

Organizational Culture

Power and Politics in Organizational Life

by Abraham Zaleznik

From the Magazine (May 1970)

There are few business activities more prone to a credibility gap than the way in which executives approach organizational life. A sense of disbelief occurs when managers purport to make decisions in rationalistic terms while most observers and participants know that personalities and politics play a significant if not an overriding role. Where does the error lie? In the theory which insists that decisions should be rationalistic and nonpersonal? Or in the practice which treats business organizations as political structures?

Whatever else organizations may be (problem-solving instruments, sociotechnical systems, reward systems, and so on), they are political structures. This means that organizations operate by distributing authority and setting a stage for the exercise of power. It is no wonder, therefore, that individuals who are highly motivated to secure and use power find a familiar and hospitable environment in business.

At the same time, executives are reluctant to acknowledge the place of power both in individual motivation and in organizational relationships. Somehow, power and politics are dirty words. And in

linking these words to the play of personalities in organizations, some managers withdraw into the safety of organizational logics.

As I shall suggest in this article, frank recognition of the importance of personality factors and a sensitive use of the strengths and limitations of people in decisions on power distributions can improve the quality of organizational life.

Political Pyramid

Organizations provide a power base for individuals. From a purely economic standpoint, organizations exist to create a surplus of income over costs by meeting needs in the marketplace. But organizations also are political structures which provide opportunities for people to develop careers and therefore provide platforms for the expression of individual interests and motives. The development of careers, particularly at high managerial and professional levels, depends on accumulation of power as the vehicle for transforming individual interests into activities which influence other people.

Scarcity & competition

A political pyramid exists when people compete for power in an economy of scarcity. In other words, people cannot get the power they want just for the asking. Instead, they have to enter into the decisions on how to distribute authority in a particular formal organization structure. Scarcity of power arises under two sets of conditions:

1. Where individuals gain power in absolute terms at someone else's expense.
2. Where there is a gain comparatively—not literally at someone else's expense—resulting in a relative shift in the distribution of power.

In either case, the psychology of scarcity and comparison takes over. The human being tends to make comparisons as a basis for his sense of self-esteem. He may compare himself with other people and decide

that his absolute loss or the shift in proportional shares of authority reflects an attrition in his power base. He may also compare his position relative to others against a personal standard and feel a sense of loss. This tendency to compare is deeply ingrained in people, especially since they experience early in life the effects of comparisons in the family where—in an absolute sense—time and attention, if not love and affection, go to the most dependent member.

Corporate acquisitions and mergers illustrate the effects of both types of comparisons. In the case of one merger, the president of the acquired company resigned rather than accept the relative displacement in rank which occurred when he no longer could act as a chief executive officer. Two vice presidents vied for the position of executive vice president. Because of their conflicting ambitions, the expedient of making them equals drove the competition underground, but not for long. The vice president with the weaker power base soon resigned in the face of his inability to consolidate a workable definition of his responsibilities. His departure resulted in increased power for the remaining vice president and the gradual elimination of “rival camps” which had been covertly identified with the main contenders for power.

The fact that organizations are pyramids produces a scarcity of positions the higher one moves in the hierarchy. This scarcity, coupled with inequalities, certainly needs to be recognized. While it may be humane and socially desirable to say that people are different rather than unequal in their potential, nevertheless executive talent is in short supply. The end result should be to move the more able people into the top positions and to accord them the pay, responsibility, and authority to match their potential.

On the other side, the strong desires of equally able people for the few top positions available means that someone will either have to face the realization of unfulfilled ambition or have to shift his interest to another organization.¹

Constituents & clients

Besides the conditions of scarcity and competition, politics in organizations grows out of the existence of constituencies. A superior may be content himself with shifts in the allocation of resources and consequently power, but he represents subordinates who, for their own reasons, may be unhappy with the changes. These subordinates affirm and support their boss. They can also withdraw affirmation and support, and consequently isolate the superior with all the painful consequences this entails.

While appointments to positions come from above, affirmation of position comes from below. The only difference between party and organizational politics is in the subtlety of the voting procedure.

Consider:

- In a large consumer products corporation, one division received almost no capital funds for expansion while another division, which had developed a new marketing approach for products common to both, expanded dramatically. The head of the static division found his power diminished considerably, as reflected in how seriously his subordinates took his efforts at influence (e.g., in programs to increase the profit return from existing volume).

He initiated one program after another with little support from subordinates because he could not make a claim for capital funds. The flow of capital funds in this corporation provided a measure of power gains and losses in both an absolute and a relative sense.

Power & action

Still another factor which heightens the competition for power that is characteristic of all political structures is the incessant need to use whatever power one possesses. Corporations have an implicit “banking” system in power transactions. The initial “capitalization” which makes up an individual’s power base consists of three elements:

1. The quantity of formal authority vested in his position relative to other positions.
2. The authority vested in his expertise and reputation for competence (a factor weighted by how important the expertise is for the growth areas of the corporation as against the historically stable areas of its business).
3. The attractiveness of his personality to others (a combination of respect for him as well as liking, although these two sources of attraction are often in conflict).

This capitalization of power reflects the total esteem with which others regard the individual. By a process which is still not too clear, the individual internalizes all of the sources of power capital in a manner parallel to the way he develops a sense of self-esteem. The individual knows he has power, assesses it realistically, and is willing to risk his personal esteem to influence others.

A critical element here is the risk in the uses of power. The individual must perform *and* get results. If he fails to do either, an attrition occurs in his power base in direct proportion to the doubts other people entertained in their earlier appraisals of him.

What occurs here is an erosion of confidence which ultimately leads the individual to doubt himself and undermines the psychological work which led him in the first place to internalize authority as a prelude to action. (While, as I have suggested, the psychological work that an individual goes through to consolidate his esteem capital is a crucial aspect of power relations, I shall have to reserve careful examination of this problem until a later date. The objective now is to examine from a political framework the problems of organizational life.)

What distinguishes alterations in the authority structure from other types of organizational change is their direct confrontation with the political character of corporate life. Such confrontations are real manipulations of power as compared with the indirect approaches

which play on ideologies and attitudes. In the first case, the potency and reality of shifts in authority have an instantaneous effect on what people do, how they interact, and how they think about themselves. In the second case, the shifts in attitude are often based on the willingness of people to respond the way authority figures want them to; ordinarily, however, these shifts in attitude are but temporary expressions of compliance.

One of the most common errors executives make is to confuse compliance with commitment. Compliance is an attitude of acceptance when a directive from an authority figure asks for a change in an individual's position, activities, or ideas. The individual complies or "goes along" usually because he is indifferent to the scope of the directive and the changes it proposes. If compliance occurs out of indifference, then one can predict little difficulty in translating the intent of directives into actual implementation.²

Commitment, on the other hand, represents a strong motivation on the part of an individual to adopt or resist the intent of a directive. If the individual commits himself to a change, then he will use his ingenuity to interpret and implement the change in such a way as to assure its success. If he decides to fight or block the change, the individual may act as if he complies but reserve other times and places to negate the effects of directives. For example:

- In one large company, the top management met regularly for purposes of organizational planning. The executives responsible for implementing planning decisions could usually be counted on to carry them out when they had fought hard and openly in the course of reaching such decisions. When they seemed to accept a decision, giving all signs of compliance, the decision usually ended up as a notation in the minutes. Surface compliance occurred most frequently when problems involved loyalties to subordinates.

In one instance, a division head agreed to accept a highly regarded executive from another division to meet a serious manpower shortage in his organization. When the time came to effect the transfer,

however, this division general manager refused, with some justification, on the grounds that bringing someone in from outside would demoralize his staff. He used compliance initially to respond to the problem of “family” loyalties to which he felt committed. Needless to say, the existence of these loyalties was the major problem to be faced in carrying out organizational planning.

Compliance as a tactic to avoid changes and commitment as an expression of strong motivation in dealing with organizational problems are in turn related to how individuals define their interests. In the power relations among executives, the so-called areas of common interest are usually reserved for the banalities of human relationships. The more significant areas of attention usually force conflicts of interest, especially competition for power, to the surface.

Interest Conflicts

Organizations demand, on the one hand, cooperative endeavor and commitment to common purposes. The realities of experience in organizations, on the other hand, show that conflicts of interest exist among people who ultimately share a common fate and are supposed to work together. What makes business more political and less ideological and rationalistic is the overriding importance of conflicts of interest.

If an individual (or group) is told that his job scope is reduced in either absolute or proportional terms for *the good of the corporation*, he faces a conflict. Should he acquiesce for the idea of common good or fight in the service of his self-interest? Any rational man will fight (how constructively depends on the absence of neurotic conflicts and on ego strength). His willingness to fight increases as he comes to realize the intangible nature of what people think is good for the organization. And, in point of fact, his willingness may serve the interests of corporate purpose by highlighting issues and stimulating careful thinking before the reaching of final decisions.

