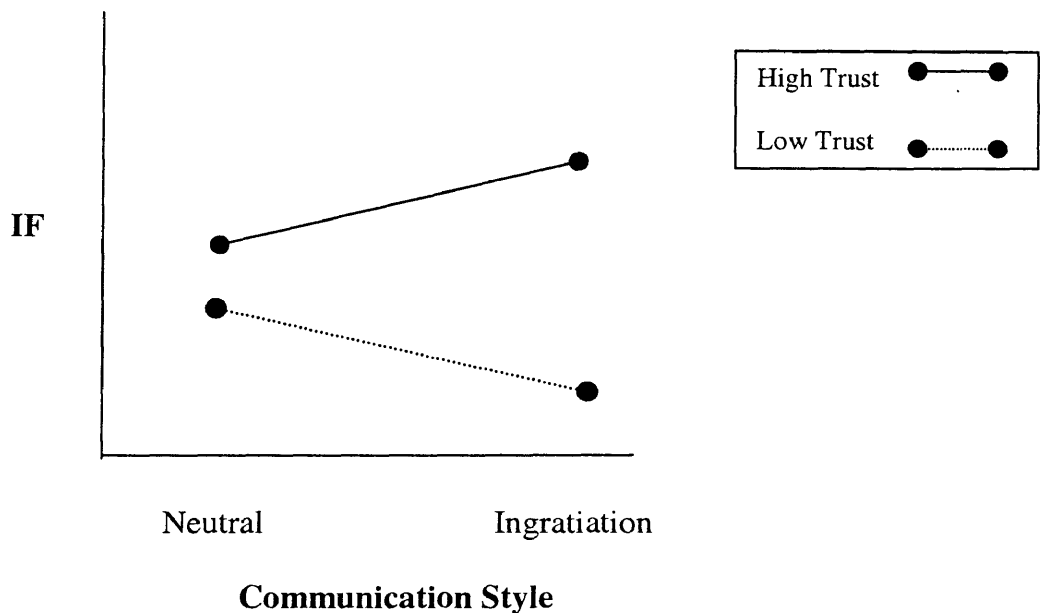
Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant two-way interaction between communication style (neutral vs. ingratiation) and organizational trust (high vs. low) when both procedural and distributive justice are low and likelihood of ORB is the dependent variable (see Figure 3).

At high levels of organizational trust, attempts to improve perceptions of interactional justice through ingratiation will lead to a decrease in the likelihood of ORB, relative to a neutral communication style. Conversely, at low levels of organizational trust, attempts to increase perceptions of interactional justice through ingratiation will lead to an increase in the likelihood of ORB, relative to a neutral communication style.

Hypothesis 3: Perceptions of interactional fairness will mediate the effects of ingratiation and trust on the likelihood of ORB.

A 2 x 2 factorial design, with communication style (ingratiatory vs. neutral) and organizational trust (high trust vs. low trust) as the independent variables, and perceptions of interactional fairness and the likelihood of ORB as the dependent variables, will be used to test these three hypotheses. In addition, perceptions of both procedural and distributive justice will be held constant for all participants.

Figure 3

<u>Hypothesis 2</u>

Communication Style
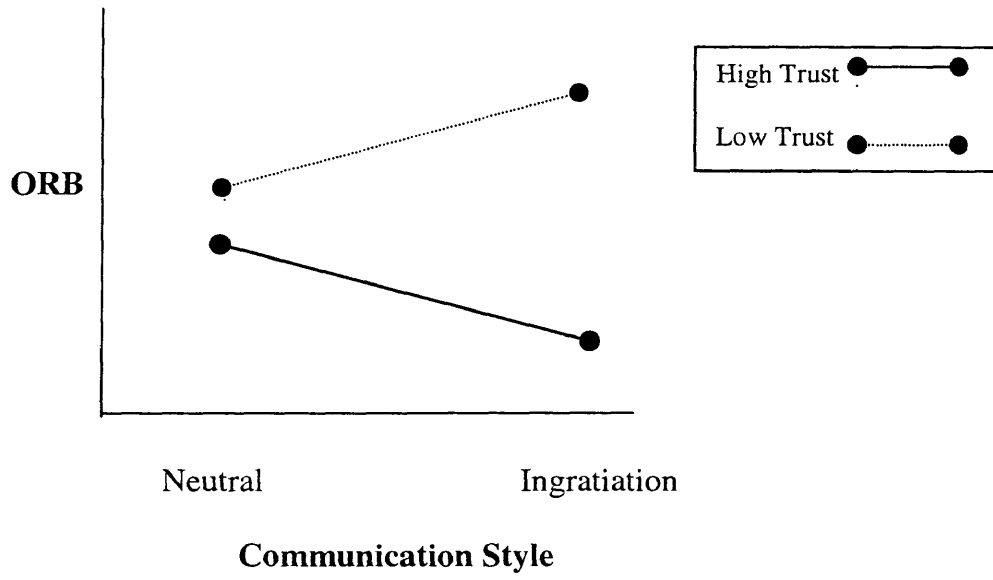
Chapter 2

Method

<u>Participants</u>

Participants consisted of 120 psychology students enrolled at a state university in

the Midwest. All participants were over the age of 18, 43% of whom were male and 57%

female. Each participant gave voluntary consent to participate in this experiment and

received extra credit in their respective psychology courses.

<u>Deception</u>

Participants signed-up for the experiment with the understanding that they were to

serve as evaluators for a psychology department experiment assessing the marketability of

an undergraduate degree in psychology in today's job market. Participants were led to

believe that the purpose of this study was to determine (1) if in fact students who major in

psychology are able to find employment following graduation and (2) the quality of the

jobs these students end up pursuing. It was further explained that the department had

already gathered data pertaining to the length of job searches for its past graduates and is

currently in the processes of assessing the quality of the jobs these graduates obtained.

After the purported purpose of the experiment was explained, each participant was

given an envelope and told that it contained a description of a former psychology major's

current job. Each participant was told that the description was written based on a phone

interview conducted by a member of the psychology department with past graduates of

UNO and that the contents were essentially a word for word narrative of what the past

graduate had said. The participant's task was to read through the narrative and evaluate the

quality of the job based on the former student's description. Each participant was told that

they were being used as raters of job quality, as opposed to the actual job incumbent, in order to avoid the subjective biases that might occur if the former student/job incumbent were to rate the quality of his or her own job.

<u>Procedure</u>

In small groups ranging in sizes from one to six, participants obtained through a voluntary sign-up procedure were individually given a packet containing one of four narratives to read. Each narrative depicted a scenario where the author, a recent graduate of UNO, was currently working as a Human Resources Specialist for a mid-sized accounting firm in Boston. In the narrative the author explained the background of the accounting firm and provided several examples of his experiences working there. The description of the firm's background and the author's experiences working there were designed to depict either a trusting climate or a climate lacking trust.

In the narrative where trust was lacking, a series of negative events illustrated how the organization and the author's supervisor had broken several agreements regarding tuition reimbursement, accommodating a summer session course schedule, pay, and vacation time. Thus, although the supervisor was typically the communicator of information pertaining to a broken agreement, the narrative makes it clear that his actions were a reflection of the organization as a whole. The narrative depicting a trusting climate used the same outcomes as the narrative where trust was lacking, but made no reference to the organization or supervisor being at fault or breaking promises. In this narrative the supervisor once again serves as an extension of the organization and should be perceived as such. An example of the trust manipulations is provided in appendix A and summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Trust Manipulation

Climate Lacking Trust	Climate Not Lacking Trust
Promise: FMT and supervisor promise to reimburse the author for tuition expenses **Outcome:** Tuition is not reimbursed because the author did not receive a grade of B or higher	**Promise:** FMT and supervisor promise to reimburse the author if he receives a grade of or higher **Outcome:** Tuition is not reimbursed because the author did not receive a grade of B or higher
Promise: No promise is made **Outcome:** Author is given luxurious tempora housing	**Promise:** Company offers to provide luxuriou temporary housing **Outcome:** Promise is kept
Promise: Author is told by an interviewer tha the Organization will a pay a certain amount. **Outcome:** The author ends up receiving less on his first pay check. The supervisor explain that the inexperienced interviewer must have misled the author but he (the author) later discovers that other employees were misled b completely different interviewers	**Promise:** No promise is made regarding the author's pay rate
Promise: The author is told that he will recei a week of paid vacation. Later he learns that the organization will not allow him to take th vacation because of the upcoming busy tax season. The author discusses the situation wit his supervisor who confers with other managers and then gives the author permissio to take the vacation anyway (both the supervisor and other higher level employees were involved in this decision so it should be seen as a reflection of the org.) **Outcome:** The supervisor tells the author that the vacation request was reviewed further and the organization was not going to allow it. Th author doesn't take a vacation at that time.	**Promise:** The author is entitled to a week of paid vacation. Later he learns that the organization will not allow him to take the vacation because of upcoming busy tax seaso The author discusses the situation with his supervisor who explains that the organization needs the extra help and that no employee is allowed a vacation at that time. **Outcome:** The author doesn't take a vacation at that time.

