CHAPTER 22

Power and politics

Key terms

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power	influence
power priming	organization politics
reward power	political skill
coercive power	need for power
referent power	Machiavellianism
legitimate power	locus of control
expert power	risk-seeking propensity
strategic contingencies theory	

Learning outcomes

When you have read this chapter, you should be able to define those key terms in your own words, and you should also be able to:

1. Appreciate the importance of power and politics in organizations.
2. Compare and contrast different perspectives on power.
3. Distinguish different bases of power.
4. Identify organizational factors which enhance the power of departments.
5. Differentiate between influencing techniques and the tactics of organization politics.
6. Identify the characteristics of individuals most likely to engage in political behaviour.
7. Explain how women use and are affected by organization politics.

Why study power and politics?

Leadership BS
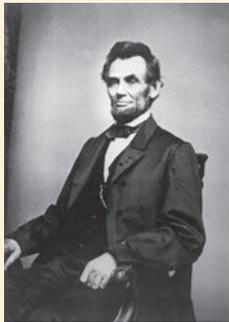
Should leaders be 'squeaky clean' and avoid playing politics? Jeffrey Pfeffer (2016) notes that many famous leaders – including Nelson Mandela, Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy, were pragmatists who were willing to use their power and political tactics to achieve what they believed were important objectives. This contradicts current leadership advice which emphasizes authenticity, telling the truth and building trust. Pfeffer claims that we often confuse what we believe ought to be true with what actually is. Citing a biography of the famous American President Abraham Lincoln, Pfeffer (2016, p.94) notes that:

'Sometimes, this approach to leadership required Lincoln to make deals he was initially uncomfortable with to gain the support of legislators, notably to win passage of the constitutional amendment that outlawed slavery. Sometimes, it required Lincoln to depart from the truth – for example, about precisely where a Southern peace delegation was as it approached Washington and when it might arrive, to give him an opportunity to negotiate privately with its members. Sometimes, it required him to display energy and confidence that he might not really have felt. The ability to do what is required in and by a situation, to behave in usefully inauthentic ways, characterized not only Lincoln but also, I would argue, many other great leaders.'

The popular view is that power corrupts, and that organization politics means underhand, cunning, manipulative 'dirty tricks' and backstabbing. While some of this may be true, leaders and managers who do not have power, and who are either unwilling or unable 'play the politics', have difficulty getting anything done. Inescapable features of organizational life, power and politics can be damaging, but can be also used in constructive ways, to solve problems, generate consensus and drive change.

We think of organizations as rational and orderly, with decisions based on evidence and reason, focusing on efficiency and effectiveness. But organizations are also political systems, and decisions are shaped by influence tactics designed to promote the interests of individuals or groups. As organizations become less hierarchical, and rely more on networks and teams, the use of power and influence becomes more important (Pfeffer, 2010). Power and politics are linked.

Power can be seen as the ability to get other people to do what you want them to do, and it is often necessary to use political tactics to achieve those ends. Politics is thus 'power in action'. Pfeffer (2010) also argues that management failures can often be attributed to lack of political skill.

An organization's members do not always share the same values and goals. Disagreements over the definitions of problems, and how best to solve them, can be expected. Disputes of this kind are often healthy, by exposing different perspectives and issues. What happens, however, when that open sharing of views fails to produce a consensus? Sometimes, those with the best ideas win. Often, the winners are those who are better able to exercise influence 'behind the scenes', by 'playing politics'. Good ideas do not always sell

themselves, and rational arguments may not be effective on their own. As the American diplomat Henry Kissinger once said:

> 'Before I served as a consultant to [President John F.] Kennedy, I had believed, like most academics, that the process of decision-making was largely intellectual and all one had to do was to walk into the President's office and convince him of the correctness of one's view. This perspective, I soon realized is as dangerously immature as it is widely held' (Pfeffer, 1992, p.31).

CUTTING EDGE — Power corrupts – but powerlessness is a bigger threat

Dacher Keltner

Dacher Keltner (2017) argues that power is part of every relationship and every social interaction that we have. Power is not just something that applies to leaders and senior managers. He observes that we gain power by showing empathy, openness, fairness, and by collaborating with others. However, the behaviour of those who have achieved power often changes, and they become rude, selfish and unethical. This is what Keltner calls 'the power paradox'; our good qualities give us the power, which then allows our bad qualities to surface. Keltner describes a laboratory experiment in which one member of a group of three was given the leadership role, and they were all then given a writing task. While they were writing, Keltner brought them a plate with four cookies. In every case, each team member took a cookie and, being polite, left the extra one. Would anyone eventually take the extra cookie? In almost every case, those who had been named as leaders took the extra cookie, and were more likely to eat it with their mouths open, lips smacking, spraying crumbs on their clothes. Another study found that drivers of inexpensive cars always gave way to pedestrians at crossings, but drivers in BMWs and Mercedes gave way to pedestrians only half the time. The more expensive the vehicle, the more entitled its owner felt to break the law or to behave in an aggressive, arrogant way.

This evidence suggests that power does corrupt. Is power corrupting you? Keltner (2016, p.114) offers the following test questions:

> 'Are you interrupting people? Do you check your phone when others are talking? Have you told a joke or story that embarrassed or humiliated someone else? Do you swear at the office? Have you ever taken sole credit for a group effort? Do you forget colleagues' names? Are you spending a lot more money than in the past or taking unusual physical risks? If you answered yes to at least a few of these questions, take it as an early warning sign that you're being tempted into problematic, arrogant displays of power.'

Keltner argues that we can beat the power paradox by being more self-aware, and by showing more empathy, gratitude, and generosity towards others. However, Keltner (2017, p.10) introduces another paradox, arguing that *powerlessness* is a bigger problem. Powerless means having little control over one's life, which is caused by poverty, inequality, racism and gender bias. Why is this a problem?

> 'The costs of powerlessness, which are so often the result of others succumbing to the power paradox, are profound. Powerlessness amplifies the individual's sensitivity to threat; it hyperactivates the stress response and the hormone cortisol; and it damages the brain. These effects compromise our ability to reason, to reflect, to engage in the world, and to feel good and hopeful about the future. Powerlessness, I believe, is the greatest threat outside of climate change facing our society today.'

🖑 **STOP AND SEARCH**   YouTube for *Dacher Keltner: The Power Paradox UC Berkeley Executive Education* (2:14).

Management decisions are often the result of influence, bargaining, negotiation and jockeying for position. Leaders and managers who lack power, and who are not skilled in working with the politics of an organization, struggle to make things happen and to get things done. These capabilities make you more employable. After the job interviews, someone on the panel might say, 'this candidate is very well qualified . . . but . . . '. They are referring to lack of political skill: do not get caught by 'the but problem'.

An understanding of power and politics also allows us to assess the power of others, and to respond accordingly, regardless of whether we ourselves are power hungry or not. Psychologists use the term 'power tells' to describe the various signs and clues that indicate how powerful someone is – or how powerful they want to be (Collett, 2004). The power tells of dominant individuals include:

- Sitting and standing with legs far apart (men)
- Appropriating the territory around them by placing their hands on their hips
- Using open postures
- Using invasive hand gestures
- Smiling less, because a smile is an appeasement gesture
- Establishing visual dominance by looking away from the other person while speaking
- Speaking first, and dominating the conversation thereafter
- Using a lower vocal register, and speaking more slowly
- More likely to interrupt others, more likely to resist interruption by others

What did they find? The red sneakers effect

? Janneke Oostrom and Richard Ronay (2018) have been studying how the way that we dress can affect recruitment decisions. One of the first things that recruiters notice is what you wear to the interview. Dress can signal to others a number of your characteristics such as power, status and competence. For a job interview, we are expected to conform with social norms, so we adopt formal business dress in order to make a good impression. But what happens if we do not conform, if we turn up in, say, jeans and red sneakers?

Janneke Oostrom

The researchers recruited 80 participants in the Netherlands. They were shown a job advertisement for a human resources manager at a professional services company. They were also shown a curriculum vitae (CV) which outlined the candidate's education, work experience, knowledge, skills and abilities. The CVs included a picture of the applicant. (As norms regarding dress style differ for men and women, and are clearer for men, the applicants in this study were all male.) The quality of the candidates' CVs varied; some were weak, and some were strong. The photos showed candidates wearing different styles of clothing. Conforming candidates wore a black suit, black leather shoes, a white shirt, and a blue tie. Non-conforming applicants wore a grey jacket, striped sweater, white shirt, blue tie, dark blue jeans – and sneakers.

Participants were asked to rate the power of the applicant, based on four 'power statements': this person is influential; has a leadership position; is in charge of subordinates; enjoys considerable authority. They were also asked whether they would recommend hiring the candidate.

Richard Ronay

What did they find? Were non-conformists seen as less suitable for the job? **(Answers in chapter Recap.)**

The power tells of submissive individuals include:

- Modifying speech style to sound more like the person they are talking to
- More frequent hesitations, using lots of 'ums' and 'ers'
- Adopting closed postures
- Clasping hands, touching face and hair (self-comfort gestures)
- Blushing, coughing, dry mouth, heavy breathing, heavy swallowing, increased heart rate, lip biting, rapid blinking and sweating are 'leakage tells' which reveal stress and anxiety.

Knowledge of these tells means that we can 'read' the power signals of others. This also means that we can control our own tells so that we appear to be more (or less) powerful.

✓✓✓ **EMPLOYABILITY CHECK (self-management, political awareness)**

You have a job interview tomorrow. You want to appear professional, but you also want to appear independent-minded and creative, and not conventional or conformist. How will you dress?

Power in organizations

Power the capacity of individuals to overcome resistance on the part of others, to exert their will, and to produce results consistent with their own interests and objectives.