Secondary effects

Conflicts of interest in the competition for resources are easily recognized, as for example, in capital budgeting or in allocating money for research and development. But these conflicts can be subjected to bargaining procedures which all parties to the competition validate by their participation.

The secondary effects of bargaining do involve organizational and power issues. However, the fact that these power issues *follow* debate on economic problems rather than *lead* it creates a manifest content which can be objectified much more readily than in areas where the primary considerations are the distributions of authority.

In such cases, which include developing a new formal organization structure, management succession, promotions, corporate mergers, and entry of new executives, the conflicts of interest are severe and direct simply because there are no objective measures of right or wrong courses of action. The critical question which has to be answered in specific actions is: Who gets power and position? This involves particular people with their strengths and weaknesses and a specific historical context in which actions are understood in symbolic as well as rational terms. To illustrate:

- A large corporation, General Motors in fact, inadvertently confirmed what every seasoned executive knows: that coalitions of power to overcome feelings of rivalry and the play of personal ambitions are fragile solutions. The appointment of Edward Cole to the presidency followed by Semon Knudsen's resignation shattered the illusion that the rational processes in business stand apart or even dominate the human emotions and ties that bind men to one another. If any corporation prides itself on rationality, General Motors is it. To have to experience so publicly the inference that major corporate life, particularly at the executive levels, is not so rational after all, can be damaging to the sense of security people get from belief in an idea as it is embodied in a corporate image.

The fact that Knudsen subsequently was discharged from the presidency of Ford (an event I shall discuss later in this article) suggests that personalities and the politics of corporations are less aberrations and more conditions of life in large organizations.

But just as General Motors wants to maintain an image, many executives prefer to ignore what this illustration suggests: that organizations are political structures which feed on the psychology of comparison. To know something about the psychology of comparison takes us into the theory of self-esteem in both its conscious manifestations and its unconscious origins. Besides possibly enlightening us in general and giving a more realistic picture of people and organizations, there are some practical benefits in such knowledge. These benefits include:

- Increased freedom to act more directly; instead of trying to “get around” a problem, one can meet it.
- Greater objectivity about people’s strengths and limitations, and, therefore, the ability to use them more honestly as well as effectively.
- More effective planning in organizational design and in distribution of authority; instead of searching for the “one best solution” in organization structure, one accepts a range of alternatives and then gives priority to the personal or emotional concerns that inhibit action.

Power Relations

Organizational life within a political frame is a series of contradictions. It is an exercise in rationality, but its energy comes from the ideas in the minds of power figures the content of which, as well as their origins, are only dimly perceived. It deals with sources of authority and their distribution; yet it depends in the first place on the existence of a balance of power in the hands of an individual who initiates actions and gets results. It has many rituals associated with

it, such as participation, democratization, and the sharing of power; yet the real outcome is the consolidation of power around a central figure to whom other individuals make emotional attachments.

Faulty coalitions

The formal organization structure implements a coalition among key executives. The forms differ, and the psychological significance of various coalitions also differs. But no organization can function without a consolidation of power in the relationship of a central figure with his select group. The coalition need not exist between the chief executive and his immediate subordinates or staff. It may indeed bypass the second level as in the case of Presidents of the United States who do not build confident relationships within their cabinets, but instead rely on members of the executive staff or on selected individuals outside the formal apparatus.

The failure to establish a coalition within the executive structure of an organization can result in severe problems, such as paralysis in the form of inability to make decisions and to evaluate performance, and in-fighting and overt rivalry within the executive group.

When a coalition fails to develop, the first place to look for causes is the chief executive and his problems in creating confident relationships. The causes are many and complex, but they usually hinge around the nature of the chief executive's defenses and what he needs to avoid as a means of alleviating stress. For example:

- The "palace revolt," which led to Semon Knudsen's departure from Ford Motor Company, is an illustration of the failure in the formation of a coalition. While it is true that Henry Ford II named Knudsen president of the company, Knudsen's ultimate power as a newcomer to an established power structure depended on forming an alliance. The particular individual with whom an alliance seemed crucial was Lee Iacocca. For some reason, Knudsen and Iacocca competed for power and influence instead of using cooperatively a power base to which both contributed as is the case

with most workable coalitions. In the absence of a coalition, the alternate postures of rivalry and battle for control erupted. Ford ultimately responded by weighing his power with one side over the other.

As I have indicated, it is not at all clear why in Knudsen's case the coalition failed to develop. But in any failure the place to look is in the personalities of the main actors and in the nature of their defenses which make certain coalitions improbable no matter how strongly other realities indicate their necessity.

But defensiveness on the part of a chief executive can also result in building an unrealistic and unworkable coalition, with the self-enforced isolation which is its consequence. One of the most frequently encountered defensive maneuvers which leads to the formation of unrealistic coalitions or to the isolation of the chief executive is the fear of rivalry.

A realistic coalition matches formal authority and competence with the emotional commitments necessary to establish and maintain the coalition. The fear of rivals on the part of chief executives, or the jealousy on the part of subordinates of the chief executive's power, can at the extreme result in paranoid distortions. People become suspicious of one another, and through selective perceptions and projections of their own fantasies create a world of plots and counterplots.

The displacement of personal concerns onto substantive material in decision making is potentially the most dangerous form of defensiveness. The need for defenses arises because people become anxious about the significance of evaluations within existing power coalitions. But perhaps even more basic is the fear and the rivalry to which all coalitions are susceptible given the nature of investments people make in power relations. While it is easy to dismiss emotional reactions like these as neurotic distortions, their prevalence and impact deserve careful attention in all phases of organizational life.

Unconscious collusions

All individuals and consequently groups experience areas of stress which mobilize defenses. The fact that coalitions embody defensive maneuvers on those occasions where stress goes beyond the usual level of tolerance is not surprising. An even more serious problem, however, occurs when the main force that binds men in a structure is the need to defend against or to act out the conflicts which individuals cannot tolerate alone.

Where coalitions represent the aggregation of power with conscious intention of using the abilities of members for constructive purposes, collusions represent predominance of unconscious conflict and defensive behavior. In organizational life, the presence of collusions and their causes often becomes the knot which has to be unraveled before any changes can be implemented.

The collusion of latent interests among executives can become the central theme and sustaining force of an organization structure of top management. For a collusion to take hold, the conflicts of the “power figure” have to be communicated and sensed by others as an overriding need which seeks active expression in the form of a theme. The themes vary just as do the structures which make a collusion. Thus one common theme is the need to control; another is the need to be admired and idealized; and still another is the need to find a scapegoat to attack in response to frustrations in solving problems.

If people could hold on to and keep within themselves areas of personal conflict, there would be far fewer collusions in organizational life. But it is part of the human condition for conflicts and needs to take over life situations. As a result, we find numerous instances of collusions controlling the behavior of executives. To illustrate:

- A multidivisional corporation found itself with a revolution on its hands. The president was sensitive to the opinions of a few outside board members representing important stockholder interests. He

was so concerned that he would be criticized by these board members, he demanded from vice presidents full information on their activities and complete loyalty to him. Over a period of years, he moved divisional chief executives to corporate headquarters so he could assure himself of their loyalty. Other executives joined in to gratify the president's need for control and loyalty.

The result of this collusion, however, was to create a schism between headquarters and field operations. Some of the staff members in the field managed to inform the board members of the lack of attention to and understanding of field problems. Discontent grew to such an extent that the board placed the president on early retirement.

Subsequently, the new president, with the support of the board, decentralized authority and appointed new division heads who were to make their offices in divisional headquarters with full authority to manage their respective organizations. One of the lingering problems of the new president was to dissolve the collusion at headquarters without wholesale firing of vice presidents.

Just as power distributions are central to the tasks of organizational planning, so the conservation of power is often the underlying function of collusions. Thus:

- A manufacturing vice president of a medium-sized company witnessed over a period of 15 years a procession of changes in top management and ownership. He had managed to retain his job because he made himself indispensable in the management of the factory.

To each new top management, he stressed the importance of “home rule” as a means of assuring loyalty and performance in the plant. He also tacitly encouraged each supervisor to go along with whatever cliques happened to form and dominate the shop floor.

However, over time a gradual loss of competitive position, coupled with open conflict among cliques in the form of union disputes, led to the dismissal of the vice president. None of his successors could reassert control over the shop, and the company eventually moved or liquidated many of the operations in this plant.

'Life Dramas'

Faulty coalitions and unconscious collusions, as I have illustrated, can result from the defensive needs of a chief executive. These needs, which often appear as a demand on others to bolster the self-esteem of the chief executive, are tolerated to a remarkable degree and persist for a long time before harmful effects become apparent to outside stockholders, bankers, or boards of directors which ultimately control the distributions of power in organizations. Occasionally, corporations undergo critical conflicts in organizational politics which cannot be ignored in the conscious deliberations which affect how power gets distributed or used.

Intertwined with the various expressions of power conflicts in organizations are three underlying "life dramas" deserving careful attention:

The *first* portrays stripping the powers of a *parental figure*.