Following the description depicting either a trusting climate or a climate lacking

trust, the second section of each narrative explained that the author was recently told that

he will have to take a small cut in his pay. The pay cut is explained to be the result of a

poorly managed buyout of the organization's CEO who was given a multimillion dollar

"golden parachute" to resign from his position. The narrative explains that it was widely

known throughout the company that the money to pay for the "golden parachute" was to

come from both the managers' and lower-level employees' salaries. However, the decision

for allocating the pay-cut was made by management who decided that only employees

with less than three years of fulltime experience working for the organization would take a

2 percent pay cut to help finance the golden parachute. The narrative further explains that

most of the affected employees believed the decision behind the pay-cut allocation was

very unfair because management chose not to garnish their own salaries. This section

served as a manipulation of both procedural and distributive justice. An example of this

procedural and distributive justice manipulation is presented in Appendix B.

The third section of the narrative described how the author's supervisor chose to

explain the pay-cut to his employees. In half of the narratives the author's supervisor used

ingratiatory like comments and in the other half he used a neutral communication style.

The ingratiation condition describes, in detail, how the supervisor expressed extreme

concern for the author's anger, explained that the pay cut was not an indication of an

employee's worth to the organization, and took the author and two other

employees, who were also affected by the pay-cut, out to lunch before explaining the pay-cut. In the narratives depicting a neutral communication style, after asking the author into his office, the author's supervisor explains the details of the pay-cut in a professional "matter-of-fact" manner and asks if the author has any questions. An example of the communication style manipulation is presented in Appendix C.

The final section of the four narratives described how the author grudgingly accepts the pay cut and continues to work for the firm because he can't afford to change jobs. This section serves to illustrate that the author does not have the option of leaving the organization as a means of reacting to the current situation. A summary of the conclusion to each narrative is presented in Appendix D.

Measures

After participants finished reading their assigned narrative, each completed a questionnaire which they were told measures postgraduate job quality. However, the items on this questionnaire actually assessed the participant's perceptions of procedural, distributive, and interactional fairness, as well as each participant's estimate of how likely he or she believes the author of the narrative would be to demonstrate ORBs. Additional items were used to determine whether participants believed the organization could be trusted along with a few distracter questions simply designed to make the scale compatible with the cover story.

Items assessing the likelihood of ORBs, trust, and the distracter questions were not based on existing instruments, thus there is no available data regarding the validity of each. However, due to the general nature of each (e.g. how likely would you be to trust this organization) this was not thought to be a problem. Items assessing aspects of procedural

justice and distributive justice were based on item stems for which evidence of construct validity has been established (Colquitt, 2001). The three items assessing distributive justice were originally taken from Leventhal (1976), and the four items assessing procedural justice came from the work of both Leventhal (1976) and Thibaut and Walker (1975). Items assessing interactional fairness were based on stems from Bies and Moag's (1986) measure of interpersonal justice for which research has found evidence of construct validity. In the questionnaire completed by participants, items 9, 11, and 16 assessed distributive justice, items 1, 4, 7, and 10 assessed procedural justice, items 3, 12, and 15 assessed interactional fairness, items 5, 14, and 19 assessed ORB, and items 6, 13, and 18 assessed trust. The entire questionnaire used in this study is presented in Appendix E.

Chapter 3

Results

Scale Reliabilities

Statistical analyses were performed to calculate the internal consistency

(Cronbach's alpha) for each scale measuring the two dependent variables, interactional

fairness and ORB. The reliability of the three-item scale measuring interactional fairness

was found to be .82, and the reliability of the three-item scale measuring ORB was .66.

Although the scale measuring interactional fairness appears to have adequate internal

consistency, the scale measuring ORB has a less than ideal level of reliability. However,

due to the fact ORB represents actual behavioral retaliation against an organization, a scale

assessing the hypothetical likelihood of these types of actions, based on a narrative

account, is probably not going to achieve the same high level of internal consistency as a

scale measuring a participant's perceptions of fairness. Because steps were taken to ensure

that the items used to assess ORB listed actual examples of these types of behaviors, the

lack of internal consistency was thought to be relatively unproblematic in this study.

Manipulation Checks

A series of manipulation checks were included in the questionnaire given to each

participant for the purpose of assessing perceived levels of procedural justice, distributive

justice, and trust present in the organization. Multiple items were combined and averaged

to provide a score for each of the three constructs with four items assessing procedural

justice, three items assessing distributive justice, and three items assessing trust. Each item

was rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale where a rating of -3 indicated strong disagreement

with the item and a rating of +3 indicated strong agreement. Ratings were later converted to a scale ranging from +1 to +7.

The mean rating given by the 120 participants on the perceived level of procedural justice was 2.48 with a standard deviation of .89. Across the four conditions ratings of procedural justice were the lowest when trust was not present in the organization and the supervisor used an ingratiatory communication style ($\underline{M}$ = 2.31) and rated highest when trust was present in the organization and the supervisor used a neutral communication style ($\underline{M}$ = 2.82). Table 2 displays the mean and standard deviation of procedural justice across the four conditions. A two-way ANOVA showed that mean ratings of procedural justice were not significantly different for level of trust $\underline{F}$ (1, 116) = 2.20, $\underline{p}$ = .097, communication style $\underline{F}$ (1, 116) = 1.58, $\underline{p}$ = .159, or the interaction of trust and communication style $\underline{F}$ (1, 116) = .792, $\underline{p}$ = .317. Based on these results it appears that procedural justice was perceived as being low in all four conditions as well as being relatively stable.

The mean rating given by the 120 participants on the perceived level of distributive justice was 2.35 with a standard deviation of .91. Across the four conditions ratings of distributive justice were the lowest when trust was not present in the organization and the supervisor used an ingratiatory communication style ($\underline{M}$ = 1.79) and rated highest when trust was present in the organization and the supervisor used a neutral communication style ($\underline{M}$ = 3.06). Table 2 displays the mean and standard deviation of distributive justice across the four conditions. A two-way ANOVA with distributive justice as the dependent variable showed that there was a main effect for both trust ($\underline{F}$ (1, 116) = 18.63, $\underline{p}$ < .001) and communication style ($\underline{F}$ (1,116) = 12.24, $\underline{p}$ < .001), although the interaction of trust and

Table 2

Procedural Justice, Distributive Justice, and Trust Treatment Condition Means

Condition	n	PJ	DJ	Trust
Low Trust / Ingratiatory Communication Style	30			
M		2.31	1.79	1.94
SD		.67	.80	.90
Low Trust / Neutral Communication Style	30			
M		2.38	2.28	2.29
SD		.76	.70	.96
High Trust / Ingratiatory Communication Style	30			
M		2.42	2.27	2.70
SD		.99	.75	.88
High Trust / Neutral Communication Style	30			
M		2.82	3.06	3.10
SD		1.10	.92	1.12

communication style was not significant (F (1,116) = .675, p = .304). Mean ratings on distributive justice were significantly lower in the low trust condition (M = 1.79) than in the high trust condition (M = 2.28), and mean ratings on distributive justice in the ingratiatory communication style condition were lower (M = 2.27) than in the neutral communication style condition (M = 3.06).

These results are bit surprising considering the actual outcomes in each condition were the same, although the events leading up to each were different. For example, in the high trust condition the supervisor explains that the narrator will receive a tuition reimbursement provided he obtains a grade of "B" or higher and when the narrator fails to meet this stipulation, he does not receive a reimbursement. In the low trust condition the same events unfold except that the supervisors fails to mention the grade stipulation. Given that outcomes across all four conditions were the same, it is difficult to explain why participants rated the perceived level of distributive justice differently. However, one possible explanation might be that people typically perceive distributive justice in relation to the events that led up to and occur along with the outcome and not in terms of the outcome alone (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996).