Power is a 'contested concept' because a number of competing perspectives have been developed. It is therefore useful to be able to view this concept from different angles, and to be aware of their respective strengths and limitations.

We will explore three perspectives. The first views power as something you possess, a property of the individual. The second sees power as a property of the relationship between one individual (or group) and another. The third sees power as embedded in social and organization structures.

Power as property of the individual

This perspective sees power as something that you possess, a set of resources that you accumulate. How much power do you have? Where did it come from? How can you acquire more power? Some of the main sources of power in an organization are shown in Table 22.1. Notice that some of these sources of power relate to the position that a manager holds in the organization (structural sources), while others relate to individual attributes (personal sources).

From this perspective, as power is something you can accumulate, you can take steps to strengthen both your structural and individual sources of power. Look for jobs in key departments, make friends with power brokers, join important networks and projects, develop your interpersonal and impression management skills, and emotional intelligence. Be aware, however, that others in the organization are also trying to accumulate power. You can win more power, but if you are not careful, you can lose it.

Table 22.1: Power as property

Structural sources	Personal sources
Formal position, job title	Energy, stamina
Access to and control over resources	Ability to focus energy
Centrality of department to the business	Sensitivity to and ability to read others
Degree of department unity	Flexibility in choice of means to achieve goals
Physical and social position in the organization's communication network	Resilience, toughness, willingness to engage in confrontation
Role in solving business-critical problems	Playing 'the subordinate' or the 'team member' in order to get support from others
Being irreplaceable	

Power priming

Research shows that we can feel and behave like a more powerful person by using a technique called **power priming** (Galinsky and Schwitzer, 2015; Cuddy, 2016; Cuddy et al., 2018). The method is simple: to become power-primed, think of a time in which you had power over others, and remember how that felt. You can also be powerless-primed, by thinking of a time when you lacked power. Power priming can be reinforced by adopting a power posture **(see Chapter 7)** and by listening to power anthems – a technique used by Serena Williams, who can often be seen wearing headphones when walking onto the tennis court.

In one experiment, students were first asked to write about a time when they either had power or lacked power. They were then asked to write an application letter for a job that had been advertised in a well-known newspaper. Another group of students was then asked to evaluate these application letters – some power-primed, and some powerless-primed – and to decide if they would appoint the person. The student judges were much more likely to hire the power-primed applicants.

In another experiment, business school graduates who wrote about a positive personal power experience before a job interview were accepted 68 per cent of the time, compared with a normal acceptance rate of 47 per cent. Only 26 per cent of the graduates who wrote about a time when they lacked power were selected; the power-primed applicants were rated as much more persuasive.

Power priming can help us to deal with experiences that are challenging and stressful. Cuddy describes a study which found that people who were asked to hold a power posture for a short time before a job interview were more likely to be offered the job than those who had been asked to sit in a 'weak' posture, hunched, holding their neck, with twisted legs. Galinsky describes a colleague who, when applying for university positions, was asked to make presentations to large audiences. She was interviewed by two prestigious universities, but neither offered her a job. She then wrote a power prime for herself, and got job offers from the next four top-tier universities to which she applied.

Power priming the process of making yourself feel more powerful, which in turn allows you to feel less stressed, and to behave as a more confident, persuasive and powerful person.

Reward power the ability to exert influence based on the other's belief that the influencer has access to valued rewards which will be dispensed in return for compliance.

Power as property of the relationship

John French and Bertram Raven (1958) identified five bases of power. If someone promises you promotion or money to act as they require, then they are using **reward power**. If they threaten you with demotion or redundancy, they are using

coercive power. When they rely on their charming personality, they are using referent power. If they rely on their formal organizational position to get you to comply, they are using legitimate power. When they can claim better knowledge and understanding of the situation, they are using expert power.

Referent power is also known as charisma (in German, *Ausstrahlung,* 'force of personality'). Legitimate power is also called position power, relying on formal organizational role and title. An individual may have access to rewards or possess expertise, but others will be less willing to comply if they do not believe that the individual has those resources (even if they do). Similarly, a person may lack expertise or the ability to reward, but will gain compliance from others because they are able to persuade them that they do have these. An individual can thus manipulate others' perceptions to gain compliance. Because two parties and their perceptions are involved, this perspective treats power as a *relational* concept, and not solely the personal property of an individual.

CRITICAL THINKING

While these power bases can help to influence others to do what you want them to do, they can have other consequences. For example, if your manager uses coercive power to get you to carry out a task, what longer term effects might this have? If your team leader uses expert power over the other team members, what consequences might this have, other than compliance with their immediate instructions?

Coercive power the ability to exert influence based on the other's belief that the influencer can administer unwelcome penalties or sanctions.

Referent power the ability to exert influence based on the other's belief that the influencer has desirable abilities and personality traits that can and should be copied.

Legitimate power the ability to exert influence based on the other's belief that the influencer has authority to issue orders which they in turn have an obligation to accept.

Expert power the ability to exert influence based on the other's belief that the influencer has superior knowledge relevant to the situation and the task.

Several different power bases, in different combinations, can be used at different times, depending on the context, and the target of the influence attempts. The American gangster Al Capone is reputed to have said, 'You can get a lot more done with a kind word and a gun than with a kind word alone' (McCarty, 2004). Managers work with different groups, and while particular power bases may be appropriate in some settings, other methods will be required in different circumstances. Traditionally, managers have relied on legitimate and coercive power. In the twenty-first century, expert and referent power are more appropriate, in most circumstances. However, an individual's power also depends on whatever resources are available to them at any given time.

Power as a property of social and organizational structures

This perspective explores how power controls our behaviour through less obvious means. Power is woven into the fabric of our society. We take many things for granted such as social and organization structures, the system of rules that we normally follow, the day-to-day 'natural order'. These routine features of our surroundings influence our behaviour in subtle ways, and we rarely challenge them, because they are 'normal'. It can be difficult to challenge 'the way things are' without appearing to be odd or extreme. We will explore the taken-for-granted nature of embedded power shortly, in our discussion of the work of Michel Foucault, and his concept of 'disciplinary power'.

Power that is *embedded* in social and organizational structures may be less visible (unless you pay attention), but can be just as powerful in controlling behaviour as more visible sources (such as Al Capone's gun). However, it is in the interests of those who can manipulate and exploit the unequal distribution of power and wealth that we do not challenge 'the way things are'. When power is embedded in this way, we simply accept the outcomes, in the same way that we accept that offices have desks, and bosses have bigger offices and bigger desks.

| **CRITICAL THINKING** | Consider your next organizational behaviour assignment. Have you been given a word limit, a submission date, and a warning about plagiarism? How do those instructions influence your behaviour as a student? |

Tough at the top

Don't expect senior leaders to work well with other senior leaders. High-power individuals, it turns out, do not collaborate as well with each other as groups whose members have lower power. In a series of studies, John Hildreth and Cameron Anderson (2016) found that groups of otherwise capable leaders performed badly and were less creative when working together. They were accustomed to exercising power over those around them, and found it difficult to work with and to reach agreement with others who were equally powerful. They were more concerned to preserve their status, less concerned with the task in hand, and less willing to share information.

Strategic contingencies theory a perspective which argues that the most powerful individuals and departments are those best able to deal effectively with the issues that are most critical to the organization's survival and performance.

In most organizations, different sections or units have different levels of power. Why should this be the case? Groups or departments that are responsible for dealing with the issues that are key to the organization's performance and survival, or solving urgent problems, or dealing with a crisis, tend to be more powerful than those parts of the organization that are less critical. In one organization, at one period, research and development may be critical in terms of developing new products and getting ahead of the competition. In a recession, when consumer spending is low, marketing and sales may be more important. The finance function in most organizations is always a high priority, and they tend to have high levels of power and influence over key decisions.

This is known as the **strategic contingencies theory** of organizational power (Hickson et al., 1971; Salancik and Pfeffer, 1977; Mintzberg, 1983). Strategic contingencies are events that must take place if the organization is to survive and succeed. If your department handles these contingencies, then it will have more power and influence. A department's ability to deal with strategic contingencies depends on five factors; dependency creation, financial resources, centrality of activities, non-substitutability, and ability to reduce uncertainty. These five factors overlap, and the more of them a department possesses, the greater the power that it will exert in the organization.

✓✓✓ **EMPLOYABILITY CHECK (self-management, how organizations work)**

When applying as a graduate recruit for a position in an organization, how will you decide which of its departments to join?

1. Dependency creation

A department is powerful if other units and departments depend on it, for materials, information, resources and advice. The receiving department is always in an inferior power position.

2. Financial resources

A department's ability to control financial resources increases power. Departments thus compete with each other for new projects which have large budgets attached to them.

3. Centrality

Centrality concerns the degree to which a department's activities are critical to achieving the organization's goals. Departments such as training, payroll management, human resources, and advertising, can be outsourced, without jeopardizing the organization's performance.

4. Non-substitutability

A department is more powerful where its work cannot easily be done by another department. Individuals and sections increase power by handling specialized work that needs high levels of skill and knowledge.

5. Uncertainty reduction

Those with the ability to reduce uncertainty can gain significant reputations and positions of influence, by providing clear definitions of problems and solutions, thus restoring an otherwise confused situation.

CRITICAL THINKING   Given what you know about structural sources of power, can you explain why accountants tend to be more powerful and influential than human resource managers?

Three faces of power

Stephen Lukes (2005) argues that power may be visible and self-evident, or subtle and covert, or institutionalized, as we have seen, in organizational structures. Power, for Lukes, thus has three faces:

1. Visible power that is exercised to secure a decision in situations where there is observable conflict or disagreement.