The *second* portrays the predominance of *paranoid thinking*, where distortions of reality result from the surfacing of conflicts which formerly had been contained in collusions.

The *third* portrays a *ritualistic ceremonial* in which real power issues are submerged or isolated in compulsive behavior but at the cost of real problem solving and work.

Parental figure

The chief executive in a business, along with the heads of states, religious bodies, and social movements, becomes an object for other people. The term "object" should be understood, in a psychological sense, as a person who is the recipient of strong emotional

attachments from others. It is obvious that a chief executive is the *object* because he controls so many of the levers which ultimately direct the flow of rewards and punishments. But there is something to say beyond this obvious calculation of rewards and punishments as the basis for the emotional attachments between leader and led as *object* and *subject*.

Where a leader displays unusual attributes in his intuitive gifts, cultivated abilities, or deeper personal qualities, his fate as the *object* is governed by powerful emotions. I hesitate to use the word “charismatic” to describe such a leader, partially because it suggests a mystique but also because, in its reference to the “great” man as charismatic leader, it expands to superhuman proportions what really belongs to the psychology of everyday life.

What makes for strong emotional attachments is as much in the need of the *subject* as in the qualities of the *object*. In other words, the personalities of leaders take on proportions which meet what subordinates need and even demand. If leaders in fact respond with the special charisma that is often invested in them at the outset, then they are parties to a self-fulfilling prophecy. Of course, the qualities demanded have to be present in some nascent form ready to emerge as soon as the emotional currents become real in authority relationships.

The emotional attachments I am referring to usually contain mixtures of positive and negative feelings. If the current were only of one kind, such as either admiration or hostility, then the authority relationship would be simpler to describe as well as to manage. All too often, the way positive feelings blend into the negative sets off secondary currents of emotion which intensify the relationships.

On the one side, subordinates cannot help but have fantasies of what they would do if they held the No. 1 position. Such fantasies, besides providing fleeting pleasures and helping one to regulate his ambitions, also provide channels for imaginative and constructive approaches to solving problems. It is only a short step from imagining

what one would do as chief executive to explaining to the real chief executive the ideas which have been distilled from this flight into fantasy. If the chief executive senses envy in back of the thoughts, he may become frightened and choke off ideas which can be used quite constructively.

Critical episode:

But suppose a situation arises where not one but several subordinates enjoy the same fantasy of being No. 1? Suppose also that subordinates feel deprived in their relationship with the chief executive? Suppose finally that facing the organization there are substantive problems which are more or less out of control. With these three conditions, and depending on the severity of the real problems besetting the enterprise, the stage is set for a collusion which, when acted out, becomes a critical episode of displacing the parental figure. To demonstrate:

- In November 1967, the directors of the Interpublic Group, a \$700 million complex in advertising and public relations, moved for the resignation of the leader and chief executive officer, Marion Harper, Jr. Briefly, Harper had managed over a period of 18 years to build the world's largest conglomerate in market services, advertising, and information on the base of a personally successful agency career. In expanding from this base, Harper made acquisitions, started new companies, and widened his orbit into international branches and companies.

As often happens, the innovator and creative person is careless in controlling what he has built so that financial problems become evident. In Harper's case, he appeared either unwilling or unable to recognize the seriousness of his financial problems and, in particular, the significance of allowing cash balances to go below the minimum required in agreements with lending institutions.

Harper seemed careless in another, even more telling, way. Instead of developing a strong coalition among his executive group, he relied on individual ties to him in which he clearly dominated the relationship. If any of the executives “crossed” him, Harper would exile the offender to one of the “remote” branches or place him on partial retirement.

When the financial problems became critical, the aggrieved executives who had once been dependent on Harper and then cast out, formed their own coalition, and managed to garner the votes necessary to, in effect, fire the head man. Although little information is available on the aftermath of this palace revolution, the new coalition had its own problems—which, one would reasonably judge, included contentions for power.

A cynic viewing this illustration of the demise of a parental figure could conclude that if one seeks to maintain power by dominance, then one had best go all the way. This means that to take some but not all of the power away from rebellious sons sets the stage for a cabal among the deprived. With a score to settle, they await only the right circumstances to move in and depose the aggressor.

While this cynical view has its own appeal, it ignores the deeper issues of why otherwise brilliant men fail to recognize the realistic needs for coalitions in the relationships of superior and subordinates. To answer this question, we would need to understand how powerful people operate with massive blind spots which limit vision and the ability to maneuver in the face of realistic problems.

The one purpose that coalitions serve is to guard against the effects of blind spots, since it is seldom the case that two people have identical limitations in their vision and ability to respond. The need to control and dominate in a personalistic sense is perhaps the most serious of all possible blind spots which can affect a chief executive, because he makes it difficult for people to help him, while creating grievances which sooner or later lead to attacks on him.

The unseating of a chief executive by a coalition of subordinates seldom reduces the emotional charge built up in the uncertain attachments to the ousted leader. A new head man has to emerge and establish a confident coalition. Until the contentions for power subside and the guilt reactions attached to deposing the leader dissolve, individuals remain vulnerable to their own blind spots and unconscious reactions to striving for power.

The references to a parental figure in the preceding discussion may appear to exaggerate the meaning of power conflicts. In whatever ways it exaggerates, it also condenses a variety of truths about coalitions among executives. The chief executive is the central *object* in a coalition because he occupies a position analogous to parents in the family. He is at the nucleus of a political structure whose prototype is the family in which jealousy, envy, love, and hate find original impetus and expression.

It would be a gross error to assume that in making an analogy between the family and formal organizations the parental role is strictly paternal. There are also characteristics of the mother figure in certain types of chief executives and combinations of mother-father in the formation of executive coalitions.

Chief executives can also suffer from depersonalization in their roles and as a result become emotionally cold and detached. The causes of depersonalization are complex but, in brief, have some connections to the narrow definitions of rationality which exclude the importance of emotions in guiding communication as well as thought.

For the purpose of interpreting how defensive styles affect the behavior of leaders, there is some truth to the suggestion that the neutrality and lack of warmth characteristic of some leaders is a result of an ingrained fear of becoming the *object* for other people—for to become the *object* arouses fears that subordinates will become envious and compete for power.

Paranoid thinking

This is a form of distortion in ideas and perception to which all human beings are susceptible from time to time. For those individuals who are concerned in their work with the consolidation and uses of power, the experience with suspiciousness, the attribution of bad motives to others, jealousy, and anxiety (characteristics of paranoid thinking), may be more than a passing state of mind.

In fact, such ideas and fantasies may indeed be communicated to others and may even be the main force which binds men into collusions. Organizational life is particularly vulnerable to the effects of paranoid thinking because it stimulates comparisons while it evokes anticipations of added power or fears of diminished power.

To complicate matters even more and to suggest just how ambiguous organizational decisions become, there may be some truth and substance in back of the suspicions, distrust, and jealousies which enflame thinking. Personality conflicts do affect decisions in allocating authority and responsibility, and an individual may not be distorting at all to sense that he had been excluded or denied an ambition based on some undercurrents in his relationships with others. To call these sensitivities paranoid thinking may itself be a gross distortion. But no matter how real the events, the paranoid potential is still high as a fallout of organizational life.

Paranoid thinking goes beyond suspiciousness, distrust, and jealousy. It may take the form of grandiose ideas and overestimation of one's power and control. This form of distortion leads to swings in mood from elation to despair, from a sense of omnipotence to helplessness. Again, when acted out, the search for complete control produces the tragedies which the initial distortions attempt to overcome. The tragedy of Jimmy Hoffa is a good case in point. Consider:

- From all indications, Hoffa performed brilliantly as president of the teamsters' union. He was a superb organizer and bargainer, and in many ways a highly moral and even prudish man. There is little evidence to support allegations that he used his office to enrich himself.

Hoffa's troubles stemmed from his angry reactions when he could not get his way in managing the union's pension fund and from his relations with the government. In overestimating his power, Hoffa fell victim to the illusion that no controls outside himself could channel his actions. At this writing, Hoffa is serving a sentence in Lewisburg Penitentiary, having been found guilty of tampering with a jury.

It is interesting to note that Hoffa's successor delegated considerable authority to regional officers, a step that removed him from direct comparisons with Hoffa and served to cement a coalition of top officers in the teamsters.

Executives, too, can be victims of their successes just as much as of their failures. If past successes lead to the false sense of omnipotence which goes unchecked in, say, the executive's control of the board of directors, then he and his organization become the victims of changing times and competitive pressures along with the weakening in perception and reasoning which often accompanies aging.

One could speculate with some reason that paranoid distortions are the direct result of senility and the inability to accept the fact of death. While intellectually aware of the inevitability of death, gifted executives can sometimes not accept emotionally the ultimate in the limitations of power. The disintegration of personality in the conflict between the head and the heart is what we come to recognize as the paranoid potential in all forms of our collective relations.