When reading each of the four narratives, participants were able to discern that in general the outcomes depicted in each of the four narratives were quite negative, as indicated by the low ratings on distributive justice across all conditions. This supports the basic assumption that distributive justice was perceived as low throughout each narrative. Interestingly, participants perceived different low levels of distributive justice depending on whether trust was present and what type of communication style was used. This indicates that participants rated distributive justice in terms of both the level of trust

present in the organization and the communication style used by the supervisor. Although somewhat disconcerting, it seems plausible that these differences simply demonstrate that most people judge the fairness of outcomes in relation to preceding events and not in absolute terms. Despite the fact that there is certainly a difference between the different facets of organizational justices, the boundaries are perhaps more blurred than I had originally assumed. Unless the events surrounding the outcomes on which one is to base his or her perception of distributive justice are identical, the subtle differences will likely color the interpretation of fairness, as was the case in these narratives.

Nevertheless, the moderately low ratings given in each of the four conditions does confirm that participants perceived a universal lack of distributive justice. In addition, verbal reports given by participants during pilot testing indicated they believed the outcomes the narrator received were in fact unfair.

The mean rating given by the 120 participants on the perceived level of trust present in the low trust condition was 2.12 with a standard deviation of .94, and the mean rating on trust in the high trust condition was 2.89 with a standard deviation of 1.01. Table 2 contains the means and standard deviations for trust across each condition. A two-way ANOVA with trust as the dependent variable resulted in a significant main effect for trust, $\underline{F}$ (1, 116) = 18.76, $\underline{p}$ < .001 and for communication style $\underline{F}$ (1, 116) = 4.06, $\underline{p}$ = .047. The trust manipulation resulted in a lower level of reported trust in the low trust condition when compared to the high trust condition and a lower level of reported trust in the ingratiatory communication style condition when compared to the neutral communication style condition. The difference in the reported level of trust across the two communication styles was quite unexpected considering the narratives were word-for –word the exact

same descriptions, except for differences in the sections depicting the communication style.

Once again it is hard to explain why a fixed factor changed when the narratives depict such similar scenarios. Clearly participants were responding to the narratives as a whole and unlike myself, who by virtue of being the creator knew how each condition fit together, were unable to see the various segments representing each of the manipulations. However, similar to the differences across the independent variables in the level of perceived distributive justice where distributive justice was rated lower in the low distributive justice conditions, in general trust was rated higher in the high trust conditions than in the low trust conditions. The results of the two-way ANOVA support this conclusion considering the much larger effect of trust than of communication style.

MANOVA

To assess the levels of perceived interactional fairness and ORB across the four conditions a 2 x 2 between-subjects multivariate analysis of variance was performed with interactional fairness and ORB serving as the two dependent variables, and trust (low and high) and communication style (neutral and ingratiatory) as the independent variables.

SPSS MANOVA was used for the analyses with a total $\underline{N}$ of 120. Results of the evaluation of assumptions of normality, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, linearity, and multicollinearity were satisfactory. Table 3 contains the condition means and standard deviations for each DV and table 4 summarizes the results of the MANOVA.

Table 3

Interactional Fairness and Organizational Retaliatory Behavior Treatment Condition
Means

Condition	n	IF	ORB
Low Trust / Ingratiatory Communication Style	30		
M		2.21	4.89
Adjusted Mean			4.49
SD		.94	1.33
Low Trust / Neutral Communication Style	30		
M		2.52	4.76
Adjusted Mean			4.62
SD		1.26	1.14
High Trust / Ingratiatory Communication Style	30		
M		2.79	4.33
Adjusted Mean			4.32
SD		.91	1.11
High Trust / Neutral Communication Style	30		
M		3.74	3.69
Adjusted Mean			4.14
SD		1.09	.96

Table 4

MANOVA of Trust and Communication Style

IV	DV	F	df	p	η^2
Trust	IF/ORB	12.66	2/115	.000	.180
	IF	21.52	1/116	.000	.157
	ORB	15.08	1/116	.000	.115
Com. Style	IF/ORB	5.38	2/115	.006	.09
	IF	10.66	1/116	.001	.084
	ORB	3.48	1/116	.065	
Trust by	IF/ORB	1.51	2/115	.226	
Com. Style	IF	2.78	1/116	.099	
	ORB	1.50	1/116	.224	

With the use of Wilks' criterion, the combined DVs were significantly affected by both the level of trust present in the organization $\underline{F}$ (2, 115) = 12.66, p < .01, and communication style $\underline{F}$ (2, 115) = 5.38, $\underline{p}$ < .01, but not by their interaction $\underline{F}$ (2, 115) = 1.51, $\underline{p}$ = .23. These results indicate a small relationship between trust (high vs. low) and the combined DVs, η^2 = .18. The relationship between communication style (neutral vs. ingratiatory) and the combined DVs was even smaller, η^2 = .09.
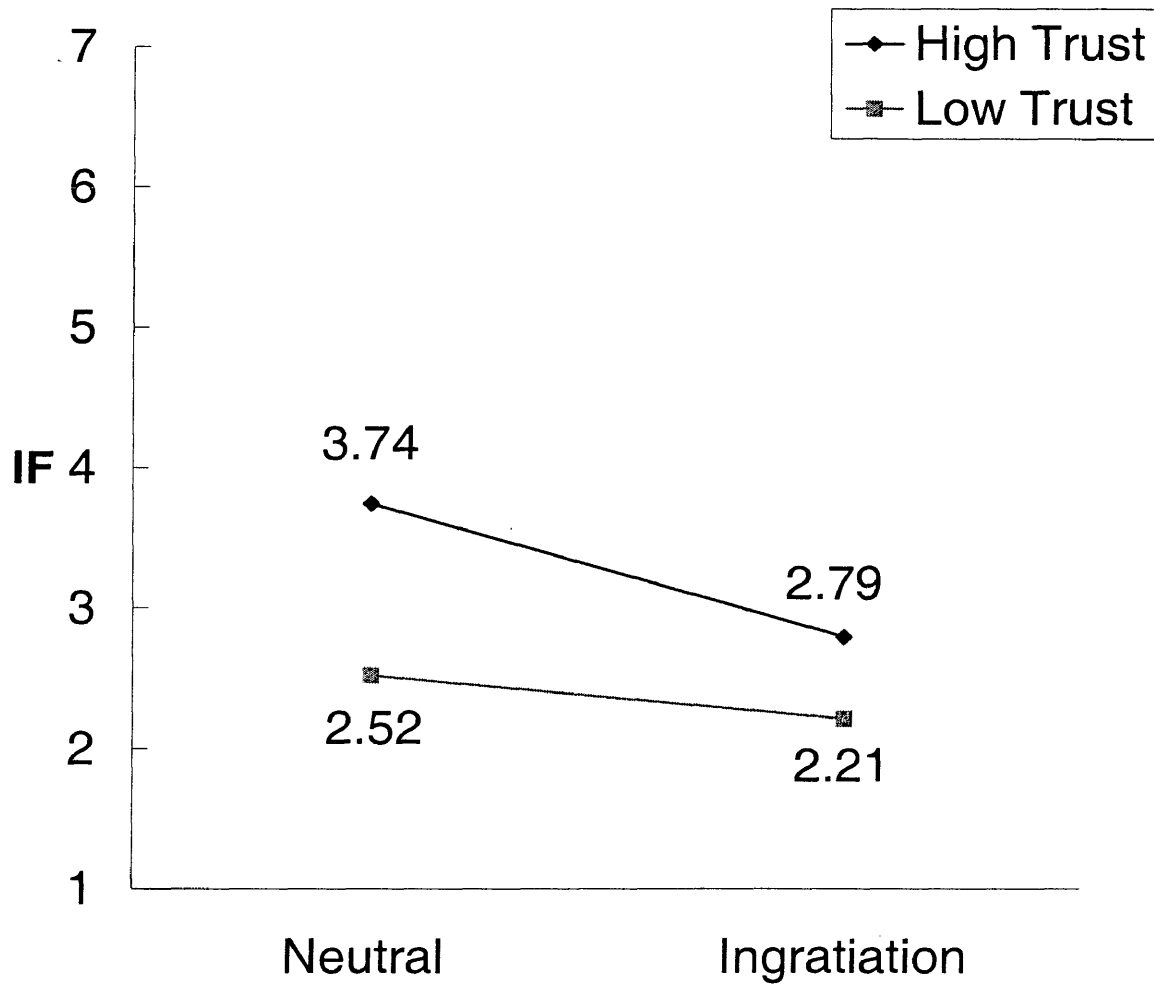
Hypothesis 1

Regarding the first hypothesis, the data do not show that there was a two-way interaction between communication style and organizational trust, under conditions of low procedural and distributive justice, with interactional fairness serving as the dependent variable. Univariate results show that there were significant main effects for trust on interactional fairness and communication style on interactional fairness. These results indicate that under conditions of low organizational trust, there was less perceived interactional fairness than under conditions where organizational trust was not lacking. Similarly, when an ingratiatory communication style was used there was less perceived interactional fairness than when a neutral communication style was used. Figure 4 illustrates these effects.