2. Covert power that is exercised to keep issues off the decision-making agenda, so that potential conflicts or disagreements are avoided, and are therefore unobservable.

3. Institutional power, which defines reality and what is 'normal' for others, – if norms and meanings become internalized by an organization's members, they will then act in accordance with those norms, even if these work against their interests.

1. Visible power

The first face of power is the most obvious, and concerns a clash of interests between those making a decision and those who are likely to be affected by it. This face focuses on the *observable behaviours* that influence the form or content of a decision. For example, in the army, a sergeant threatens to put a private on a charge unless he completes an assigned task before midnight. The sergeant's words and actions, and their effect on the soldier's behaviours, can be observed.

2. Covert power

The second face of power concerns the manipulation of issues. The interests of certain groups can be excluded from a bargaining or decision-making arena: 'Sorry, that topic does not fall within the remit of this committee'. The focus here is on the non-observable behaviours that keep issues on or off an agenda. You may know that, if you bring a particular issue to a particular management group, you will not be thanked for raising that problem – so you keep quiet about it, even though there is no pressure on you to do this. This is known as *non-decision making* (Bachrach and Baratz, 1963), which those with power can use to avoid conflict and resistance. This prevents controversial issues from ever reaching the public domain, so discussion is prevented, and no decisions are taken. With the first face of power, at least you know what you are up against. With this second face, you are not invited to the conversation.

3. Institutional power

The third face of power involves shaping others' perceptions, cognitions and preferences, so that they accept their current situation, because they cannot see an alternative. Acceptance may be perceived as natural, unchangeable or divinely ordained, and also as beneficial, and can lead us to act against our objective interests. So we come to understand that maximizing profit through reducing waste and cutting costs are fundamental, unchallengeable features of reality (even though such actions may make working conditions more unpleasant or difficult). In this way, 'the powerful' define reality for 'the powerless', whose interests and grievances are obscured and silenced. Paradoxically, this face of power is characterized by harmony, as power is not exposed in public, those subjected to it are unaware of its presence and influence, and overt conflict is avoided.

Another distinguishing feature of institutionalized power is that it cannot be linked easily with the actions of any one particular individual. This contrasts with the first face of power where we can see individuals influencing a decision. And it may be seen with the second face of power, in the 'behind the scenes' manoeuvres of individuals who want to prevent the open discussion of controversial issues. But if you can control indirectly the actions of others by getting them to accept particular norms and assumptions, in other words to 'internalize' those values and beliefs, not only is challenge stifled, but it is difficult to find individuals to blame for doing the stifling. Organizational culture **(see Chapter 4)** can be an effective source of this control. Institutional power sustains the dominance of the powerful by reducing the ability of the powerless to complain. This is simple to achieve: 'I'm afraid that my role does not give me responsibility for solving problems like that'; 'This committee does not deal with those issues.'

Disciplinary power

Michel Foucault, a French philosopher and historian, provides yet another perspective on power. His thinking relates to Lukes' third 'institutional' face of power focusing on the ways in which management remains dominant by defining reality and normality in ways that reduce the likelihood of challenge or resistance. Foucault (1979, p.93) observed that, 'power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere'. The related concepts of *bio-power* and *disciplinary power* are central to understanding Foucault's thinking.

Bio-power

Bio-power is another term for power that operates by establishing what is normal or abnormal, or socially acceptable or deviant, in thought and behaviour. Bio-power is targeted at society as a whole, and is achieved through a variety of *discursive practices*: talk, writing, debate, argument, representation. The media play a major role in sustaining and altering what we conceive as socially normal. Bio-power exercises its control over us by 'constituting the normal' and operates through our individual cognition and understanding. If you accept without challenge 'the way things are', the way a situation is currently represented, ('the constitution of the normal' as Foucault puts it) then bio-power takes on a self-disciplining role with regard to your thinking and behaving:

> 'As you walk onto the street, you realize just how late it is. You can't believe that you have been at work for so long. You should be used to this by now. Most days you spend twelve hours in the office, with only a fading tourist photograph of an Indian village to remind you of what it was like to be free. There isn't anyone holding a gun to your head, is there? But long hours have their drawbacks. Even though you might want a family, you know that is impossible. Anyway, you have made your decision. You're out to achieve big things, and this requires a few small sacrifices.' (Fleming and Spicer, 2007, p.19)

There is no manager or supervisor telling you what to do. Procedures, instructions and controls are applied by individuals to themselves in pursuit of goals that they have been persuaded are their own, but which are set by self-interested elites. Rather than having individuals' behaviour regulated through external systems of monitoring and control (supervisors, technology, appraisals), these controls get inside the 'hearts and minds' of organization members, and work through self-regulation.

CRITICAL THINKING

How does bio-power affect your behaviour? Which goals do you accept as your own, and which have been 'given' to you by your university and/or its staff? In your work, current or past, which procedures and instructions have you accepted without criticism, and to which you have conformed without challenge? If you decided to challenge those goals, procedures, and instructions, how would you do that, and how would you estimate your chances of success in getting any of them changed?

Disciplinary power

Disciplinary power targets individuals and groups and works through the construction of social and organizational routines. Through this lens, Foucault sees power as a set of techniques, the effects of which are achieved through what he calls *disciplinary practices*. These practices include the tools of surveillance and assessment that are used to control and

regiment individuals, rendering them docile and compliant. The tools, or mechanisms that achieve compliance include (Hiley, 1987, p.351):

- The allocation of physical space in offices or factories, which establishes homogeneity and uniformity, individual and collective identity, ranks people according to status, and fixes their position in the network of social relations
- The standardization of individual behaviour through timetables, regimentation, work standards and repetitive activities
- The 'composition of forces', where individuals become parts of larger units, such as cross-functional teams, or production lines
- The creation of job ladders and career systems which, through their promises of future promotion and reward, encourage compliance with the organization's demands.

We do not normally consider office layouts, timetables, career ladders and work assignments to be manifestations of power. However, these normal features of organizational life help to shape and discipline our daily activities and interpersonal relationships, controlling us, and guaranteeing our compliance with social and organizational norms and expectations. It is precisely because they are 'micro techniques', so small, so unobtrusive, and so embedded in the organization's structure and processes, that they are hardly noticed. Foucault's concept of power is thus different from traditional concepts, as the contrasts in Table 22.2 indicate (Buchanan and Badham, 2008, p.296).

CRITICAL THINKING How are disciplinary practices affecting your behaviour? Identify examples of practices to which you have been subjected, either in your educational institution or at work, which have shaped your routine daily activities and social interactions. So what? Is this a problem?

Table 22.2: Foucault and traditional concepts of power

Traditional concepts of power	Foucault's concepts of power
Power is possessed, accumulated, vested in the individual	Power is pervasive, a totality, reflected in concrete practices
Power is in the hands of social and organizational elites; resistance is futile	Power is found in the micro-physics of everyday social life; power depends on resistance
We are subject to the domination of those who are more powerful than us	We construct our own web of power by accepting current definitions of normality
Power is destructive, denies, represses, prevents, corrupts	Power is productive, contributes to social order, which is flexible and shifting
Power is episodic, visible, observable in action, deployed intermittently, absent except when exercised	Power is present in its absence, discreet, operating through taken-for-granted daily routines and ways of living
Knowledge of power sources and relationships is emancipatory, helping us to overcome domination	Knowledge maintains and extends the web of power, creating further opportunities for domination

Source: Buchanan and Badham (2008)
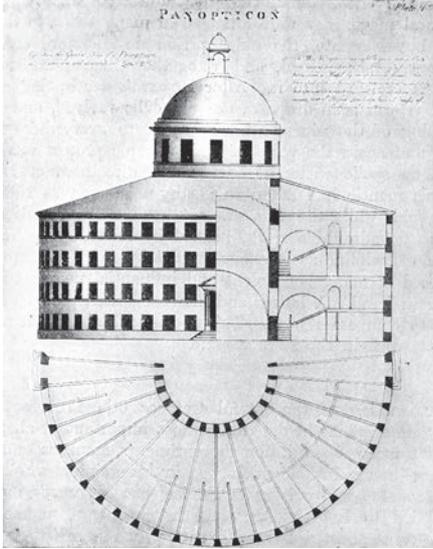
Foucault argues that we are trapped in a 'field of force relations', a web of power which we help to create, and which we are always recreating. We are creators of that web of power, and prisoners within it. At an organizational level, disciplinary practices condition employees' thought processes, leading them to treat taken-for-granted processes, such as performance-based pay, as 'natural', and beyond question. This 'force field', however, is neither stable nor inevitable. Challenge may be difficult, but is not impossible. As a consequence, this force field changes as points of resistance are encountered, networks of alliances change, fissures open up, old coalitions break up, and new ones are formed. Foucault also points out that resistance (by employees to management demands, for example) only demonstrates and reinforces the need for such disciplinary measures.

Foucault uses the metaphor of the *panopticon* for his image of disciplinary power. This is a circular prison designed by the eighteenth-century philosopher Jeremy Bentham, allowing all the prison inmates to be observed, in their cells, by one observer who cannot be seen by the prisoners. The prisoners cannot avoid the surveillance, but they do not know when they are being observed. They must therefore behave at all times *as if* they are being watched. They thus monitor themselves. As McAuley et al. (2007, p.263) argue: 'We are not necessarily compelled to act as we do by some external agency. Instead, through society's disciplines of schools, hospitals, prisons and military, we have internalized [*power*] to become self-governed or 'normalized'. A modern example of Bentham's panopticon principle is the wording on the back of delivery vehicles which reads, '*Well driven? Call 0800 11 22 33*'.