Ritualistic ceremonial

Any collective experience, such as organizational life with its capacity for charging the atmosphere in the imagery of power conflicts, can fall victim to rigidities. The rigidities I have in mind consist mainly of the formation and elaboration of structures, procedures, and other ceremonials which create the illusion of solving problems but in reality only give people something to act on to discharge valuable energies.

The best example of a ritualistic approach to real problems is the ever-ready solution of bringing people together in a committee on the naive grounds that the exchange of ideas is bound to produce a solution. There are even fads and fashions to ritualism as in the sudden appearance of favorite words like “brainstorming” or “synergism.”

It is not that bringing people together to discuss problems is bad. Instead, it is the naive faith which accompanies such proposals, ultimately deflecting attention from where it properly belongs. Thus:

- In one research organization, professionals faced severe problems arising from personal jealousies as well as differences of opinion on the correct goals and content for the research program. Someone would periodically suggest that the problems could not be solved unless people came together, preferably for a weekend away from the job, to share ideas and really get down to the “nitty-gritty” of the problem. (It is interesting to note that no one ever defines the “nitty-gritty.”) The group would indeed follow such suggestions and typically end the weekend with a feeling of euphoria brought on by considerable drinking and a sumptuous meal.

The most concrete proposal for action was in the idea that the basic problem stemmed from the organization’s increased size so that people no longer knew one another and their work. The solution which appeared, only shortly to disappear, was to publish a laboratory newsletter that would keep people abreast of their colleagues’ newest ideas.

In a more general vein, ritualism can be invoked to deal with any real or fancied danger, with uncertainty, ambivalent attitudes, or a sense of personal helplessness. Rituals are used even in the attempt to manipulate people. That power relations in organizations should become a fertile field for ritualism should not surprise anyone.

As I have tried to indicate, the problems of organizational life involve the dangers associated with losses of power; the uncertainties are legion especially in the recognition that there is no one best way to organize and distribute power, and yet any individual must make a commitment to some form of organization.

Ambivalent attitudes, such as the simultaneous experience of love and hate, are also associated with authority relationships, particularly in how superior-subordinate become the subject and object for the expression of dependency reactions. In addition, the sense of helplessness is particularly sensitized in the events which project gains and losses in power and status.

Finally, superior and subordinate in any power structure are constantly tempted to manipulate each other as a way of gaining control over one's environment, and the more so when there is a lack of confidence and credibility in the organization's efforts to solve problems in realistic ways.

The negative effects of ritualism are precisely in the expenditure of energy to carry out the rituals and also in the childlike expectation that the magic formulas of organizational life substitute for diagnosing and solving real problems. When the heads of organizations are unsure of the bases for the exercise of power and become defensive, the easy solution is to play for time by invoking rituals which may temporarily relieve anxiety.

Similarly, when executives fail to understand the structure and potential of the power coalitions they establish (either consciously or unconsciously), they increasingly rely on rituals to deflect attention away from their responsibilities. And, when leaders are timid men incapable of initiating or responding, the spontaneous reaction is to use people to act out rituals. Usually, the content and symbolism in the rituals provide important clues about the underlying defensiveness of the executive.

Obsessional leaders:

The gravitational pull to ceremonials and magic is irresistible. In positions of power, obsessional leaders use in their public performances the mechanisms of defense which originate in their private conflicts. These defenses include hyper-rationality, the isolation of thought and feeling, reactive behavior in turning anger into moral righteousness, and passive control of other people as well as their own thought processes.

Very frequently, particularly in this day and age of psychologizing conflict, obsessive leaders “get religion” and try to convert others into some new state of mind. The use of sensitivity training with its attachment to “openness” and “leveling” in power relations seems to be the current favorite.

What these leaders do not readily understand is the fallacy of imposing a total solution for the problem of power relations where reality dictates at best the possibility of only partial and transient solutions. To force openness through the use of group pressure in T-groups and to expect to sustain this pressure in everyday life is to be supremely ritualistic. People intelligently resist saying everything they think to other people because they somehow have a deep recognition that this route leads to becoming overextended emotionally and, ultimately, to sadistic relationships.

Intelligent uses of power:

The choice fortunately is not between ritualistic civility and naive openness in human relationships, particularly where power is concerned. In between is the choice of defining those partial problems which can be solved and through which bright people can learn something about the intelligent uses of power.

We should not lose sight of the basic lesson that people in positions of power differ from “ordinary” human beings mainly in their capacity to impose their personal defenses onto the stage of corporate life. Fortunately, the relationships are susceptible to intelligent management, and it is to the nature of this intelligence that I wish to address the conclusion of this article.

Coming Full Circle

The main job of organizational life, whether it concerns developing a new political pyramid, making new appointments to executive positions, or undergoing management succession at top levels, is to bring talented individuals into location for the legitimate uses of power. This is bound to be a highly charged event in corporate relationships because of the real changes in power distributions and the emotional reactions people experience along with the incremental gains and losses of power.

The demand, on the one hand, is for objectivity in assessing people and needs (as opposed to pseudorationality and rationalizing). This objectivity, on the other hand, has to be salvaged from the impact of psychological stresses which impel people to act out fantasies associated with power conflicts. The stresses of change in power relations tend to increase defensiveness to which counterreactions of rationalizing and of myth making serve no enduring purpose except perhaps to drive underground the concerns which make people react defensively in the first place.

Stylistic biases

Thought and action in the politics of organizational life are subject to the two kinds of errors commonly found in practical life: the errors of omission and those of commission. It is both what people do and what they neglect to do that result in the negative effects of action outweighing the positive. But besides the specific errors of omission and commission (the tactical aspects of action), there are also the more strategic aspects which have to be evaluated. The strategic aspects deal both with the corporate aims and objectives and with the style of the leaders who initiate change.

In general, leaders approach change with certain stylistic biases over which they may not have too much control. There is a preferred approach to power problems which derives from the personality of the leader and his defenses as well as from the realities of the

situation. Of particular importance as stylistic biases are the preferences for partial, as contrasted with total, approaches and the preferences for substance over form.

Partial vs. total:

The partial approaches attempt to define and segregate problems which become amenable to solution by directive, negotiation, consensus, and compromise.

The total approaches usually escalate the issues in power relations so that implicitly people act as though it were necessary to undergo major conversions. The conversions can be directed toward personality structure, ideals, and beliefs, or toward values which are themselves connected to important aspects of personal experience.

When conversions become the end products of change, then one usually finds the sensitization of concerns over such matters as who dominates and who submits, who controls and who is being controlled, who is accepted and who is rejected. The aftermath of these concerns is the heightening of fantasy and defense at the expense of reality.

It may come as something of a disappointment to readers who are favorably disposed to psychology to consider the possibility that while organizations do have an impact on the attitudes of their constituent members, they cannot change personality structures or carry out therapeutic procedures. People may become more effective while working in certain kinds of organizations, but only when effectiveness is not dependent on the solution of neurotic conflict.

The advocates of total approaches seem to miss this point in their eagerness to convert people and organizations from one set of ideals to another. It becomes a good deal wiser, if these propositions are true, to scale down and make concrete the objectives that one is seeking to achieve.

A good illustration is in the attention given to decentralization of authority. Decentralization can be viewed in the image of conversion to certain ideals about who should have power and how this power should be used responsibly, or through an analytical approach to decide selectively where power is ill-placed and ill-used and to work on change at these locations. In other words, the theory of the partial approach to organizations asserts priorities and depends on good diagnostic observation and thought.

Substance vs. form:

Leaders can also present a stylistic bias in their preference for substance or form. Substance, in the language of organizations, is the detail of goals and performance—that is, who has to do what with whom to meet specific objectives. Form directs attention to the relationship of “who to whom” and attempts to achieve goals by specifying how the people should act in relation to each other.

There is no way in which matters of form can be divorced from substance. But students of organization should at least be clear that attention to form *ahead of* substance threatens a person’s sense of what is reasonable in undertaking actions. Attention to form may also present an implicit attack on one’s conception of his independence and freedom from constraint.

Making form secondary to substance has another virtue: it can secure agreement on priorities without the need of predetermining who will have to give way in the ultimate give-and-take of the negotiations that must precede decisions on organization structure.

The two dimensions of bias, shown in the Exhibit I matrix, along with the four cells which result, clarify different executive approaches to power. The two dimensions define the executive’s cognitive biases in: (1) selection of goals (partial vs. total), and (2) orientation toward action (form vs. substance).