Hypothesis 2

Regarding the second hypothesis, the data do not show that there was a two-way interaction between communication style and organizational trust, under conditions of low procedural and distributive justice, with ORB serving as the dependent variable. Univariate results show that there was a significant main effect for trust on ORB and a marginal, but not significant, effect for communication style on ORB. These results

Figure 4

Main Effects of Trust and Communication Style on Interactional Fairness

indicate that under conditions of low organizational trust there was more ORB than under conditions where organizational trust was not lacking. Figure 5 illustrates these effects.

Hypothesis 3

ANCOVA was used to assess whether or not interactional fairness mediated the effect of both trust and communication style on ORB. During this analysis, ORB was analyzed, with the higher priority DV, interactional fairness, serving as a covariate, after interactional fairness had been tested in univariate ANOVA. Results of an evaluation of the assumptions of normality of sampling distributions, linearity, homogeneity of variance, homogeneity of regression, and reliability of covariate were satisfactory. In addition, interactional fairness and ORB were found to be significantly correlated, $r = -.55$, $p < .001$.

Results of the ANCOVA show that with interactional fairness as the covariate, there were no main effects for trust on ORB, F (1, 115) = 3.35 or for communication style on ORB, F (1, 115) = .17. The adjusted (interactional fairness as the covariate) and unadjusted means on ORB are listed in Table 3.

Regarding hypothesis three, it appears that interactional fairness mediated the relationship between trust and ORB and between communication style and ORB, keeping in mind the main effect of interactional fairness on ORB was only marginal. As predicted, trust influences ORB indirectly through a mediator, perceptions of interactional fairness; to the extent interactional fairness influences ORB it is through perceptions of interactional fairness. The adjusted means are illustrated in Figure 6.
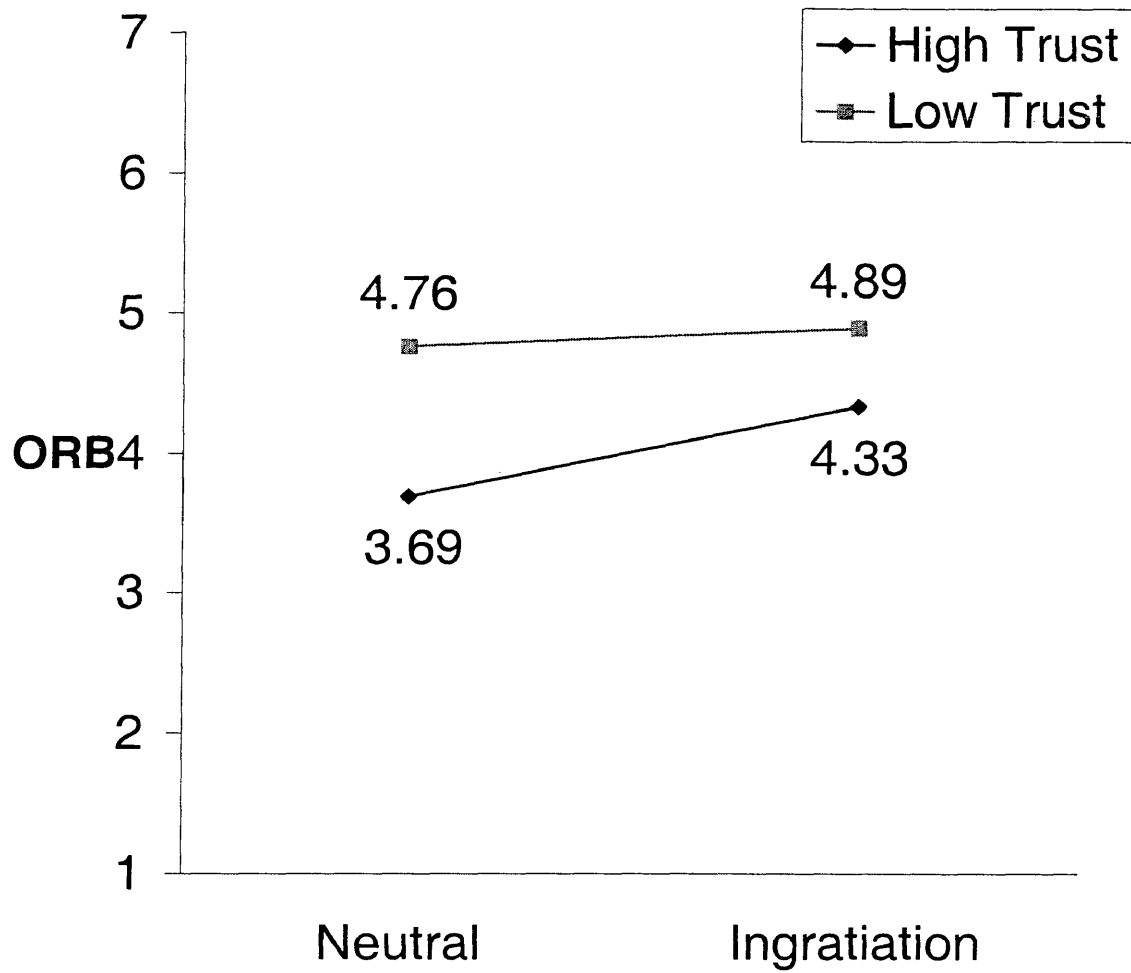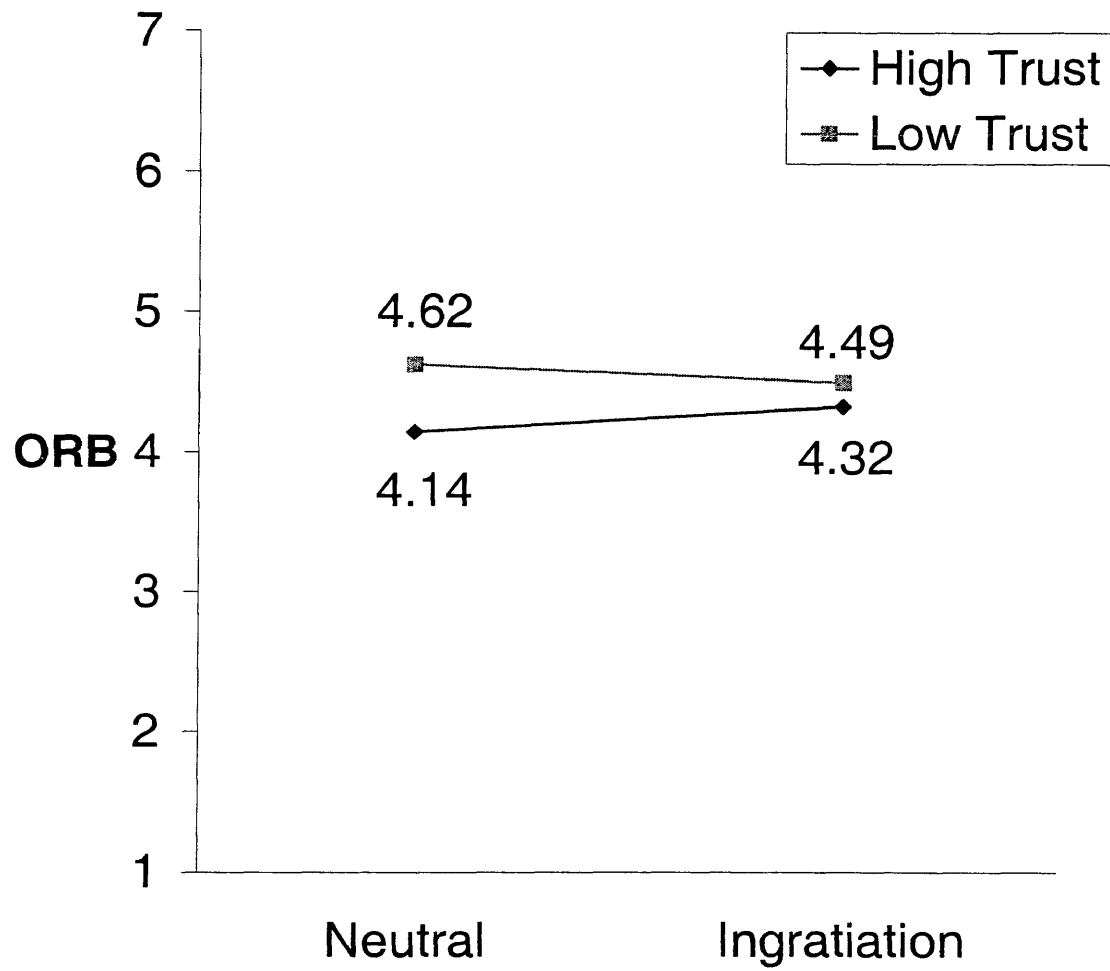
Figure 5