CUTTING EDGE New power

Henry Timms and Jeremy Heimans (photo credit: Michael Creagh)

Jeremy Heimans and Henry Timms (2014; Timms and Heimans, 2018) argue that traditional concepts of power are being challenged by a new set of values and behaviours based on our desire for more participation, collaboration, and co-production. 'Old power', they argue, is like a *currency*: it is difficult to accumulate, few have large quantities, and they guard it jealously. 'New power', on the other hand, is like a *current,* which is generated by many, and is open, participative and peer-driven. New power is more dispersed, and is based on our growing desire and technological ability to participate. Heimans and Timms identify five ways in which participation is widening:

Sharing	Passing what one person has said or created on to others (e.g. Facebook)
Shaping	Adapting content or ideas to create a new message (e.g. Facebook)
Funding	Providing financial support for ideas (e.g. crowd-funding, peer-to-peer lending)
Producing	Creating content for a community of peers (e.g. YouTube, TaskRabbit)
Co-owning	Sharing ownership of something (e.g. Wikipedia, Linux)

New power is based on a distinct set of values. You are not just a passive user of YouTube; you can create your own content and share it with others. This 'peer-based collective action' means that collaboration is becoming the norm, and that traditional providers are becoming less influential. Participation has come to be regarded as a right, to shape and to create aspects of our lives. New power encourages 'DIO' or 'do it ourselves', solving social problems, for example, without the need for conventional bureaucracies. Traditional privacy is being replaced by permanent transparency as more people live on social media.

Heimans and Timms identify four types of organizations depending on their business models and their values. *Castles* are companies that have old power business models and old power values, such as Apple and the American National Security Agency. *Cheerleaders* combine old power models with new power values, such as the clothing companies Patagonia and Zappos. *Connectors* have new power models, but still work with old power values, such as Facebook and Uber. *Crowds* are peer-driven organizations that combine new power models and values, such as Wikipedia, Kickstarter, and HuffPost. New power, however, is not necessarily benign. Timms and Heimans (2018, p.53) argue:

> 'The future will be won by those who can spread their ideas better, faster, and more durably. In a world of fake news, climate change deniers, Holocaust deniers, anti-vaxers, and all manner of extremists, the stakes are high. Those on the side of the angels, who want to spread compassion, promote pluralism, or defend science, must first grapple with a painful reality: that new power can supercharge hate and misinformation. In fact, those darker forces often start at an advantage because their provocations compel our attention and our clicks. It isn't enough to simply have the facts on your side.'

STOP AND SEARCH   YouTube for *Jeremy Heimans: What New Power Looks Like* (Ted Talk, 15:12)

CRITICAL THINKING   How are you affected by new power? How are you using new power? To see how Stefanie Sword-Williams uses new power, go to her self-promotion website at **f***beinghumble.com**.

Power and influence

Influence the process of affecting someone else's attitudes, beliefs or behaviours, without using coercion or formal position, such that the other person believes that they are acting in their own best interests.

How can we use power to get others to do what we want? Power is defined as exerting one's will and overcoming resistance to produce the results that we desire. Those over whom power is exercised may resent this. However, it is also possible to achieve the desired results in such a way that those affected are not aware, and only occasionally resentful, and may even be grateful. Andrzej Huczynski (2004) defines **influence** as one person's ability to

HOW DO YOU GET OTHERS TO ACCEPT YOUR IDEAS?

affect another's attitudes, beliefs or behaviours. Influence can be achieved without force or 'pulling rank'. When this is successful, the person who is influenced often believes that they have not been pressured into doing something, but are acting in their own best interests.

The use of influence tactics has attracted a lot of research interest, and we will consider two influential perspectives. One is based on the work of David Kipnis et al. (1984), who identified eight categories of influence tactic; assertiveness, ingratiation, rational appeal, sanctions, exchange, upward appeal, blocking and coalition (Table 22.3). Kipnis and colleagues note that managers do not exercise influence for self-interest and enjoyment, but in order to promote new ideas, encourage others to work more effectively, or introduce new working practices, for example.

From their study of American, Australian and British managers, Kipnis et al. (1984) identified four types of manager based on their patterns of use of these tactics:

- *Bystanders* rarely use any of these influence tactics, have low organizational power, have limited personal and organizational objectives, and are frequently dissatisfied.
- *Shotguns* use all of these influence tactics all the time, have unfulfilled goals, and are inexperienced in their job.
- *Captives* use one or two 'favourite' tactics, habitually, and with limited effectiveness.
- *Tacticians* use rational appeal frequently, make average use of other tactics, tend to achieve their objectives, have high organizational power, and are usually satisfied.

Discussing what he calls 'the science of getting what you ask for', Robert Cialdini (2008; 2013) identifies six principles of influence by observing the 'compliance professionals' who persuade other people for a living: salespeople, fund-raisers, advertisers, political lobbyists, cult recruiters, confidence tricksters. He shows how compliance professionals exploit the socialized responses that we automatically make to familiar cues. Anyone can learn these techniques.

1. *Reciprocity:* We are more likely to comply with a request from someone who has previously given us a gift, favour, or concession.

    We have a socially trained sense of obligation, to give 'something in return', even when the gift is unsolicited. Survey researchers include small payments to increase questionnaire response rates; restaurant staff increase tips by giving customers sweets with their bills.

Table 22.3: Influence tactics

Assertiveness	Order the person to do it. Point out that the rules demand it. Keep reminding them about what is required.
Ingratiation	Make the request politely and humbly. Act in a friendly way and be complimentary before asking. Sympathize with any hardships they may face.
Rational appeal	Write a detailed justification. Present relevant information in support. Explain the reasoning behind your request.
Sanctions	Threaten to get them fired. Threaten to block their promotion. Threaten them with a poor performance evaluation.
Exchange	Offer an exchange of favours – mutual backscratching. Remind them of favours you have provided them in the past.
Upward appeal	Get higher level management to intervene in your support. Send the person to speak to your boss.
Blocking	Threaten to stop working with the person. Ignore the person and stop being friendly. Withhold collaboration until they do what you want.
Coalition	Get the support of colleagues to support your request. Make the request at a formal meeting where others will support you.

2. *Social proof:* We are more likely to comply with a request, or to adopt a behaviour, which is consistent with what similar others are thinking or doing.

   If other people think it is correct, then we tend to agree. If others are doing it (driving fast on a stretch of road), then we feel justified in doing the same. Bartenders 'salt' their jar of tips to indicate that tipping is 'appropriate'. Church ushers use the same method, and evangelical preachers use 'ringers' who are briefed to 'spontaneously' come forward at predetermined moments during the service.

3. *Commitment/consistency:* We are more likely to comply with a request which leads to actions consistent with our previous acts and commitments.

   Consistency is linked to intellect, rationality, honesty and integrity, and tends to be valued. If I can get you to commit to something (meet me for coffee), then it will be easier to persuade you to do something else that is consistent with that prior commitment (join me for dinner).

4. *Friendship/liking:* We are more likely to comply with requests from friends, or from others whom we like.

   Charities recruit volunteers to collect donations in their local area. Compliance professionals as strangers, however, have to find ways to get us to like them. Attractive individuals are generally more persuasive, and we are more easily influenced by those who are similar to us in some way: opinions, background, lifestyle, personality, dress. In one study, a survey response rate was doubled by giving the person sending the questionnaire a name similar to that of the respondent; Bob Gregar and Cindy Johanson sent survey questionnaires to Robert Greer and Cynthia Johnson.

5. *Scarcity:* We are more likely to comply with requests that will lead to the acquisition of opportunities that are scarce.

   Opportunities tend to be more highly valued when they are less available, and items that are difficult to possess are 'better' than items that can be easily acquired, including information. Customers are told that products, services, membership opportunities are in short supply and will not last long, or 'offer available for one week only – hurry, buy now.'

6. *Authority:* We are more likely to comply with requests from those in positions of legitimate authority.

   Position power can be persuasive. The title 'doctor' often commands blind obedience to dangerous instructions, such as administering an unsafe level of a drug. People are more likely follow instructions from a security guard in uniform, and an expensive business suit has a similar effect.

CRITICAL THINKING   Who are the people that you need to influence most often? What influence techniques do you use? Which techniques work best, and which are less effective? How can you improve your use of these techniques, to become more influential?

Influencing from the middle: how to win support for new ideas

Susan Ashford

James Detert (© Tom Cogill)

Susan Ashford and James Detert (2015, p.73) argue that 'Organizations don't prosper unless managers in the middle ranks identify and promote the need for change'. However, when it comes to sharing those ideas, middle managers are often discouraged by the top leadership style ('if an idea was any good, we would have already thought of it'), and valuable opportunities are missed. Ashford and Detert asked middle managers to describe their experiences of selling three kinds of ideas: new products, processes or markets; improvements to existing products and processes; and better ways to meet

employees' needs. This helped them to identify seven influence tactics that middle managers use to attract senior executive attention and resources:

Tactic	Base your approach on these questions
Tailor your pitch	Where does my audience stand on this issue? What does my audience find most convincing or compelling?
Frame the issue	How can I connect my issue to organizational priorities? How can I best describe its benefits? How can I link it to other issues receiving attention? How can I highlight an opportunity for the organization?
Manage emotions	How can I use emotions to generate positive responses? How can I manage my audience's emotional responses?
Get the timing right	What is the best moment to be heard? Can I 'catch the wave' of a trend, or tap into what's going on outside? What is the right time in the decision-making process to raise my issue?
Involve others	Which allies from my network can help me sell my issue? Who are potential blockers, and how can i persuade them to support me? Who are fence-sitters, and how can I convince them that my issue matters?
Adhere to norms	Should I use a formal or a casual approach, or a combination?
Suggest solutions	Am I suggesting a viable solution? If not, am I proposing a way to discover one, instead of just highlighting the problem?