EXHIBIT I
Cognitive Management Styles in Organizational Life

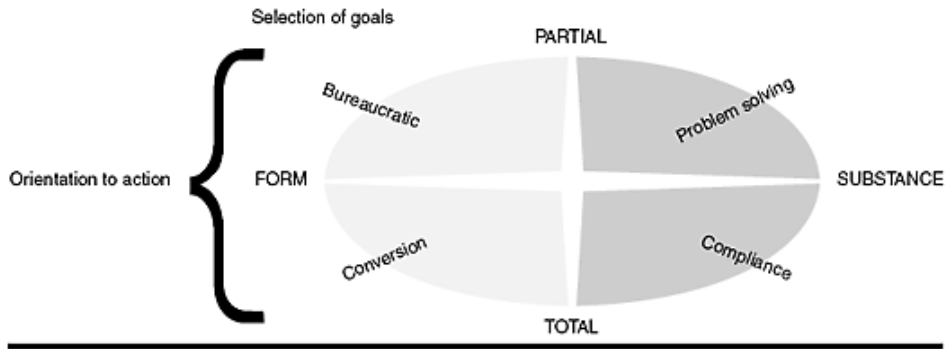


Exhibit I Cognitive Management Styles in Organizational Life

In the *bureaucratic* approach—that is, partial goals and attachment to form as a mode of acting—the emphasis is on procedure and the establishment of precedent and rule to control the uses of power.

The appeal of this approach is its promise of certainty in corporate relationships and in the depersonalization of power. The weaknesses of the bureaucratic approach are too familiar to need detailing here. Its major defect, however, is its inability to separate the vital from the trivial. It more easily commands energy over irrelevant issues because the latent function of the bureaucratic approach is to bypass conflict.

My contention here is that few important problems can be attended to without conflict of ideas and interests. Eventually organizations become stagnant because the bureaucratic approaches seldom bring together power and the vital issues which together make organizations dynamic.

The *conversion* approach (total-form) is notable through the human relations and sensitivity training movements as well as ideological programs, such as the Scanlon Plan and other forms of participative management. The popularity of “management by objectives” bears some scrutiny as a conversion movement directed toward power figures.

Another “total” approach which differs from conversion in its emphasis on substance is *compliance* with the directives of the powerful leader. This is the arena of the authoritarian personality (in both the leader, who has the power, and in the led, who seek submission), for whom personal power gets expressed in some higher goal that makes it possible for ends to justify means. The ideals may, for example, be race, as with dictator Adolf Hitler, or religion, as with Father Charles Coughlin, a dictator-type of the depression. In business, the illustrations are of a technological variety as with Frederick Winslow Taylor’s “scientific management” and Henry Ford’s automobile and assembly line.

Almost any technology can assume the proportions of the total approach if it is advanced by a charismatic leader and has deep emotional appeal. This explains the popularity of “management information systems,” “value analysis,” and “program planning and budgeting” which lead to a belief that the system itself is based on order, rationality, and control; therefore, the belief in turn helps to counteract the fears of chaos and lack of control which make people willing to demand total dependence and compliance in power relations. The effects of this fear on how people seek to arrange power relations in business, government, and the community cannot be overestimated.

Problem-solving approach

It should be perfectly obvious by now that my favored approach to organizational life combines the biases in Exhibit I of the partial substantive quadrant which I have designated “problem solving.” From observation of competent business executives, we know it is precisely their ability to define problems worthy of thought and action and to use their organization to evolve solutions which characterize their style.

The contrary notion that executives are primarily caretakers, mediators, and seekers of consensus is more a myth than an accurate portrayal of how the competent ones attach themselves to power. To

have power and not direct it to some substantive end that can be attained in the real world is to waste energy. The difficulties with the problem-solving approach are in risking power in favor of a substantive goal.

While there are no absolute right answers in problem solving, there are ways of evaluating the correctness of a program and plan. With a favorable average, the executive finds his power base enhanced and his ability to take risks increased.

The problem-solving approach to organization structure operates according to certain premises:

1. That organization structure is an instrument rather than an end. This means that a structure should be established or modified quickly instead of stringing out deliberations as though there actually exists a best and single solution for the problem of allocating power.
2. That organization structure can be changed but should not be tinkered with. This means that members of an executive organization can rely on a structure and can implement it without the uncertainty which comes from the constant modification of the organization chart.
3. That organization structure expresses the working coalition attached to the chief executive. In other words, the coalition has to be established de facto for the structure to mean anything. If the structure is out of line with the coalition, there will be an erosion of power and effectiveness. If no coalition exists in the minds of participants, putting it on paper in the form of an organization chart is nothing more than an academic exercise and a confusing one at that.
4. That organization structure represents a blend of people and job definitions, but the priority is in describing the structure to accommodate competent people. The reason for this priority lies in the fact that competent executives are hard to find. Therefore, as an

action principle, one should ensure the effective uses of the scarcest resources rather than conform to some ideal version of power relations.

5. That organization structure is a product of negotiation and compromise among executives who hold semiautonomous power bases. The more the power base of an executive is his demonstrated competence, the greater his autonomy of power and therefore capacity to determine the outcome in the allocations of power.

The basic criticism of the problem-solving approach is in the danger of defining issues narrowly and ultimately undermining the moral-ethical basis of leadership. This criticism is valid, but as with so many problems in practical affairs, it can be overcome only by leaders who can see beyond the limits of immediate contingencies. In fact, I have tried to show throughout this article how the limitations of leaders, in both their cognitive and their emotional capacities, become the causes of power problems.

We have therefore come full circle in this analysis: because power problems are the effects of personality on structure, the solutions demand thinking which is free from the disabilities of emotional conflicts. This insight is often the margin between enduring with what exists or taking those modest steps which align competence with institutional authority in the service of human needs.

1. See my article, "The Management of Disappointment," HBR November–December 1967, p. 59.

2. See Chester Barnard, *The Function of the Executive* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1938), p. 167.

A version of this article appeared in the May 1970 issue of *Harvard Business Review*.

Abraham Zaleznik is the Konosuke Matsushita
Professor of Leadership Emeritus at Harvard
Business School in Boston.

The International Journal of Conflict of Management
Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 77–102

BACKLASH TOWARD DIVERSITY INITIATIVES: EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF DIVERSITY PROGRAM JUSTIFICATION, PERSONAL AND GROUP OUTCOMES

Deborah L. Kidder
Towson University
Melenie J. Lankau
University of Georgia
Donna Chrobot-Mason
University of Cincinnati
Kelly A. Mollica
Bethel College, TN
Raymond A. Friedman
Vanderbilt University

This study used a scenario design to examine whether there are different reactions among whites based on how a diversity program is justified by an organization. A reactive justification (affirmative action) was proposed to result in greater backlash than a competitive advantage justification (diversity management). In addition, this study examined the effects of personal and group outcomes on backlash and explored two individual difference variables, gender and orientation toward other ethnic groups, as potential moderators of the proposed relationships. Backlash was operationalized in four ways: an affect-based measure (negative emotions), two cognitive-based measures (attitude toward the diversity program, perceptions of unfairness of promotion procedures), and a behavioral-intentions-based measure (organizational commitment). Results indicated that the diversity management justification was associated with more favorable support of the diversity initiative, and that unfavorable personal and group outcomes adversely affected backlash reactions. There was no empirical support for the influence of the moderator variables on the proposed relationships, however, a main

Note: Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Deborah L. Kidder, Towson University, Department of Management, 8000 York Road, Towson MD 21252.
Email: dkidder@towson.edu

effect for gender was found. Implications of the study's findings and future research directions are discussed.

Keywords: Justice, Affirmative, Action, Diversity

Many organizations have recognized the value of a diverse workforce and the need for managing diversity (Fernandez, 1999). Recognizing the difficulties that minorities often face in the corporate world and the stereotypes and prejudices that still exist, organizations are implementing formally sanctioned diversity programs to help ensure more opportunity for non-traditional employees (Brief & Buttram, 1997; Cox, 1993). Managing diversity has been "portrayed as a product of enlightened corporate self-interest" (Yakura, 1996) and has become popular throughout corporate America (Gottfredson, 1992). The touted benefits of diversity management may include attracting and retaining the best available talent, enhanced marketing efforts, higher creativity and innovation, better problem solving, and more organizational flexibility (Cox & Blake, 1991).

Despite progress, the issue of diversity in organizational settings continues to be sensitive and controversial. There is evidence of backlash or resistance against affirmative action policies and other diversity initiatives on the part of whites, and especially white males (Kravitz & Klineberg, 2000; Mobley & Payne, 1992; Solomon, 1991). However, not all whites react negatively to diversity programs in all situations, nor do they all oppose the underlying principles behind valuing diversity in the workplace.

While there is a large body of research examining attitudes toward affirmative action (see Kravitz et al., 1997, for a review), there has been little empirical research exploring attitudes toward diversity management practices that companies pursue for competitive advantage. Linnehan and Konrad (1999) noted that contrasting diversity management practices and affirmative action is a "common theme in the literature," but such contrasts have been largely descriptive rather than empirical. Richard and Kirby (1998) suggested that comparisons of diversity programs (implemented for business reasons) versus affirmative action programs (implemented to avoid government sanctions and/or lawsuits) are an important area for research and theoretical development. The purpose of our study was to address this deficiency in the literature by examining whether the reason given for implementing a diversity program affected levels of backlash among whites.