<u>Main Effect of Trust on Organizational Retaliatory Behavior</u>

Figure 6

Organizational Retaliatory Behavior Condition Means Adjusted for Interactional Fairness

Results of the MANOVA and subsequent ANCOVA indicate that when trust is lacking in an organization's climate, perceptions of interactional fairness are lower than when trust is not lacking, and there is a higher likelihood of ORB when trust is lacking than when it is not. In addition, the use of an ingratiatory communication style to communicate news of a pay-cut leads to a decrease in perceptions of interactional fairness relative to the use of a neutral communication style and, to some extent, the use of an ingratiatory communication style leads to an increase in the likelihood of ORB relative to a neutral communication style (univariate ANOVA revealed a marginal effect). Finally, based on the results of an ANCOVA, it appears that interactional fairness mediates the relationship between trust with ORB and the relationship between communication style and ORB.

Chapter 4

Discussion

Overview

In this study attempts were made to ensure that the setting of each narrative was as realistic as possible. In each experimental session, all participants listened to the same lengthy discussion of the purported purpose of, and method used to conduct, the study. Participants were told that they were to serve as assessors in an ongoing experiment conducted by the Psychology department designed to track the employment of graduates who majored in psychology. Concerning their role in the experiment, participants were told that they would be involved in conducting a preliminary assessment of the quality of the jobs graduates currently held. Each participant was told that they would read over a script that was created after a recorded phone conversation with a graduate, who was asked to discuss his experiences while working at his most recent job, was typed into a narrative format. After participants finished reading the narratives they were asked to complete a brief survey they were told measured various aspects of job quality. Once all the participants in a session had finished they were simultaneously debriefed and asked if they believed the cover story that the script was in fact a person's real job experiences. All participants indicated that they did in fact believe the script and completed the subsequent questionnaire under this same belief. Thus, the narrative accounts did appear to possess at least a moderate degree of realism.

Regarding the experimental manipulations, the conditions represented in each of the narratives appeared to be perceived accurately by participants. Thus, in all four conditions participants perceived low levels of procedural and distributive justice, though

there was some variation across the conditions. Similarly, trust was perceived as being higher in the high trust condition and lower in the low trust condition with some variation across the two communication styles. Regarding the variation, it appears that perceptions of distributive justice and, to a lesser extent, procedural justice were influenced by the other manipulations, such as the level of trust present and the communication style, and that the perceived trust was marginally influenced by the communication style. Despite this variation, each experimental manipulation was accurately perceived by participants as representing low procedural and distributive justice and either high or low trust, depending on the condition.

According to Hypothesis 1, it was predicted that there would be a two-way interaction between trust and communication style on the perceived level of interactional fairness. When trust was low a higher level of perceived interactional fairness was expected when a neutral communication style was used relative to an ingratiatory communication style, and when trust was high a higher level of perceived interactional fairness was expected when an ingratiatory communication style was used relative to a neutral communication style. Thus, if the goal was to boost perceptions of interactional fairness, under conditions of low distributive and procedural justice, it was thought that an ingratiatory communication style would only be effective if trust was present and in the absence of trust a neutral communication style would be preferable.

According to Hypothesis 2, it was predicted that there would be an analogous two-way interaction between trust and communication style on the likelihood of ORB. When trust was low a higher likelihood of ORB was expected when a neutral communication style was used relative to an ingratiatory communication style, and when trust was high a

higher likelihood of ORB was expected when an ingratiatory communication style was used relative to a neutral communication style. Thus, if the goal was to decrease the likelihood of ORB, under conditions of low distributive and procedural justice, it was thought that an ingratiatory communication style would only be effective if trust was present and in the absence of trust a neutral communication style would be preferable.

The third hypothesis of this study predicted that the effect of trust and communication style on ORB would be mediated by perceptions of interactional fairness. Thus, both trust and communication style were thought to have only indirect effects on the likelihood of ORB, effects that were mediated by the impact of both on perceptions of interactional fairness.

The results indicate that the style in which a person communicates a negative outcome brought on by procedures perceived as unfair does not interact with the level of trust present in an organization for the purpose of predicting the perceived level of interactional fairness and the likelihood of ORB. Instead, when an ingratiatory communication style was used, participants perceived less interactional fairness and reported a higher likelihood of ORB than when a neutral communication style was used, regardless of the level of trust present. Thus, even when there was nothing to suggest the absence of trust in the organization, participants seem to favor the scenario in which the supervisor used a neutral communication style than when he used the more flattering ingratiatory communication style.

One possible explanation for these unexpected results is that the supervisor lacked credibility in the eyes of participants who may have been influenced to a greater extent by a general negative affective reaction to both the high and low trust scenarios. Given that

the outcomes in both the high and low trust scenarios are essentially the same, the number of negative outcomes may have been enough to trigger a more thorough information search and flag all attempts at persuasive communication as being ingratiatory.

Referring back to the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), in addition to low trust, the cumulative effect of the negative outcomes the narrator received in both the high trust and low trust conditions may have caused participants to process the supervisor's message, when communicating news of the paycut, in a much more thorough/systematic manner. The combined impact of the negative outcomes may have primed participants to view both the organization and the supervisor with suspicion. Originally, it was thought that the absence of trust would trigger this more thorough information search and thus increase the likelihood that the ingratiatory communication style would be perceived as insincere. However, what may have occurred is that the negative outcomes, independent of the level of trust present, were powerful enough to trigger a more thorough information search and increase the likelihood that the ingratiatory communication style was perceived as insincere.

Participants may have been influenced by negative outcomes to the extent that they would have viewed any actions of the organization or its representatives with a heightened degree of suspicion. If this were the case, the supervisor's message in the ingratiatory communication style condition stood little chance of being perceived as sincere.

Another possible explanation for these results is that participants found the ingratiatory actions to be so out of character for the supervisor, that the actions were not very believable. Had the supervisor been depicted as a genuine caring person throughout the narrative, perhaps his actions when communicating news of the payout in the

ingratiatory communication style condition would have been perceived as being more sincere. In addition, the use of a rather sarcastic depiction of the supervisor's behaviors following the ingratiatory communication (see Appendix C) may have further tarnished the sincerity of his actions.

Given the description used in this study, the supervisor is probably perceived as being indifferent when it comes to the well being of his subordinates, until his sudden outburst of concern while explaining the paycut. Even though the supervisor is not depicted as being malicious, his actions while explaining the paycut may have been perceived as being too far removed from his normal indifferent mannerism and thus somewhat suspect.

Regarding this explanation, it was neither the level of trust present nor the negative outcomes that made the ingratiatory communication conditions seem so transparent. Rather, the actions of the supervisor were so out of character that participants could not help but perceive these actions as blatantly ingratiatory. According to Jones and Pitman (1982), one of the factors influencing the success of an ingratiatory message is the extent to which the actions of the communicator are consistent with his or her past behaviors. In this study, even if the supervisor was not perceived as uncaring, in other words if participants had yet to formulate an opinion of him, the onset of his behavior when communicating the paycut may have been unusual enough to trigger a systematic information search and flag the communication style as blatantly ingratiatory.

Whatever the reason, participants did not look upon the ingratiatory communication style with favor. Even when the organization was depicted in terms of not lacking trust, participants perceived less interactional fairness and indicated a higher

likelihood of ORB when the supervisor used an ingratiatory communication style. Clearly,

under the conditions depicted in these narratives, attempts at ingratiation failed.