Ashford and Detert offer three other pieces of advice. First, choose your audience; your immediate boss may not be the best place to start. Second, use several tactics rather than just one or two; they are more powerful in combination. Finally, choose your battles; some ideas are too difficult to sell.

STOP AND SEARCH   YouTube for *James Detert on Facilitating Upward Communication* (10:22).

Organization politics and political skill

Age and treachery

Bill Bratton is an American police chief known for his achievements in 'turning around' failing or problem forces.

'In 1980, at age 34 one of the youngest lieutenants in Boston's police department, he had proudly put up a plaque in his office that said: *Youth and skill will win out every time over age and treachery*. Within just a few months, having been shunted into a dead-end position due to a mixture of office politics and his own brashness, Bratton took the sign down. He never again forgot the importance of understanding the plotting, intrigue, and politics involved in pushing through change'. The advice is: know who the key players are, understand how they play the politics game, know their attitudes and positions in relation to change proposals (Kim and Mauborgne, 2003, p.68).

Organization politics are generally regarded as unsavoury and damaging, associated with back-stabbing and dirty tricks. 'Machiavellian' is an insult, not a compliment. Henry Mintzberg (1983) emphasizes the parochial, divisive and illegitimate nature of political behaviour. How could anyone be advised to use tactics such as these? However, research has also revealed the positive, constructive, 'pro-social' uses of political tactics, which can be used to pursue organizational as well as individual goals. This involves the exercise of **political skill**.

Gerald Ferris

Organization politics the ability to understand others at work, and to use that knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives.

Political skill an interpersonal style that combines social astuteness with the ability to relate well, and to demonstrate situationally appropriate behaviour in a disarmingly charming and engaging manner that inspires confidence, trust, sincerity and genuineness

Gerald Ferris et al. (2000) argue that political skill ('savvy and street smarts') has four dimensions (Table 22.4). *Social astuteness* involves understanding the behaviour and motives of others. *Interpersonal influence* is the ability to influence others in a compelling way. *Networking ability* involves building relationships across and outside the organization. *Apparent sincerity* means being seen as forthright, open, honest and genuine (Ferris et al., 2005 and 2007; Brouer et al., 2006).
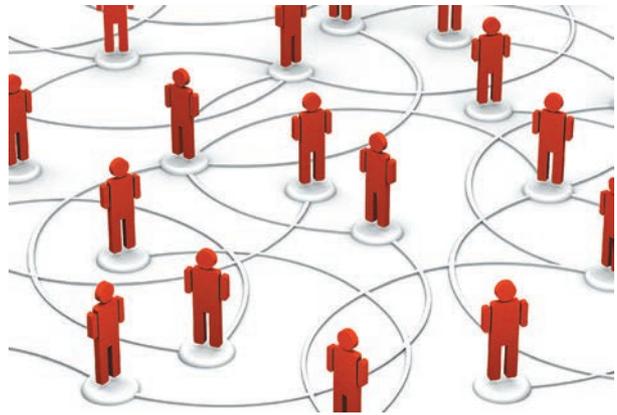
Studies using university staff and students as participants produced the following conclusions:

- Political skill correlates with measures of self-monitoring and emotional intelligence.
- Those who score high on political skill show less anxiety, and are less likely to perceive stressful events as threatening.
- Political skill is not correlated with general intelligence.
- Political skill predicts job performance and subordinate evaluations of leadership ability.
- The dimension of political skill related most strongly to performance rating is social astuteness.

Table 22.4: Dimensions of political skill

Dimension	Definition	Sample inventory items
Social astuteness	Attuned observers and good interpreters of behaviour, self-aware, sensitive to others, clever	I understand people very well. I pay close attention to people's facial expressions.
Interpersonal influence	Subtle and convincing style, calibrate actions to the situation, to the 'target', be flexible	I am able to make most people feel comfortable and at ease around me. I am good at getting people to like me.
Networking ability	Adept at using networks, develop friendships and build alliances easily, skilled in negotiation and conflict resolution	I spend a lot of time and effort at work networking with others. At work, I know a lot of important people and am well connected.
Apparent sincerity	Appear honest and open, and to have integrity, authenticity, sincerity, genuineness, no ulterior motives	It is important that people believe I am sincere in what I say and do. I try to show a genuine interest in other people.

Describing those who are highly skilled in politics, Ferris et al. (2005, p.128) observe that:

> 'Politically skilled individuals convey a sense of personal security and calm self-confidence that attracts others and gives them a feeling of comfort. This self-confidence never goes too far so as to be perceived as arrogance but is always properly measured to be a positive attribute. Therefore, although self-confident, those high in political skill are not self-absorbed (although they are self-aware) because their focus is outward toward others, not inward and self-centred. We suggest that people high in political skill not only know precisely what to do in different social situations at work but how to do it in a manner that disguises any ulterior, self-serving motives and appears to be sincere.'

The wider research evidence confirms that political skill can contribute to individual performance, leadership effectiveness, career success, and the ability to cope with workplace stress. The outcomes, however, depend on the organizational context, and on how political tactics are used (Kimura, 2015).

The main categories of political tactics are summarized in Table 22.5 (Buchanan and Badham, 2008). The use of these tactics is driven by four sets of factors: personal, decisional, structural and organizational change.

CRITICAL THINKING   What is your attitude towards organization politics and political skill? Are these behaviours unethical and to be avoided? Is a degree of political skill a requirement for success in your chosen career?

Table 22.5: Political tactics

Image building	We all know people who didn't get the job because they didn't look the part – appearance is a credibility issue; support for the right causes, adherence to group norms, self-confident manner
Information games	Withholding information, bending the truth, white lies, timed release of information, overwhelming others with complex technical details
Structure games	Creating new roles, teams, and departments, abolishing old ones, in order to promote supporters and sideline adversaries, and to signal new priorities
Scapegoating	Ensuring that someone else is blamed, that this is the fault of another department, or external factors, or my predecessor, or trading conditions, or a particular individual; avoiding personal blame
Alliances	Doing secret deals with influential others to form a critical mass, a coalition, to win support for and to progress your proposals
Networking	Friends in high places, 'wine and dine' them to get your initiatives onto the senior management agenda, improve your visibility, gather information
Compromise	Give in, all right, you win this time, I won't put up a fight and embarrass you in public – if you will back me next time
Rule games	Refuse requests because they have not followed correct procedures or are contrary to company policy; accept similar requests from allies on the grounds of 'special circumstances'
Positioning	Choose and move to roles that make you visible and appear successful; withdraw from failing projects; locate yourself appropriately in the building, sit in the 'right' place at meetings
Issue selling	Package, present, and promote your plans and ideas in ways that make them more appealing to your target audiences
Dirty tricks	Keep dirt files for blackmail, spy on others, discredit and undermine competitors, spreading false rumours, corridor whispers

Personal drivers

Organizations hire people with ambition, drive, creativity, and ideas of their own. Recruitment, appraisal, training and promotion policies encourage political behaviour in those who are creative and ambitious, and who want to see their ideas implemented. The traits to look for include the *need for power, Machiavellianism, internal locus of control* and *risk-seeking propensity*.

Need for power

(*n*Pow) the desire to make an impact on others, change people or events, and make a difference in life.

Need for power

David McClelland (1961) argues that three types of need are culturally acquired, or learned. These are **need for power** (*n*Pow), need for achievement (*n*Ach), and need for affiliation (*n*Aff). Some of us have a strong need to influence and lead others, and are thus more likely to engage in political behaviour. Since a desire to control others and events, and to have an impact on what is going on, is often associated with effective management, it is not surprising that selectors look for this trait in candidates for managerial jobs (McClelland and Boyatzis, 1982).

McClelland et al. (1976) distinguish between 'institutional managers' and 'personal power managers'. The latter seek personal gain at the expense of others and 'are not disciplined enough to be good institution builders' (McClelland and Burnham, 1995, p.130):

> '[They] exercise their power impulsively. They are more often rude to other people, they drink too much, they try to exploit others sexually, and they collect symbols of personal prestige such as fancy cars or big offices.'

Institutional managers, in contrast, combine power motivation with self-control, and represent 'the socialized face of power' (McClelland and Burnham, 1995, p.129):

> '[T]he good manager's power motivation is not oriented towards personal aggrandizement but toward the institution that he or she serves. [They] are more institution minded; they tend to get elected to more offices, to control their drinking, and have a desire to serve others.'

Good 'institutional' managers have the following profile:

- They feel responsible for developing the organizations to which they belong
- They believe in the importance of centralized authority
- They enjoy the discipline of work, and getting things done in an orderly way
- They are willing to sacrifice self-interest for organizational welfare
- They have a keen sense of justice, concerning reward for hard effort.

In other words, good managers use power in the interests of the organization, rather than in pursuit of self-interest. The use of power can therefore be acceptable, as long as it is subject to discipline, control, and inhibition. However, this viewpoint argues that institution building and personal career enhancement can be pursued at the same time.

✓✓✓   **EMPLOYABILITY CHECK (self-management, political awareness)**

You are being considered for promotion to a more senior management role. The role needs someone with ambition, with ideas of their own, and with the influence to implement those ideas. How will you persuade the promotions board that you are the right candidate for this job?

Machiavellianism

Machiavellianism
a personality trait or
style of behaviour
towards others which
is characterized by (1)
the use of guile and
deceit in interpersonal
relations, (2) a cynical
view of the nature of
other people; and (3)
a lack of concern with
conventional morality.