Using a scenario study design, we examined differences between respondents' reactions to the justification for a diversity initiative for attracting and retaining minority employees. We argue that backlash may be more or less prevalent depending on how diversity efforts are justified or framed by the organization. We examine two ways of justifying diversity efforts, either for affirmative action goals or for competitive advantage goals. We first discuss the differences between these two justifications, then hypothesize that backlash may be more evident when diversity efforts are framed from the affirmative action perspective rather than from the competitive advantage perspective. We also propose that respondent's perceptions of personal and group outcomes may influence backlash reactions. Finally, we explore whether two individual characteristics, gender and orientation toward other ethnic groups, mitigate the effects of backlash and act as moderators of the rela-

The International Journal of Conflict Management, Vol. 15, No. 1

tionships between diversity program justification, outcomes, and backlash reactions. In the first section, we discuss the concept of backlash and previous research examining backlash in the workplace. We then proceed to discuss the importance of justifications and outcomes, discuss our hypotheses, and then present our research design and results.

Backlash Towards Diversity Initiatives in the Workplace

Backlash is a negative response to a decision or policy that occurs when a person thinks that others have received undeserved benefits (Crosby & Gonzalez-Intal, 1984). In the context of diversity, we wish to examine backlash as negative reactions experienced by traditionally higher-status majority group members when they believe that traditionally lower-status minority group members have received preferential treatment. While backlash can occur in many situations for a variety of reasons, examining the responses of white majority members to perceived preferential treatment of minority members is in keeping with previous research, which focuses on negative reactions to diversity initiatives (e.g., McLean Parks & Banas, 1996). Backlash, as a negative reaction to change, can manifest itself both attitudinally as well as behaviorally (McLean Parks & Banas, 1996).

Backlash toward diversity initiatives thus differs from more general reactions to perceived unfair actions because of the focus on identity-group membership. Whites have traditionally held high status positions in the United States (Ridgeway, 1991), and diversity programs in the workplace may threaten group identity for whites as the status quo is challenged (Sidanius, Devereux, & Pratto, 2001). White backlash toward diversity efforts is problematic, because it can produce negative reactions to implementing organizational initiatives (Bond & Pyle, 1998; Society for Human Resource Management, 1993; Wheeler, 1994). Employee acceptance and support are important precursors to the success of any human resource initiative, including diversity. White males, who still hold the majority of powerful positions in organizations, have expressed concern about their future opportunities because of diversity programs that give preference to other groups (Galen & Palmer, 1994; Heilman, McCullough, & Gilbert, 1996; Lynch, 1989, 1997; Mobley & Payne, 1992). McLean Parks and Banas (1996) argued that "those in control may view themselves as a cohesive in-group by virtue of their positions, and therefore may tend to view actions by organizational out-groups and external parties as possible threats to their control and organizational well-being" (p. 5). According to a *Newsweek* article entitled "White Male Paranoia," over half of white males surveyed believed that they were unfairly losing advantages in the workplace (Gates & Cose, 1993). Because it is inevitable that powerful groups will react negatively to changes in the power distribution that threaten their advantageous position (Smith, 1982), white backlash is not surprising.

There is a significant amount of research indicating that whites oppose preferential treatment for minorities in the workplace, based on two assumptions: first, that preferential treatment leads to the hiring of unqualified minorities; and second, that workplace discrimination is no longer a problem in the United States (Kravitz & Klineberg, 2000). Research on attitudes towards affirmative action has shown

that negative reactions are not universal among whites, however. In the next section, we will discuss the importance of diversity program justification for initiatives that benefit minorities in the workplace.

Diversity Program Justification

Justifications, also called social accounts, consist of explanations given for an action taken in order to manage reactions from the individuals affected by the actions (Scott & Lyman, 1968). Research has shown that justifications help mitigate negative reactions to unfavorable outcomes and decrease the negative repercussions that often follow bad news in the workplace (e.g., Bies, 1987; Bies & Moag, 1986; Brockner, 1988; Shapiro, 1991). As cognitive tools, social accounts use impression management to help individuals make sense of what is happening to them (Cobb, Stephens, & Watson, 2001; Weick, 1995).

Affirmative action, based on federal legislation, is meant to increase employment opportunities for qualified women and minorities when they are underrepresented in the workplace. The underlying rationale for affirmative action is to remedy historical discrimination of disadvantaged groups. While affirmative action programs are still in place in many organizations, the entire notion of affirmative action has come under considerable social and political attack (Little, Murry, & Wimbush, 1998). In the late 1980's during President Reagan's second term in office, companies began a shift toward diversity management practices in response to the stigma associated with affirmative action (Bond & Pyle, 1998).

In contrast with affirmative action, which is essentially a "remedial program for implementing equal employment opportunity" (Yakura, 1996), diversity management focuses on business need and the view that there is value in diversity (Gilbert, Stead, & Ivancevich, 1999). The goal of diversity management is corporate efficiency and profitability (Bond & Pyle, 1998). Corporations promote diversity management as a strategic imperative that will improve workforce productivity and organizational effectiveness (Jackson & Alvarez, 1992).

In the current study, we examine reactions to the two different justifications (affirmative action versus diversity management) for a recruitment and retention program for minorities. White backlash toward diversity efforts may be largely confined to affirmative action programs. Whites may react more negatively to affirmative action programs because they, individually or as a group, stand to "lose"; whereas reactions to diversity management may be less negative or even positive because the company as a whole stands to "gain." Individuals tend to be more risk averse in the face of a loss, while being more risk-tolerant when presented with an opportunity for a gain (Kahneman & Tversky, 1988).

Research has documented that whites tend to have less favorable attitudes overall toward affirmative action than minorities (for a review, see Kravitz et al., 1997). Opposition to affirmative action on the part of whites is especially strong when they believe that affirmative action involves quotas and preferential treatment, i.e., "identity-conscious" activities (Konrad & Linnehan, 1995) leading to reverse discrimination. In contrast, diversity management efforts should be more palatable and accepted than affirmative action because it is for the good of the company rather than simply to avoid lawsuits (Linnehan & Konrad, 1999). Business

The International Journal of Conflict Management, Vol. 15, No. 1

necessity is viewed as a more legitimate justification than government mandates in the United States; this argument is in keeping with the U.S. value of individual freedom, and fits the perception of an employer in control rather than in the weaker position of being told what to do by the government. This assumption, however, has been largely untested in the empirical literature. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Backlash reactions of white respondents toward a workplace initiative to recruit and retain minorities will be stronger if management offers a reactive justification (affirmative action) than if management offers a competitive business justification (diversity management).

Personal and Group Outcomes and Backlash Reactions

Research has demonstrated that concerns for justice and fairness influence people's attitudes in the workplace (Lind & Tyler, 1988). Whites tend to report more opposition to affirmative action programs when they perceive that procedures associated with the programs are unfair (e.g., Bobocel, Son Hing, Davey, Stanley, & Zanna, 1998; Kravitz, 1995), with the implication that unfair procedures will lead to unfair outcomes for whites. Less attention has been given to the influence of actual outcomes on reactions. In a series of studies, Bobocel and colleagues examined perceptions of affirmative action with regard to violating the merit principle, which they equate with unfair distributive justice (e.g., Bobocel et al., 1998). They found that non-prejudiced individuals often opposed affirmative action, because it violated the distributive justice norm of equal allocations.

Although not specifically related to backlash, there is extensive research supporting the relationship between perceptions of fairness and desired personal outcomes such as jobs and promotions (see for example, Cropanzano, 1993). In particular, distributive aspects of fairness must take into account whether or not a valued outcome for the perceiver is affected by the decision (Tornblom & Vermunt, 1999). We suggest that backlash reactions will be influenced by how white respondents are personally affected by an outcome (i.e., promotion received or not received).

Hypothesis 2: Backlash reactions of white respondents toward a workplace initiative to recruit and maintain minorities will be stronger if the personal outcome is unfavorable.

Backlash is also likely to be influenced by outcomes at the group level. In addition to one's own personal outcomes, people notice, identify with, and react to the experiences of members of their identity group (Levine & Moreland, 1987; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In particular, employees pay attention to how resources are allocated among identity groups in their organization and whether these allocations are fair.

The group value model of justice suggests that an individual's positive identity is derived in part from how members of their group are treated (Lind & Tyler, 1988). Fair treatment satisfies a basic psychological need by signifying that the group enjoys a high quality relationship with and is valued by management (Cro-

panzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001). Often, people erect psychological boundaries of fairness, thus limiting their scope of justice to their own identity group (Opatow, 1996). Any perceived threat to the status of one's identity group may be viewed as a potential loss of one's individual status and identity (Tyler, 1989).