Unlike Hypothesis 1 and 2, there was some evidence in support of Hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 3 predicted a mediated effect of trust and communication style on ORB, with

perceptions of interactional fairness serving as the mediator. Results show the effect of

trust on ORB was mediated by perceptions interactional fairness. Although there was only

a marginal effect of communication style on ORB, this "effect" too was mediated by

perceptions of interactional fairness.

<u>Applied Implications</u>

The applied implications of these results are slightly difficult to discern, given the

potential alternative explanations previously mentioned. However, bearing in mind that

these explanations exist, one can speculate that when there is a general perception of low

distributive and procedural justice, attempts at raising perceptions of interactional justice

via ingratiatory-like actions will likely bring about more harm than good. When an

organization is going through a period of downsizing, paycuts, promotional freezes, or

similar events that increase the likelihood that employees will perceive lower levels of

distributive and procedural justice, representatives of the organization need to understand

that their actions during these times may be looked upon with a great deal suspicion. If,

under these circumstances, a manager is put in the position of keeping the peace and

maintaining employee morale, he or she must be aware of how his or her actions could be

interpreted. For example, if he or she attempts to display concern for the employees will

these actions actually be perceived as sincere. Alternatively, will these actions be

perceived as ingratiatory and ultimately create feelings of greater ill will.

One of the premises of this study was that the presence or absence of trust would be the key to determining whether or not an ingratiatory communication style would help to increase perceptions of interactional fairness as well as decrease the likelihood of ORB. However, as these results have shown, trust did not appear to have much of an impact on the success of the ingratiatory communication style at raising perceptions of interactional fairness and decreasing the likelihood of ORB, relative to the neutral communication style. In all cases, the less emotion laden communication style was preferred, regardless of the level of trust present in the organization.

Based on these results, if a manager wishes to avoid the potential for having his or her behaviors perceived as insincere under the aforementioned conditions, then he or she should opt to display less emotion laden actions. In other words, when interacting with subordinates under conditions of low distributive and procedural justice, a manager may have to fight his or her natural tendency to want to create the impression that he or she is truly concerned, and instead maintain a more neutral disposition, or at least make sure not to exaggerate his or her concern.

Of course in this study the emotion laden actions were rather extreme, and in an applied setting a manager will probably find it beneficial to show some degree of concern. In an applied setting a manager's primary concern should be to acknowledge the possibility that actions conveying too much sympathy, empathy, or flattery, could be perceived as ingratiatory, even if they were in fact sincere. Thus, even the well intentioned manager has to be aware that not everyone is privy to his or her true motives and at times fight the desire to create the appearance of true concern if the actions that create that image involve a high degree of empathy, sympathy, or flattery. This study appears to show that

not only will actions that are interpreted as insincere decrease perceptions of interactional

fairness, these actions will also indirectly increase the likelihood of ORB, as mediated by

perceptions of interactional fairness.

Limitations and Future Research

Once again, the previous conclusions are tentative, pending evidence that

eliminates competing explanations for the results of this study. Specifically, it must be

shown that neither the negative outcomes preceding the communication manipulations, nor

the extent to which the supervisor was acting within character were the true causes of the

failed attempt at ingratiation. To further clarify these results, future research should

investigate how altering the negativity of the outcomes prior to the paycut impacts the

communication style. Perhaps if there is less of a general negative affective reaction to the

narratives, the supervisor's communication style under conditions where trust is not

lacking and an ingratiatory communication style is used will be less transparent. This

could be accomplished by adding more positive outcomes to help offset the negative

outcomes needed for the trust manipulation. In this type of scenario it should be possible to

separate the negativity of the outcomes from the trust manipulation.

Similarly, future research should assess how adjusting the description of the

supervisor both prior to and after he communicates news of the paycut impacts the

interpretation of his communication style. Perhaps if the supervisor is depicted as having

been more involved with his subordinates his communication style would not be seen as

out of character. Under this scenario one would have to be careful and balance the

supervisors involvement with his subordinates to show both positive and negative regard.

Essentially, one would want to create a neutral affective reaction to the supervisor and at the same time make his ingratiatory communication style seem as though it is not out of character. The solution may be to depict the supervisor as showing concern for his employees at times and a lack of concern at times. In addition, the description of the supervisor's behaviors following the communication should be adjusted so that there is no mention of his returning to a normal routine that involves little contact with his subordinates.

There may also be an effect of individual differences that could prove to be at work in this study. Individual differences could play a role in how a person responds to an ingratiatory message. The ability of the both the communicator and target could impact how the message is interpreted. For example, an experienced sales person or politician might be more effective in making an ingratiatory communication seem believable than would a person with less experience using this impression management tactic. Also, the targets of ingratiatory messages may have differing degrees of ability when it comes to uncovering the true meaning of the message. In other words, some people may simply be more prone to believing or not believing ingratiatory messages. Future research should seek to address this issue.

In addition, the context within which these scenarios took place may limit the range of applied settings the results could generalize to. The narratives used in this study describe a very specific series of event that, when not duplicated, may not produce the same results. Future research may wish to address the impact the context of the narrative will have on the degree to which the results can be generalized to actual applied settings.

Finally, given that participants were simply rating a written narrative of a stranger's work experiences, their reactions may not have been as genuine as had they experienced the situation directly, perhaps through a simulation or as actual employees of an organization. This decrease in realism may have tainted the results and the participants responses may not be a good representations of how an individual who is personally involved in these type of circumstance would react. Ideally, future research should assess how an increase in the realism of the experiment would impact the results.

Conclusions

The results of this study appear to indicate that under conditions of low distributive and procedural justice, attempts at increasing perceptions of interactional fairness via an ingratiatory-like communication style will decrease a target's perceptions of interactional fairness and increase the likelihood of ORB. From an applied perspective, managers who try to maintain employee morale and quell negative reactions to the organization during turbulent times, such as during periods of downsizing, paycuts, or promotional freezes, must be aware that actions taken to show concern for the employee's well-being run the risk of being interpreted as ingratiatory. This risk most likely increases as the extent to which the managers actions become more and more ingratiatory-like, and involve moderate to excessive displays of caring, empathy, or flattery. Managers who find themselves in these situations might be better off using a less emotion laden communication style, even if such actions fail to convey a high level of concern for their subordinates. Because the consequences of having actions intended to convey care and concern interpreted as being blatantly ingratiatory include decreased perceptions of interactional fairness and an increase in the likelihood of retaliatory behaviors; managers

should use less emotion laden actions when there is the potential for ambiguity regarding employee perceptions of a manager's intentions.

With all that said, one must keep in mind the very specific context in which the study took place. Claims about applied implication must be tempered by the fact that generalizing outside the context of the study is probably not warranted at this time. The closer an applied setting comes to mirroring the events depicted in each narrative the more likely it is that the results of this study will generalize and the aforementioned conclusions will hold true.

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Appendix A

Trust Manipulation

Low Trust

I have been working for FMT, a mid-sized accounting firm located in Boston, full-time, for approximately two years. My current position is that of a Human Resources (HR) specialist in charge of interviewing and selecting new employees, assisting in annual evaluations, and posting weekly company news on our web site.

Although I have been working full time at FMT for two years, I was originally introduced to the company as an HR intern in the summer of 1995. At the time I didn't think the pay was much ($10.00 an hour I think), however, the internship did give me the opportunity to get away from Omaha for a summer and gain some "real world" experience. Unfortunately, towards the end of my junior semester (spring 1995) I learned that one of the courses I needed to graduate was not going to be offered the following year and that second summer session would be my only opportunity to take it. I knew that there was no way I would allow my self to graduate late, so I decided my only option would be to forego the internship and register for summer session. Quite discouraged, I told the head of the HR department (Jerry) that I would not be able to take the internship because of the class conflict. Much to my surprise, Jerry informed me that I shouldn't be so hasty with my decision and that a community college located one town away from FMT probably offered the same course. In addition, Jerry added that he thought FMT offered a 100% tuition reimbursement (including books and other course related materials) to its interns, and he put me on hold while he checked. After waiting on hold for a few minutes Jerry's voice came back on the line and told me that he had just spoken with the compensation and benefits director who confirmed that FMT did in fact offer a 100% tuition reimbursement policy for its interns. After finding out that credit for the course would transfer back to UNO, I called Jerry back and accepted the internship offer.