Machiavellianism is another trait which those who tend to engage in organization politics are likely to possess. Niccolò Machiavelli was a sixteenth-century Florentine philosopher and statesman who wrote a set of guidelines for rulers (princes in particular) to use in order to secure and hold on to power. These were published in *The Prince*, and suggested that the primary method for achieving power was the manipulation of others (Machiavelli, 1514). Since then, Machiavelli's name has come to be associated with opportunism and deceit in interpersonal relations.

Richard Christie and Florence Geis (1970) produced a famous study of Machiavellian personality characteristics. Those who score highly on their Machiavellian test – 'High Machs' – tend to agree with statements such as:

- The best way to handle people is to tell them what they want to hear.
- Anyone who completely trusts anyone else is asking for trouble.
- Never tell anyone the real reason you did something unless it is useful to do so.

'Low Machs' tend to disagree with those statements. High Machs prefer to be feared rather than to be liked. They manipulate others with their persuasive skills. They initiate and control interactions, are prepared to use deceit, engage in ethically questionable behaviour, and believe that the means justifies the desired end.

Internal locus of control

Locus of control an
individual's generalized
belief about internal
(self-control) versus
external control (control
by the situation or by
others).

A third trait that encourages political behaviour is an individual's **locus of control**. Some people believe that what happens to them in life is under their own control; they have an *internal* locus of control. Others believe that their life situation is under the control of fate or other people; they are described as having an *external* locus of control (Rotter, 1966). It is the 'internals', who believe that they control what happens to them, who tend to use more political behaviour than 'externals'. Internals are more likely to expect that their political tactics will be effective, and are also less likely to be influenced by others.

NICCOLÒ MACCHIAVELLI

Political blunders

To develop a career, you need political skill, or 'savvy and street smarts'. Andrew DuBrin (2016) identifies the political blunders which can damage your reputation and career, and the mistakes which cause embarrassment:

Career-damaging blunders

1. Humiliating others in public (praise in public, criticize in private)
2. Violating the organization's code of ethics and standards of conduct
3. Uncontrolled greed, even if large sums of money are obtained legally
4. Sending negative messages through corporate emails, websites and social media

5. Bypassing the boss
6. Showing hostility and seeking revenge in an exit interview
7. Being indiscreet in one's private life
8. Conducting an improper office romance

Embarrassing blunders

1. Being politically incorrect
2. Displaying impatience for promotion
3. Gossiping about taboo subjects and sharing too much personal information
4. Attacking the organization's values and cherished customs – its 'sacred cows'

5. Refusing to take holidays

6. Showing insensitivity to cross-cultural differences

7. Rejecting business social invitations

8. Wearing sexually provocative clothes

9. Inappropriately consuming alcohol

10. Being insensitive to public opinion

DuBrin argues that you should avoid these political blunders. What do you think?

Risk-seeking propensity

Risk-seeking propensity an individual's willingness to choose options that involve risk.

A final trait that can determine whether a person engages in political behaviour is their **risk-seeking propensity**. Engaging in political behaviour is risky, and there are negative as well as positive outcomes for those who do it. They could be demoted, passed over for promotion, or given low performance ratings. Some people are naturally risk-averse, while others are risk-seekers. Risk-seekers are more likely to engage in political behaviour. For those who are risk-averse, the negative consequences of a failed influencing attempt may outweigh the possible benefits of a successful outcome.

The need for power, Machiavellianism, internal locus of control, and risk-seeking propensity – these personality characteristics are associated with a strong desire for career advancement. All organizations have a proportion of ambitious individuals who compete with each other, arguing and lobbying for their ideas, innovations, and projects. However, traditional organizational structures are hierarchical, and there are fewer positions available at each higher level. Those who are ambitious, therefore, are in constant competition to secure those scarce senior posts.

Decisional drivers

The extent to which politics affects the decision-making process depends on the type of decision. Some decisions are structured; others are unstructured. Structured decisions are programmable, and can be resolved using decision rules. Routine decisions, such as how much stock to order, are structured. If a decision is structured or programmed, and if there is no opposition to what a manager wants to do, then it will be less necessary to use politics.

The problem is, the number of management decisions that can be based simply on information, calculation and logic is small. Unstructured decisions also depend on judgement, experience, intuition, preference, values and 'gut feel'. Unstructured, or unprogrammable, decisions are more common, and virtually all senior management decisions are unstructured to some degree. Examples include:

- Should we maximize short term profitability, or develop our medium term market share instead?

- Should we develop our human resource management function, or outsource this to a specialist management services organization?

- Should we develop our social media strategy to focus on communications with customers and suppliers, or should we consider the employee engagement benefits of social media?

Home viewing

The film *Contact* (1997, director Robert Zemeckis) is about Dr Eleanor (Ellie) Arroway (played by Jodie Foster). It recounts humankind's first contact with aliens. The task of searching for extra-terrestrial life is fraught with personal, scientific, economic, political and ethical uncertainties. While she may be an excellent scientist, Ellie is not a good organizational politician. As you watch the film, answer the following questions. What organizational political mistakes does Ellie make? What political skills does Dr David Drumlin display? What mistakes does Ellie make in the President's advisory committee meeting? What tactics does Drumlin use to maintain his controlling position? What advice would you give Ellie if she wanted to become a more effective organizational politician?

With unstructured decisions, one can expect different managers with their own experiences, opinions, values, and preferences, to disagree. This debate is natural and valuable. Put another way, 'When two people always agree, one of them is unnecessary' (Pfeffer and Sutton, 2006, p.31). Since information, calculation and logic cannot help to reach an unstructured decision, what strategies are left? In these kinds of situations, those involved are more likely to use political tactics to gain the support of others, and to deflect resistance when necessary, to ensure that their preferred course of action is endorsed.

Structural drivers

Organization structures tend to be based on departments or functions, which compete with each other: purchasing, production, marketing, sales, finance, human resources. These functions have their own goals, priorities and perspectives: sales want to maximize revenue, finance want to cut costs. These functions are interdependent – they have to work together. This combination of factors can produce conflict, which results in the use of political tactics when the issues are important, resources are scarce, and power is distributed unevenly. In other words, political behaviour is an inevitable consequence of the way in which organizations are structured.

Organizational change drivers

Organizational change – especially major or strategic change **(Chapter 19)** – creates more unstructured decisions, particularly with regard to the direction and purpose of change, and also how the goals of change should best be achieved. The scope for political behaviour during periods of major change is therefore high. Change also generates uncertainty, and those who have the appropriate political knowledge and skill can exploit that uncertainty to their advantage, to influence decisions in their preferred direction, and to position themselves favourably in the new structure.

These four sets of drivers – personal, decisional, structural, and organizational change – present a powerful combination. Political behaviour in organizational settings is a naturally occurring phenomenon, and is highly resistant to management attempts to stifle or eradicate it.

Is it different for women?

Carly Fiorina was the first female chief executive of a Fortune 20 company, Hewlett-Packard. In her autobiography, she says that, 'Life isn't always fair, and is different for men than for women' (Fiorina, 2006, p.70). Women suffer from sex role stereotyping that associates management with masculinity: 'think manager – think male', and women's abilities are consequently underestimated.

Women are as likely to experience and to use organization politics as are men. However, there appear to be subtle differences between the sexes. Table 22.6 summarizes the evidence contrasting traditional female and male stereotypes with regard to attitudes to organization politics. This is the source of the cliché that, 'men are bad but bold, and women are wonderful but weak'. These are predispositions, broad patterns, and general tendencies, and must be treated with caution. Differences between the sexes must not be confused with individual differences. In addition, Buchanan and Badham (2008) emphasize that much of the research evidence is dated. Social norms and attitudes change rapidly, and these stereotypes may no longer apply in today's organizations.

What did she do? Not till the lady leaves

? Carly Fiorina (2006) tells the following story about her early career:

You've just graduated from the company management development programme for 'high flying' university graduates, and you've been assigned to your first role, as a sales team member, in a successful division which provides government communications services. Your boss is not welcoming, and gives you a stack of paperwork which you are still reading at the end of the week. Talking to your new colleagues, you discover that your boss is having an affair with a colleague in another department, so he doesn't have much time for you. Marie, the only other woman on the team, is prepared to offer advice. David manages one of the team's largest clients, servicing a large national communications network. You are assigned to 'co-manage' this client with him. David thinks this is a bad idea. Two of the client's regional (male) managers, who decide on major purchases, are planning a visit. You ask if you can join them, and David agrees. However, the day before the meeting, David explains that you will not be able to join them after all, because the clients have specifically requested that they meet at their 'favourite restaurant'. You are confused, until Marie explains that this is a strip club, with table dancing during dinner. You know when and where they are meeting, and you are embarrassed and anxious.

Carly Fiorina

What would you do? Your options are: (1) This is just one meeting. It doesn't matter. Don't go; (2) Express outrage and insist that they hold the meeting somewhere else. (3) Tell David that you're coming anyway and that you'll meet them there. Which option would you choose, and why? Fiorina's answer is at the end of the chapter.