Therefore, whether or not whites are personally disadvantaged by the promotion outcomes, they may nonetheless be sensitive to the outcomes of their identity group as a whole in comparison with other identity groups. High-status groups are most likely to exhibit out-group biases i.e., backlash, towards preferential treatment, as they are most likely to perceive it as a threat to group-based esteem (James, 1993). Accordingly, we posit the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Backlash reactions of white respondents toward a workplace initiative to recruit and maintain minorities will be stronger when the group outcome is unfavorable.

While we expect that, in general, white respondents will react more negatively to an unfavorable personal outcome and unfavorable group outcome as hypothesized above, we believe that the extent of backlash will be greater for the affirmative action justification than the diversity management justification. Since the business case for diversity is based on the notion that racial diversity provides opportunities for an organization to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage (Richard, 2000), individuals presented with a diversity management justification may be more likely to perceive the diversity initiative as an important strategic policy and, therefore, be more tolerant of unfavorable personal and group-identity outcomes. We suggest the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4a: Backlash reactions of white respondents to an unfavorable personal outcome will be stronger for the affirmative action justification than the diversity management justification.

Hypothesis 4b: Backlash reactions of white respondents to an unfavorable group outcome will be stronger for the affirmative action justification than the diversity management justification.

Individual Characteristics as Moderators

Orientation toward Other Ethnic Groups. According to Phinney (1996), achieving a psychologically healthy ethnic identity involves a developmental process in which individuals develop a positive sense of their own identity through exploration and increased awareness, together with greater understanding and acceptance of other identity groups. This identity development process often involves greater awareness of differences between one's identity group and other groups, and how other groups relate to one's own identity group. This higher level of awareness and understanding may occur through positive interactions with members of other ethnic groups. The "contact hypothesis" suggests that positive inter-group interaction *should* enhance personalization and that common social categorization processes that occur among members of different social groups decrease over time as members attend more to individuating information (Allport, 1954; Brewer & Brown, 1998). The more individuals interact in a positive way

The International Journal of Conflict Management, Vol. 15, No. 1

with members of other identity groups, stereotypes become less prevalent, feelings of fear and uncertainty may be reduced, and positive feelings towards others increase (Linnehan & Konrad, 1999). In addition, white employees with increased contact with minorities may be more likely to develop an awareness of the issues that minorities face in the workplace. This increased awareness may also sensitize white employees to the salience of their own membership in a majority status group and the privileges associated with that status. Swim and Miller (1999) found that individuals who believed that whites were privileged in U.S. society were more likely to hold positive attitudes towards affirmative action.

We suggest that a positive orientation toward people of other ethnic groups may diminish whites' negative reactions toward initiatives for minorities and unfavorable outcomes due to their greater understanding of the challenges faced by minority groups for upward mobility in organizations. We propose that white respondents' orientation toward other ethnic groups may moderate the relationship between diversity program justification, personal and group outcomes, and backlash reactions.

Hypothesis 5: Backlash reactions of white respondents to a workplace initiative to recruit and maintain minorities will be moderated by the respondent's orientation towards other ethnic groups. Specifically, backlash will be lower among whites receiving either a reactive program justification or an unfavorable outcome, who have a positive orientation towards other ethnic groups than those who have a negative orientation towards other ethnic groups.

Gender. Previous research has found gender differences in attitudes towards affirmative action as well as gender differences in perceptions of organizational justice (e.g., Graves & Powell, 1994; Kravitz & Platania, 1993; Lee & Farh, 1999; Little et al., 1998; Parker, Baltes & Christiansen, 1997; Tata, 2000). Women are considered to be other-oriented and more benevolent at work than men (Major, Bylsma, & Cozzarelli, 1989). In addition, research has shown that females are more likely to be concerned with procedural justice, while males are more focused on distributive justice (Tata & Bowes-Sperry, 1996; Sweeney & McFarlin, 1997). Social identity theory suggests that individuals tend to classify themselves in terms of their membership in salient identity groups (Tajfel, 1982). Classifications have hierarchical levels and are prompted by the social context. From a historical perspective, women have traditionally experienced membership in the minority or low-status group within organizations and have been the beneficiaries of affirmative action programs. Women may be likely to classify themselves as minority group members and therefore feel a sense of solidarity with members of other minority groups. Hence, we suggest that gender may moderate the relationship between program justification, personal and group outcomes, and backlash reactions.

Hypothesis 6: Backlash reactions of white respondents to a workplace initiative to recruit and maintain minorities will be moderated by the respondent's gender. Specifically, when whites receive

either a reactive justification or an unfavorable outcome, backlash will be lower among females in comparison with males.

Method

Sample

Pre-test Samples. The survey for this study was refined based on the results of three pre-tests. The purpose of the pre-tests was to examine whether the manipulations were accurately perceived by the participants as well as to shorten the survey by removing scales that did not show significant effects on the dependent variables. The format of the survey for the pre-tests was the same as the one described below for the full study. The three pre-tests included, in order, a sample of 89 executives attending executive training programs at four universities across the United States, 146 psychology undergraduates at a fifth university, and an additional 122 graduate students from two of the original four universities. A complete list of items used in the pre-tests is available from the authors.

Current Study Sample. Our sample consisted of white male and female working professionals and managers who were recruited from the evening and executive MBA programs of four business schools located within the eastern United States. While both minorities and whites participated in the study, we are reporting only the data from participants who identified their race as white ($N = 166$), as our study focuses on backlash among white respondents. Participants were on average about 31 years old, and had an average of nine years of work experience. Seventy-one percent were male and 78% had supervisory responsibilities at the time they completed the survey.

Study Design

We used a scenario study to test our hypotheses. Nemetz and Christensen (1996) suggested the use of scenarios for assessing people's reactions to different viewpoints toward diversity. Scenarios allow difficult manipulations to be more easily operationalized, provide control over potentially unmanageable variables, and allow for summarizing events that might otherwise take weeks to occur, such as the time between the implementation of a diversity initiative and the announcement of promotions (McCollaugh, Berry, & Yadav, 2000).

Participants, who each read one scenario, were asked to imagine they were a mid-level manager at a fictitious company. Participants responded to a series of questions designed to assess their reactions to the situation described in the scenario. The scenarios were based on a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ experimental design in which we asked participants to respond to one of eight fictitious scenarios that manipulated three conditions: (1) the company has an affirmative action or diversity management program in place (referred to hereafter as "*diversity program justification*"), (2) the subject is personally (dis)advantaged by promotion decisions (referred to hereafter as "*personal outcome*"), and (3) promotion decisions appear to be more favorable to minorities as a group or not (referred to hereafter as "*group outcome*"). The eight cells had on average 21 respondents in each.

The International Journal of Conflict Management, Vol. 15, No. 1

In the diversity management condition of our study, management was described as having a business priority to hire good people and to retain employees who reflect the diversity of their customer base (see Appendix A for complete scenario). In the affirmative action condition, management at the company was described as being concerned with meeting affirmative action goals to adhere to EEOC guidelines for minority representation, and the company had an affirmative action program to actively seek, hire, and promote minorities.

The second manipulation concerned personal outcome. The participant (again, who was asked to assume the role of a mid-level manager in the company), was told that promotion decisions were recently made. We manipulated whether or not the participant read that s/he received (favorable condition) or did not receive (unfavorable condition) a promotion.

Finally, we manipulated the type of group outcome in the scenario. The promotions resulted in either a proportionate (favorable condition) or disproportionately high number (unfavorable condition) of minorities promoted. Minorities represented 10% of the company's workforce. The favorable condition indicated that 10% of the promotions went to minorities, while the unfavorable condition indicated that 40% of the promotions went to minorities.

Measures

Manipulation Checks. To evaluate the effectiveness of the manipulations, we included three scales, one for each manipulation. First, for the diversity program justification manipulation, we included four items ($\alpha = .75$); for example, "Employees at Nixell are hired under an affirmative action program," and "Nixell recently implemented a diversity initiative to hire and promote minorities (R)." A high score on this scale supported the affirmative action manipulation whereas a low score supported the diversity management manipulation. Second, for the personal outcome manipulation, we included two items ($\alpha = .84$); for example, "At Nixell, I was one of 10 managers who got promoted." A high score supported the favorable condition, in which the subject was promoted. Finally, we included three items ($\alpha = .84$) to check the group outcome manipulation, e.g., "It appears that minorities were promoted disproportionately more than whites." A high score supported the unfavorable condition, in which a disproportionately high number of minorities were promoted. The *t*-test results are shown in Table 1. All *t*-test results were significant, which provided support that the manipulations of the independent variables among the scenarios were correctly perceived by the respondents.

Backlash Reactions. Backlash can be viewed as an affective response, a cognitive response, and/or a behavioral intentions response (McLean Parks & Banas, 1996). Due to the lack of existing measures in the literature, we modified two scales as well as designed two new scales to assess each of these three responses. With the exception of the emotion items, the remaining items on the survey were measured on a scale from 1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 5 = "Strongly Agree." In an exploratory principal-axis factor analysis with varimax rotation, all the items used in this study loaded on their expected factors with no cross-loadings above .40. A complete list of the items used in this study plus their factor loadings can be found in Appendix B.