That summer (1995) was my first exposure to FMT and despite my duties being a little dull, I was pleased to get some exposure to HR in an applied setting, and at the same time take the all-important required class for free.

I began taking my course toward the end of June, and although the college was only two towns away, getting there actually amounted to about an hour and half of drive time each way (have you ever been to Boston?). Before starting the class I was working a standard 9-5, 40 hours a week. I decided that the class, which took place 3 times a week at 2:30 in the afternoon, would require me to take a significant amount of time off of work each week. After some deliberation I came to the conclusion that in order to accommodate both work and school I was going to have to miss one class a week and cut my work schedule down to 30 hours a week. I knew that missing one class a week or 6 out of a total of 18 would be difficult but I really had no other options.

Luckily I managed to make it through the class in fairly good shape and went into the week of the final test with a low "A" average. The final was on a Friday and I had been missing class on Wednesdays to pick up my extra hours at work, so I anticipated no problem finishing the class with high marks.

Unfortunately, because of excessive traffic on the day of the final I arrived almost an hour late and was forced to rush through the test in order to finish it on time. I thought about asking for an extension, but felt that because of my once a week absences, the instructor would probably be less than sympathetic. Needless to say I did very poorly, I believe I got a "D+" on the final, and ended up receiving a "C+" for the course. Oh well, it was free, and the "C+" would still allow me to graduate.

After receiving my tuition statement, I went to the benefits clerk in order to receive my reimbursement. Much to my dismay the clerk shook his head and explained that he could not reimburse me for the 400 dollars it cost to take the course because I had not obtained a grade of "B" or higher. Come to find out the compensation and benefits clerk and Jerry failed to inform me that FMT only reimbursed tuition if a grade of "B" or higher was achieved. Thus, when I went to drop off the forms to get my reimbursement check I was told that I would have to pay for the course myself and that I should have known about the grade stipulation. Quite upset I left and a week later flew back to Omaha to finish my final year at UNO.

Fortunately, I ended up graduating from UNO (400 dollars further in debt) on time and because I already had work experience in Boston, and I really wanted to work in HR, I decided to apply for a full time HR specialist position at FMT after graduation.

When I was initially hired for full time work at FMT, I found that the money I received on my first paycheck was less than what I was told my starting salary would be. I immediately brought this to my supervisor's attention (still Jerry) and he informed me that the person who interviewed me was new and he must have made a big mistake when discussing salary. Interestingly enough I found out that two of my coworkers, also newly hired HR specialists, were made similar promises of pay, by different interviewers, that were also broken. Needless to say I let this incident slide without putting up much of a fuss, I was simply happy to have found a job so quickly and FMT did provide me with a temporary apartment that was close to work.

In March of my first year working full time I decided to take a trip back to Omaha to visit my family. I had spent Thanksgiving and Christmas away from home for the first time ever and I was becoming a little homesick. Fortunately, FMT offered 1 week of paid vacation per year, even to first year employees, provided advance notice was given and the time off was approved. Perhaps spurred on by my homesickness, I decided to take advantage of my vacation time, after all, I would be eligible for more vacation time in May because it would then be the start of my second year.

I told Jerry a couple of weeks in advance of my desire to use my vacation time and he presented me the forms I would need to fill out in order to do so. After filing the vacation

forms (basically they were just a formality for the company records). I began to eagerly anticipate my trip back home, only two short weeks away.

The Monday before my Friday departure I received a company memo which explained that all FMT employees had to report for work the next two weeks and be prepared for possible overtime to accommodate the recent heavy workload brought on by the coming filing deadline for taxes (April 15). At first my heart sank at the thought of canceling my vacation, but then I began to think, what added need is there for a HR specialist during tax season. It makes sense for the accountants and related personnel to have to be on duty, but why HR? I went to have a talk with Jerry and explained my situation. After hearing me out he agreed that the memo probably didn't apply to nonessential personnel and that he would check with the other managers to see if it would be o.k. if I left. On Tuesday Jerry told me that after conferring with the other managers they all agreed that I should proceed with my vacation plans. Great, the problem was solved and I wasn't going to miss my vacation, right? Wrong.

Two days later, while passing me in the hall, Jerry briefly explained to me that he had had a talk with one of the executives who told him that the reason the memo said all personnel had to report was to ensure the accountants and other essential personnel had backup help to get some of the additional work completed. Jerry quickly added that I would have to cancel my vacation plans. I simply couldn't believe it. I filed my vacation form and FMT said go ahead, I brought the memo to Jerry's attention and he and the other managers said not to worry about it, and yet I still had to cancel my vacation.

High Trust (Climate not lacking trust)

I have been working for FMT, a mid-sized accounting firm located in Boston, full-time, for approximately two years. My current position is that of a HR specialist in charge of interviewing and selecting new employees, assisting in annual evaluations, and posting weekly company news on our website.

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I began taking my course toward the end of June, and although the college was only two towns away, getting there actually amounted to about an hour and half of drive time each way (have you ever been to Boston?). Before starting the class I was working a standard 9-5, 40 hours a week. I decided that the class, which took place 3 times a week at 2:30 in the afternoon, would require me to take a significant amount of time off of work each week. After some deliberation I came to the conclusion that in order to accommodate both work and school I was going to have to miss one class a week and cut my work schedule down to 30 hours a week. I knew that missing one class a week or 6 out of a total of 18 would be difficult but I really had no other options.

Luckily I managed to make it through the class in fairly good shape and went into the week of the final test with a low "A" average. The final was on a Friday and I had been missing class on Wednesdays to pick up my extra hours at work, so I anticipated no problem finishing the class with high marks.

Unfortunately, because of excessive traffic on the day of the final I arrived almost an hour late and was forced to rush through the test in order to finish it on time. I thought about asking for an extension, but felt that because of my once-a-week absences, the instructor

would probably be less than sympathetic. Needless to say I did very poorly, I believe I got a "D+" of the final, and ended up receiving a "C+" for the course. O well, it was free, and the "C+" would still allow me to graduate.

After receiving my tuition statement, I went to the benefits clerk in order to receive my reimbursement. Much to my dismay the clerk shook his head and explained that he could not reimburse me for the 400 dollars it cost to take the course because I had not obtained a grade of "B" or higher. I told him my story about the excessive traffic and he said even though he felt bad there really was nothing that could be done about it. Well, what could I say, I was told about the grade policy beforehand and rules are rules.

Fortunately, I ended up graduating from UNO (400 dollars further in debt) on time and because I already had work experience in Boston, and I really wanted to work in HR, I decided to apply for a full time HR specialist position at FMT after graduation. In addition, I remember that FMT offered to provide me with temporary housing if I ever chose to apply for full time work. Given the difficulty involved with finding an adequate apartment in Boston, this was a very generous offer.

When I arrived in Boston to begin my full time position as a HR specialist I was pleasantly surprised to find that not only did FMT fulfill the promise to find housing, my temporary apartment was both luxurious and very close to work. I was actually a little reluctant to look for my own place given the nature of my temporary accommodations.

In March of my first year working full time I decided to take a trip back to Omaha to visit my family. I had spent Thanksgiving and Christmas away from home for the first time ever and I was becoming a little homesick. Fortunately, FMT offered 1 week of paid vacation per year, even to first year employees, provided advance notice was given and the time off was approved. Perhaps spurred on by my homesickness, I decided to take advantage of my vacation time, after all, I would be eligible for more vacation time in May because it would then be the start of my second year.

I told Jerry a week in advance of my desire to use vacation time and he presented me the forms I would need to fill out in order to do so, reminding me that it would have to be approved. After filling out and filing the vacation forms, I began to eagerly anticipate my trip back home, only two short weeks away.

The Monday after filing my vacation request I received a company memo which explained that all FMT employees had to report for work the next two weeks and be prepared for possible overtime to accommodate the recent heavy workload brought on by the coming filing deadline for taxes (April 15). At first my heart sank at the thought of canceling my vacation, but then I began to think, what added need is there for a HR specialist during tax season. It makes sense for the accountants and related personnel to have to be on duty, but why HR? I went to have a talk with Jerry and explained my situation. After hearing me out, Jerry told me the reason everyone had to stick around was to ensure all the work got done, thus HR and other departments outside of accounting would have to chip in and help with the extra sorting, filing, and mailing, all tasks that accounting would not have time to

complete. In addition, Jerry stated that he had just sent me an email to explain that my vacation had not been approved for that very reason. Although disappointed, Jerry's explanation made sense to me and that evening I canceled my flight to Omaha.