The evidence suggests, however, that women may not use political tactics to the same degree, or in the same manner, as men. This may be one explanation for the lack of women in senior management roles. Women have been shown to be less successful in acquiring organizational power and are more likely to suffer 'political skill deficiency' (Perrewé and Nelson, 2004). As political skill is more important at senior levels, women can struggle in the competition to secure

Table 22.6: Traditional gender stereotypes in approach to organization politics

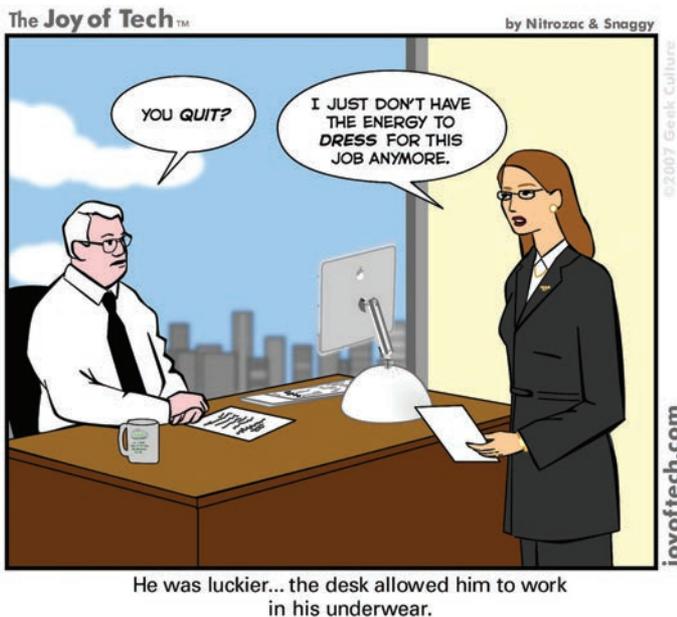| Wonderful but weak female stereotype	Bad but bold male stereotype
Politically innocent, naive	Politically aware, skilled
Organizational power is difficult to acquire	Organizational power is readily acquired
Use passive or 'soft' influence tactics such as coalition forming	Use aggressive or 'hard' influence tactics such as threats and assertiveness
Use formal systems to get information	Use informal systems to get information
Uncomfortable with self-promoting behaviour	Self-promotion taken for granted
Career depends on doing a good job	Career depends on self-promotion

Source: Buchanan and Badham (2008)

top jobs, or struggle once they are in those positions. It is possible that women lack confidence and perceived competence in their ability to play organization politics (Arroba and James, 1998).

Reviewing the evidence on influence tactics, Ferris et al. (2002, p.103) found that:

- women tend to use fewer influence tactics than men
- the tactics most used by women tend to be consistent with female stereotypes
- organizational norms reward those who use traditional 'masculine' influence tactics
- women who use 'male' tactics may attract organizational rewards (promotion, pay rises) but may receive less social support from colleagues.

Marla Watkins and Alexis Smith (2011) studied 140 female law graduates working in American law firms, which were male-dominated. They used the measure of political skill developed by Gerald Ferris (described above). Those with high political skill scores were more likely to have been promoted to management roles than those with low political skill. The researchers conclude that women who are politically skilled, and who understand the gender-based interpersonal challenges they face in a male-dominated organization, will have an advantage over their less skilled peers in terms of advancing to more senior positions.

There are individual, social, and structural explanations for the apparent differences in the ways in which women and men approach organization politics.

The Joy of Tech™ by Nitrozac & Snaggy

YOU *QUIT?*

I JUST DON'T HAVE THE ENERGY TO *DRESS* FOR THIS JOB ANYMORE.

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joyoftech.com

He was luckier... the desk allowed him to work in his underwear.

Individual explanations

Personality

Variations in attitudes and behaviours may be attributable to innate personality traits and predispositions. Some psychologists argue that these are genetically acquired, while others believe that socialization, in the form of upbringing and cultural norms, have a major impact on personality **(Chapter 6).** Research has suggested that women are socialized to be more passive and accommodating than men. For example, Barbara Tannen (1995) argues that boys and girls acquire different linguistic and relational styles in childhood (boys are expected to be more competitive), which subsequently influence their working styles and career prospects.

Awareness

Women may not be aware of, or prefer to deny, the role of organization politics. Sandy Mann (1995) argues that women can be politically naive, adopting 'innocent' behaviours at work, putting their faith in rationality and fairness. They believe that they can mobilize the resources that they need through formal channels, and secure promotion by working hard without the need to influence others. From this standpoint, politics interferes with the process of getting the job done, and those who think this way are less likely to use informal relationships, friends or favours in order to achieve their goals.

Preference

Singh et al. (2002) found that, despite apparent gender differences, women understood as well as men the need to 'read' the organization and 'play the game' in order to become more visible and increase their promotion chances. However, women reported that they were uncomfortable in having to behave in a self-promoting manner, and that networking was not a natural female behaviour. Women in that study thus knew 'the rules of the game', but some chose deliberately not to play.

Authenticity

Women who seek or acquire a senior management position have the option of employing the 'take charge', 'dominant male' leadership stereotype. Alice Eagly (2005) noted that women who moderated their display of femininity, and who modelled confident, authoritative, masculine behaviours, were more likely to feel that they were inauthentic, unnatural and play-acting.

Motivation

A study of General Electric's 135,000 professional workers found that voluntary turnover among female staff was 8 per cent compared to 6.5 per cent among men. Also, 26 per cent of professional women who were not yet in senior posts said that they did not want those jobs. Of the 108 women who had appeared in the Fortune 500 lists of the most powerful women, at least 20 had left their prestige positions, most of them by their own choice. That study also found that women did not greet promotions to senior roles eagerly. Some did not actively seek promotion; some declined promotion outright; others replied to the invitation with the question, 'Are you sure?' The American politician Hillary Clinton suggested that many women pushed less strongly for promotion than men, not because they lacked ambition, but because they did not hang their egos on the next rung of the corporate ladder (Sellers, 2003).

Joanna Barsh and Lareina Yee (2011, p.4) found that women often turn down promotion in order to stay in a role that they find motivating, from which they derive a sense of meaning, and to avoid the 'energy-draining meetings and corporate politics at the next echelon'.

Social explanations

Women can copy the male leadership stereotype: aggressive, competitive, intense. It appears that certain behaviours are seen as being reserved for men, and that 'tough female managers are often labelled with epithets such as *battle axe, dragon lady, bitch* and *bully broad*':

> If a leadership role requires a highly authoritative or competitive behaviour that is perceived as masculine, the mere fact that a woman occupies the role can yield disapproval. [T]he more confidently a woman conveys those values, the less effective she may become because of her challenge to traditional gender norms and her overturning of the expected gender hierarchy' (Eagly, 2005, p.464).

Alice Eagly and Linda Carli (2007) suggest that women need to develop their 'social capital' – by building a network of professional colleagues. Women tend not to invest time in networking due to family responsibilities, and because they may not see this as important. Networking,

however, is an important political skill. We each have our own network of relationships based on a variety of social, leisure, and work settings. Used effectively, these relationships can help us to find better jobs, and get promoted. Other people can also be a source of new ideas, and they can in turn pick up ideas from us. However, research by Herminia Ibarra (2015) shows that women and men build and use their networks in different ways. More importantly, women's approach to networking often puts them at a disadvantage in terms of influence and promotion.

Climbing the career ladder

Adrian Furnham (2015) argues that networking is key to career success:

'*Do serious networking.* You need a map of who's who; who holds power and influence; and who will be must useful to you. Job titles are poor indicators. Start mapping your environment; it is called social network analysis but all you need is a good eye and ear. Use those "elevator" and "water cooler" moments to introduce yourself. Build relationships by finding out what you have in common with people and how you might be able to help them. Accept all social invitations.'

The title of Keith Ferrazzi's (2014) guide to developing networking skills is *Never Eat Alone.*

Ibarra found that men tend to develop networks in which the people that they approach for work-related conversation and advice are those with whom they socialize outside work. Women, in contrast, have what Ibarra calls 'functionally differentiated' networks, with separate work-related and social groups. Men, whose work and social networks overlap, have more opportunities to share information and to develop influence. Ibarra puts it this way: 'They have more clout'. With their differentiated networks, women have less access to information, and are thus less influential.

Women are thus advised to be more calculating with regard to the friendships and relationships that they nurture. This means developing work-related networks that deliberately include people who can help them to achieve their goals, and who they may be able to help in return. Learning how to play golf is not essential, but may be useful in some circumstances.

✓✓✓   **EMPLOYABILITY CHECK** (self-management, political awareness, how organizations work)

As a female student, what steps can you take now to start building your professional network in preparation for when you graduate and start looking for work?

Structural explanations

Women can be rendered 'structurally powerless' by being limited to routine, low-profile jobs, and by having restricted access to line management roles early in their careers. Women face discrimination in what are often secretive promotion decisions, in organizations that are typically characterized by 'old boys' networks' and unequal power distribution (Oakley, 2000).

A male-dominated organization culture encourages long working hours. Men and women may have to choose between family responsibilities on the one hand, and attending breakfast meetings and evening drinks, on the other. Social expectations mean that this is often a more difficult decision for women, who are also faced with negative institutional mindsets: 'everybody "knows" you can't put a woman in that job'. The 'always on 24/7 executive lifestyle with travel' is the ultimate barrier, disrupting work-life balance. Barsh and Yee (2011) found that increasing numbers of men disliked this, too.

There are several explanations for women's apparent reluctance to use organization politics. This reluctance may in turn help to explain why there are so few women in senior management roles.

⟳ RECAP

1. *Appreciate the importance of power and politics in organizations.*

   - Organizations seem to be experiencing more change, uncertainty, ambiguity and discontinuity, creating a context that makes political skill more important.

2. *Compare and contrast different perspectives on power.*

   - Power can be considered from the 'power-as-property'; a 'faces of power'; and a 'disciplinary power' viewpoint.

   - The power-as-property viewpoint regards power as a characteristic of individuals, of relationships, and of the structures of society and organizations.

   - The faces of power viewpoint regards power as overt and observable, as covert and unobservable, and as internalized by employees.

   - Disciplinary power reduces employees' ability to dissent by creating and managing meanings for them.

3. *Distinguish different bases of power.*

   - The five bases of power are reward, coercion, referent, legitimate and expert.