Appendix B

Low Procedural and Distributive Justice Induction

Moving ahead one year to the present, I am still working for FMT, and just recently received a scheduled pay raise. Interestingly enough FMT recently began finding itself in a bit of financial trouble and is in the process of dismissing the current Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to help turn things around. The CEO and probably most of management had made some really dumb business moves in the last year (trying to acquire organizations that weren't very compatible with FMT, promoting individuals who didn't have the ability to serve in their new posts, etc. . .) and the board decided that the CEO was going to have the take the blame. Unfortunately the CEO had been one of the original members of FMT and the only way to dismiss him would be to buy him out. Adding to the board's dilemma, it was going to cost several million dollars to perform this buyout and the current financial status of the organization made this impossible, or so it seemed.

The board decided that the only way to secure money for the multi-million dollar buyout was to have existing employees take small pay cuts. They reasoned that to get the organization back on track they would need to change its current direction. To them, switching direction meant replacing the CEO, who was thought to be responsible for the current direction. However, as most people within the organization knew, simply replacing our figurehead would not bring about the desired change. Most FMT employees knew the managerial structure was really to blame for the current problems and that until something was done to change this structure there was little hope for improvements. Oh well, businesses like quick fixes and the board's decision to replace the CEO was the quickest fix available.

As I had mentioned, the board believed that a small, company-wide, pay cut would be the best way to raise the necessary funds to buyout the current CEO. Unfortunately, they placed management in charge of determining the specifics of the pay cut. Management decided that the best way to implement the pay cut would be to have all employees with less than 2 years of full-time experience with the company take a 2% decrease in their salaries. Although management's decision was suppose to be confidential, the information eventually leaked and almost everyone in the company knew about the pay cut ahead of time. Everyone knew management had basically saved their own salaries by changing the boards idea of a small company wide pay cut, with their decision to have the lesser experienced employees suffer. Thus, the board's idea of a universal pay cut of less that 1% company wide (including management) became a 2% pay cut for the all the newer employees, which included me. I had full knowledge of my impending pay cut two weeks before Jerry decided to break the news to me. Interestingly, I think Jerry knew full well of the information leakage.

Appendix C

Communication Style Manipulation

Ingratiatory Communication Style

The day Jerry broke the news of my 2% pay cut (about a month ago) he came to work acting unusually cordial to me and the others in HR. It wasn't that he was usually unpleasant, it's just that he typically had a rather uncaring indifference about him. A typical day with Jerry in the office meant a quick hello in the morning and maybe some small exchange of pleasantries before he left. He rarely interacted with the rest of us and almost seemed to consider us undeserving of his attention. I would assume this is quite typical of management, or at least at FMT it is.

Getting back to Jerry's unusual behavior. On the day he sprung the news of the pay cut he showed up with 2 dozen donuts and a thermos of premium coffee for everyone. He actually sat down and participated in our midmorning conversation over break and seemed interested in what we had to say. It was really quite bizarre. Things were really getting strange when later it came time for lunch and he offered to take us all (3 of us) out to eat.

Over lunch Jerry eventually broke news of the pay cut. He very apologetically explained how we would each have to take a small decrease in our pay starting immediately. He let us express our feelings about the decision and then tried to comfort us by explaining that he knew what we must be going through and saying that we had every right to be angry. He even went so far as to pat me on the back as if he was trying to demonstrate his empathy. Jerry assured us that the pay cut was not an indication of our worth to FMT or a reflection of how he evaluated our performance. He said that he was very pleased with our performance and that we should not view the pay cut as punishment for a lack of productivity. Interestingly enough he failed to explain exactly why we were forced to take the pay cut and how managerial salaries, such as his, were not being garnished. Perhaps due to the fact that we already knew all the details of the pay cut, no one really thought to question him. After his outburst of empathy, Jerry paid the bill, we all returned to work, and he promptly disappeared into his office.

As I had mentioned, this incident took place about a month ago and I must point out that since then things have pretty much returned to normal. After that day, Jerry returned to his usual mannerisms and has yet to bring donuts again, participate in our midmorning conversations, or take us out to lunch. He has gone back to his lofty management perch where he blesses us with a greeting in the morning and a "good-by" in the evening and ignores us the rest of the day.

Neutral Communication Style

On the day he broke the news of the pay cut, Jerry called each of us into his office separately. When it was my turn, I was told to sit down and Jerry calmly explained in a professional and matter-of-fact manner that, as I had probably already known, I would

have to take a 2% pay cut. He went on to tell me that the pay cut would be effective immediately and asked if I had any questions. Because I already knew why the pay cut was being implemented I really had nothing to ask him. He thanked me for my time and then dismissed me. That happened about a month ago and since then nothing much has changed.

Appendix D

<u>Conclusion</u>

Final Paragraph

You may be wondering why I don't try to find another job. Well, I guess one of the reasons is that I really like my co-workers. Still another is I enjoy the work I'm doing in HR. Finally, and I would imagine most importantly, I can't really afford to take time off and search for another job. I have school loans to pay, along with rent, gas, and food to buy, all things that are very expensive here in Boston. I live from paycheck to paycheck but I am surviving.

Appendix E

Measures

Instructions: Please read each statement carefully. Circle the number that most closely represents your degree of agreement with each statement. Please circle a response for each statement.

-3 Strongly Disagree	-2 Disagree	-1 Somewhat Disagree	0 Neutral	+1 Somewhat Agree	+2 Agree	+3 Strongly Agree

1.   The procedures this organization used gave this employee influence over the outcomes he/she received.

       -3   -2   -1   0   +1   +2   +3

2.   This employee found a job that he/she can develop into a successful career.

       -3   -2   -1   0   +1   +2   +3

3.   This organization is not genuinely concerned about its employees' well-being.

       -3   -2   -1   0   +1   +2   +3

4.   The procedures this organization used to make decisions were not free of bias.

       -3   -2   -1   0   +1   +2   +3

5.   Based on the way the organization treated this employee, he/she would be likely to call in sick without actually being ill.

       -3   -2   -1   0   +1   +2   +3

6.   Based on its past actions, an employee would trust this organization to keep him/her informed of any future policy changes.

       -3   -2   -1   0   +1   +2   +3

7.   The procedures this organization used were applied consistently to all employees, including management.

       -3   -2   -1   0   +1   +2   +3

-3 Strongly Disagree	-2 Disagree	-1 Somewhat Disagree	0 Neutral	+1 Somewhat Agree	+2 Agree	+3 Strongly Agree

8. This is a rewarding job for someone who majored in psychology.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3

9. The outcomes received by this employee reflected the effort he/she put into his/her work.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3

10. The procedures this organization used did not give this employee the opportunity to appeal the outcomes he/she received.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3

11. This employee got the outcomes that he/she deserved.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3

12. This organization treats its employees with dignity.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3

13. Trust is lacking in this organization.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3

14. Based on the way the organization treated this employee, he/she would be likely to commit minor acts of theft, such as taking office supplies (for example, papers, pens, floppy disks).

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3

15. The organization treated this employee with respect.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3

16. Relative to his/her contributions to the organization, this employee received unfair outcomes.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

17.   This employee has a job that most people would find desirable.

-3   -2   -1   0   +1   +2   +3

18.   Based on its past actions, an employee would trust this organization to keep its agreements in the future.

-3   -2   -1   0   +1   +2   +3

19.   Based on the way the organization treated this employee, he/she will be likely to assist the organization and provide informal help, such as training new employees.

-3   -2   -1   0   +1   +2   +3

20.   A degree in psychology could easily lead to a better job than the one described by this employee.

-3   -2   -1   0   +1   +2   +3

Given that at the end of this individual's description he explains how he was given a pay-cut, what did you think of his supervisor's behavior? Specifically, please provide your interpretation of the supervisor's behavior while explaining news of the pay cut to his subordinates. For example, do you believe his communication style was appropriate, sincere, professional, etc...? Why or why not?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please provide your assessment of the overall quality of this employee's current job based on the description you have just read using a 10-point rating scale where a rating of 1 indicates the lowest quality and a rating of 10 indicates the highest quality. Please mark your rating by circling the appropriate number. After you make your rating please write a few sentences that justify why you gave the job that rating.

RATING: 1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

JUSTIFICATION:

_____

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