4. *Identify organizational factors which enhance the power of departments.*

   - Factors enhancing the power of departments in organizations include dependency-creation, financial resources, centrality, non-substitutability, and uncertainty reduction.

5. *Differentiate between influencing tactics and political tactics.*

   - Influencing tactics include assertiveness, ingratiation, rational appeal, sanctions, exchange, upward appeal, blocking and coalition.

   - Political tactics include image building, information games, structure games, scapegoating, alliances, networking, compromise, rule games, positioning, issue selling and 'dirty tricks'.

6. *Identify the characteristics of individuals most likely to engage in political behaviour.*

   - Those who are most likely to engage in political behaviour have a high need for power (n*Pow*), a high Machiavellian score, an internal locus of control, and risk-seeking propensity.

7. *Explain how women use and are affected by organizational politics.*

   - Sex role stereotyping associates management with masculinity leading to a systematic underestimation of women's abilities.

   - Women appear to use power, influencing and impression management tactics differently from men; women tend to be less comfortable with self-promotion tactics which men use routinely.

   - Women can find it difficult to develop influence due to individual, social, and structural factors; women often do not develop useful professional networks in the way that men do.

RECAP: What did they find? the red sneakers effect

Oostrom and Ronay (2018) found that:

- Candidates dressed in a non-conformist way may be perceived more positively than those dressed in a more conforming manner; this is known as 'the red sneakers effect' – if you are confident enough to 'dress down', then you must be competent and highly regarded.

- Candidates with a strong CV were seen as powerful no matter how they dressed.

- Candidates with a weak CV were unlikely to be hired if they dressed in a non-conformist way.

- Deliberate non-conformity was seen as indicating that the candidate had the power, influence and status that allowed them to ignore social norms and behave as they liked; 'red sneakers' are a 'power tell' (which explains why Mark Zuckerberg can wear what he wants at work – 'I am successful so I can afford to dress in a nonconforming style' – but this also explains why he wore a formal business suit when he appeared before a congressional hearing in April 2018).

- This means that you will only get away with a non-conforming dress style – jeans and sneakers – if you have a strong CV which confirms your competence and qualifications for the job.

- A non-conforming dress style will backfire – you probably won't get the job – if you do not have strong evidence to demonstrate your capabilities.

Revision

1. How can someone low in the organizational hierarchy obtain more power?

2. Identify the costs and benefits to an organization of its members engaging in political behaviour.

3. 'Power is most potent when it appears to be absent.' What does this statement mean? Do you agree with it? Give reasons and examples to support your view.

4. What steps can women take in order to strengthen their organizational power and influence?

Research assignment

Interview three managers from the same or different organizations, ideally at junior, middle and senior manager levels. First, ask each one to give you a specific example of 'workplace politics in action'. Second, make three copies of the scoresheet from chapter exercise 2 below. Third, ask each manager to rank each type of decision according to the extent that they believe politics affected the outcome (1 = most political; 11 = least political). They should enter their ranking in column three. Finally, ask them what makes a decision 'political' in their organization.

Springboard

David A. Buchanan and Richard Badham (2008) *Power, Politics and Organizational Change.* London: Sage Publications (second edition). Considers the constructive use of power and political tactics in organizations.

Robert Cialdini (2016) *Pre-Suasion: A Revolutionary Way to Influence and Persuade.* London: Random House. Argues that the context in which an advertisement appears is more important than the selling strategy – illustrated with fascinating examples. The best per-suaders are the best 'pre-suaders', who work out how best to present a message in order to get agreement before the target audience has heard it.

Jeffrey Pfeffer (2010) *Power: Why Some People Have It – and Others Don't.* New York and London: Harper Business. An honest practical exploration of the skills involved in acquiring, holding on to, and using power to progress one's career – getting noticed by the right people, building networks, overcoming opposition, and building a reputation for getting things done.

Henry Timms and Jeremy Heimans (2018) *New Power: How It's Changing The 21st Century – And Why You Need To Know.* London and New York: Macmillan. Argue that the 'currents' of participative and open 'new power' are replacing the 'currency' of bureaucratic, closed old power. Offers examples of new power leaders, movements and organizations in action.

OB cinema

Dirty Rotten Scoundrels (1988, director Frank Oz). DVD track 2: 0:07:42 – 0:10:55 (4 minutes). Freddy Benson (played by Steve Martin) is a conman working on the French Riviera. This clip begins with a shot of Zurich railway station platform and ends with Benson's 'Thank you'. Benson persuades a woman on a train, a complete stranger, to buy him a meal. How does he achieve this?

1. What impression management techniques does he use?

2. What influencing tactics does he employ?

Chapter exercises

1: Power in a changing environment

Objectives

1. To introduce different types of power.

2. To explore the PESTLE change drivers in the environment which impact on the power of employees.

3. To understand how power in organizations is gained and lost as a result of these environment changes.

Briefing

1. Form groups and nominate a spokesperson. Read the description of your organization.

2. Read each of the five environmental change scenarios in order. For each one, decide:

   a. Which environment change driver is affecting your organization in this scenario?

   b. What types of activities are likely to increase/become more important in the company, as a result?

   c. Which five company employees' power bases will *increase* most in the light of this changed environmental condition?

   d. Why did you select these persons?

   Each scenario is separate from the others. Make any reasonable assumptions as you discuss the matter.

3. Each group's spokesperson presents and justifies their conclusions to the entire class.

Your organization

Your medium-sized company manufactures portable, petrol-driven, electric power generators that are sold to domestic and office customers, often for use in emergencies

Advertising expert (m)	Charted accountant (m)
Chief financial offer (f)	General manager (m)
Operations manager (f)	Marketing manager (f)
Industrial engineer (m)	Computer programmer (f)
Product designer (m)	Industrial chemist (m)
Public relations expert (m)	In-house legal advisor (m)
Company trainer (m)	Human resource manager (f)

Employees (m) = male; (f) = female

Five environmental change scenarios

1. The existing small batch production of generators will be replaced by a state-of-the-art, automated assembly line.

2. New laws about engine and factory emissions are being passed by the European Parliament.

3. Sales are greatly reduced, and the industrial sector seems to be shrinking.

4. The company is planning to go international in the next year or two.

5. The Equality Commission is pressing companies to establish better male-female balance in senior posts and is threatening to 'name-and-shame' companies.

Source: adapted from Barbuto (2000)

2: Politics in decision making

Objectives
1. To contrast perceptions about the use of politics in decision making.
2. To predict when and where politics will be used in organizations.
3. To contrast political with rational decision-making processes.

Briefing
1. Individually, using the worksheet, rank each of the 11 organizational decisions (a–k) in terms of the extent to which you think politics play a part. Rank the most political decision as '1' and the least political as '11'. Enter your ranking in the first column on your worksheet – 'Individual Ranking'.

2. Form groups of four to seven members. Rank the 11 items again, this time as a group. Use consensus to reach agreement, that is, listen to each person's ideas and rationale before deciding. Do not vote, bargain, average or toss a coin. Base your decision on the logical arguments made by group members rather than your personal preference. Enter your rankings in the second column on the scoresheet – 'Team Ranking'.

3. After all teams have finished, your instructor will read out the rankings produced by a survey of managers which indicates the frequency with which they believe that politics plays a part in each type of decision. As these are read out, enter them in column three on the scoresheet – 'Manager Ranking'.

4. Still in your groups:
   a. Compare the individual rankings (column 1) of group members. On which decisions did group members' perceptions differ significantly? Why might that be?
   b. Compare your group ranking (column 2) with the manager ranking (column 3). On which decisions did group and managers' perceptions differ significantly? Why might that be?

Scoresheet
'To what extent do you believe politics plays a part in the decision'

1 = most political   11 = least political

Decision	1	2	3
	Individual ranking	Team ranking	Manager ranking
Management promotions and transfers			
Entry level hiring			
Amount of pay			
Annual budgets			
Allocation of facilities, equipment, offices			
Delegation of authority among managers			
Inter-departmental coordination			
Specification of personnel policies			
Penalties for disciplinary infractions			
Performance appraisals			
Grievances and complaints			

5. In plenary, answer the questions as directed by your instructor:

  i.   What distinguishes the most political decision items (ranked 1–4 in column 3) from the least political (ranked 8–11)?

  ii. In what circumstances might a rational decision process be used in making a decision, and when would a political process be used?

  iii. Research suggests that that political behaviour occurs more frequently at higher rather than lower levels in organizations. Why should this be so?

  iv. How would you:
    • apply rationality to those decisions currently possessing a large political element?
    • politicize decisions currently made using rational processes?

  v.   How would you advise a manager who felt that politics was bad for the organization and should be avoided at all costs?

Source: based on Gandz and Murray (1980)

What did she do? The answer

Fiorina chose option 3. She wore a conservative business suit, and carried a briefcase. At the 'restaurant', in order to reach the client group, she had to walk in front of the stage, where about a dozen women were performing. She tried to sound relaxed and knowledgeable, ignoring the show, while David continued drinking and asking the women to come and dance on their table. All of the women who approached their table said, 'Sorry gentlemen. Not till the lady leaves'. The meeting lasted several hours. The client's business was secured. Fiorina concludes: 'After a few hours, having made my point, I left them all there. They heaved a sigh of relief, I'm sure, but the next day in the office, the balance of power had shifted perceptibly. I had shown David that I would not be intimidated, even if I was terrified. I truly cared about doing my job even when it meant working in difficult circumstances. Having tried to diminish me, David was himself diminished. He was embarrassed. And Bill [one of the other team members] decided that he would take me under his wing and help me succeed. We cannot always choose the hurdles we must overcome, but we can choose how we overcome them' (Fiorina, 2006, p.31).

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