First, we measured the participants' emotional reactions to the scenario. These items were drawn from the Watson, Clark and Tellegen (1988) article describing the development of their affect scale. The list of emotions included the following: "distressed," "upset," "hostile," and "irritable." Unlike the other backlash indicators in the study, emotion was measured as a continuous variable, using the thermometer scale technique. Previous research suggests that thermometer scales provide more detailed options for responses, which creates a variable that is more continuous than traditional Likert-type scales (Russell & Bobko, 1992). Each item anchored the left end of a 5-inch line. The top of the scale listed responses from "Not at all" to "Extremely" spaced evenly apart. The variable was coded between 0 and 5, with gradations measured in 1/8 inch increments. A ruler was used to measure the distance from the left edge to the slash mark. We created one variable by averaging the items ($\alpha = .90$). A high score for emotions indicated a strong negative emotional reaction, or high backlash.

Table 1
T-tests on Manipulation Check Items

	Justification <i>t</i>	Group Outcome <i>t</i>	Personal Outcome <i>t</i>
Nixell uses an affirmative action program.	7.77**		
Employees at Nixell are hired under an affirmative action program.	3.54**		
Nixell recently implemented a diversity initiative to hire and promote minorities.	-9.82**		
At Nixell, increasing diversity is seen as important for the bottom line.	-6.56**		
A significant number of promotions went to minorities.		-14.87**	
It appears that minorities were promoted disproportionately more than whites.		-14.3**	
Almost all of the promotions went to white managers.		17.32**	
At Nixell, I was one of 10 managers who got promoted.			16.45**
I was not one of 10 managers who got promoted.			-32.46**

Note: $df=166$.

** $p < .01$.

The International Journal of Conflict Management, Vol. 15, No. 1

Another way of viewing backlash is in terms of cognitive attitudinal responses about the specific program (i.e., affirmative action or diversity management) and perceptions of unfairness of the promotion procedures. Attitude toward the program was measured by the average score of three items created for this study ($\alpha = .80$). Lower scores represented less favorable attitudes toward the type of program indicating greater backlash. Fairness perceptions of the promotion procedures are considered to be more cognitive in nature than affective emotions, based on rational calculations of costs and benefits. Four items were created for this study. We averaged the items into one scale ($\alpha = .87$). Items were recoded such that a high value indicated a perception of unfairness of promotion procedures or high backlash.

Finally, backlash may be manifested in organizationally-related attitudes, specifically *organizational commitment*. We included three organizational commitment items from O'Reilly & Chatman (1986). The average of the three items was used as one scale ($\alpha = .82$). A high score on this scale indicates high commitment or low backlash.

Independent Variables. Gender was measured as a categorical variable, with males coded as 0, and females coded as 1. To assess orientation toward other ethnic groups, we used four items that comprise the Other Group Orientation subscale from Phinney's (1992) Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure. These items were averaged to form one scale ($\alpha = .77$).

Results

Means, standard deviations and intercorrelations among the study variables are shown in Table 2. To test the hypotheses, we ran separate hierarchical multiple OLS regressions for each backlash indicator (emotional reactions, attitude toward program, perceptions of unfairness of the promotion procedures, and organizational commitment). The three main manipulations (diversity program justification, personal outcome, and group outcome) were entered in the first step of the analyses. In the second step, the two moderator variables, orientation toward other ethnic groups and gender, were entered. The third step added all two-way interactions to test the moderator hypotheses. Although we did not hypothesize three-way interactions, we added these in a fourth step to examine whether more complicated effects were present. The regression results are shown in Table 3. Results from the fourth step are not shown, as none of the three-way interactions were significant. For each step, the change in *R*-square and *F* statistic were examined for significance.

For hypothesis 1, we predicted that there would be a main effect for the diversity program justification of a workplace recruitment and retention initiative for minorities (affirmative action versus diversity management) on perceptions of backlash. Specifically, subjects presented with an affirmative action scenario should report higher backlash than subjects presented with a diversity management scenario. This hypothesis was supported for only one of the backlash indicators (see Table 3). Specifically, respondents who received the scenario with the diversity program justification of diversity management reported significantly more positive attitudes toward the program, compared to respondents who received

Table 2
Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. (Manipulation) Program justification	.48	.50								
2. (Manipulation) Personal outcome favorability	.49	.50	.01							
3. (Manipulation) Group outcome favorability	.49	.50	-.02	.01						
4. (DV) Negative emotion	1.53	1.26	.04	.67**	.21**					
5. (DV) Attitude toward program	3.00	1.02	.28**	-.15*	-.01	-.32**				
6. (DV) Perceived unfairness	3.25	.76	-.05	.24**	.32**	.44**	-.48**			
7. (DV) Organizational commitment	3.05	.85	-.03	-.44**	-.08	-.52**	.43**	-.55**		
8. (IV) Other group orientation (centered)	.00	.69	.03	-.10	.04	-.10	.11	.08	.07	
9. (IV) Gender	.29	.45	-.06	-.01	.03	-.06	.21**	-.08	.14	.18*

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

the affirmative action scenario. There was no support for the relationship between diversity program justification and emotional reactions, perceptions of unfairness of the promotion procedures, and organizational commitment.

Table 3
Hierarchical Regression Results

Variables	Negative Emotions	Attitude toward Program	Perceptions of Unfairness	Organizational Commitment
Step 1	β	β	β	β
Program justification ²	.04	.28**	.02	-.02
Personal outcome Favorability (POF) ³	.66**	-.15*	.20**	-.44**
Group outcome Favorability (GOF) ³	.20**	-.01	.28**	-.07
R^2	.48**	.10**	.12**	.20**
F	51.12**	6.23**	7.68**	14.02**
Step 2				
Other group orientation(OGO)	-.03	.05	.12	.01
Gender ⁴	-.06	.22**	-.08	.14*
ΔR^2	.01	.05*	.02	.02
ΔF	.72	5.23*	1.76	2.05
Step 3				
Program x OGO	-.15	.04	.02	.07
POF x OGO	-.07	.00	-.02	.14
GOF x OGO	-.01	-.02	-.12	.01
Program x Gender	-.01	-.06	.08	-.05
POF x Gender	-.02	.09	.13	.18
GOF x Gender	-.02	-.03	.08	-.03
Program x POF	.19	-.29*	.16	-.09
Program x GOF	-.05	-.09	.13	-.10
POF x GOF	-.02	-.01	.05	.07
ΔR^2	.03	.04	.03	.04
ΔF	1.02	.85	.70	.89

Note: $N = 166$, standardized betas reported; ²Justification (0 = aff. action, 1 = div. mgmt); ³Group & Personal (0 = pos. outcome, 1 = neg. outcome); ⁴Gender (0 = Male, 1 = Female)

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

For hypothesis 2, we proposed that personal outcomes would have a direct effect on backlash. This hypothesis was supported for all four indicators of backlash reactions. Individuals who read that they did not receive a promotion reported higher negative emotions, less favorable attitudes toward the type of program, greater perceptions of unfairness, and lower levels of organizational commitment than those respondents who received the scenario where they did receive a promotion.

Hypothesis 3 posited a direct effect of group outcomes on reported backlash. It was predicted that subjects who were informed that a disproportionately high number of minorities received promotions relative to their percentage of the employee population would experience greater levels of negative reactions than subjects who were informed that minorities were promoted in equal proportion to the number of minorities in the company. This hypothesis was supported for two of the four backlash indicators (See Table 3). Participants who were informed that a disproportionately high number of minorities received promotions reported higher negative emotions and higher perceptions of unfairness of the promotion procedures than those informed that a proportionate number of minorities received promotions. Group outcomes did not have a significant effect on respondents' attitudes toward the program nor their level of organizational commitment.

Hypotheses 4a and 4b proposed that backlash reactions would be stronger for unfavorable personal and group outcomes in the scenarios with an affirmative action justification than those with a diversity management justification. Although the addition of the two-way interactions (Justification \times Personal outcome and Justification \times Group outcome) did not explain significant variance, the beta was significant for a Justification \times Personal outcome interaction on attitudes toward the program. The lack of a significant change in R^2 may have been due to the sample size and the number of two-way interactions included in the regression analyses. To assess this possibility, we conducted a simple MANOVA with program justification and personal outcome as factors, and found that the interaction was significant with attitude toward program as the dependent variable ($F = 5.33, p < .05$). An examination of the means revealed that for the affirmative action scenarios, all respondents held a rather negative attitude towards the diversity program: respondents who did not get the promotion ($M = 2.73$) did not differ in attitude toward program from respondents who did get the promotion ($M = 2.71$). However, respondents who received the diversity management justification and the promotion reported significantly more favorable attitudes toward the program ($M = 3.63$) than the respondents who received the diversity management justification but who did not receive the promotion ($M = 2.95$).

Lastly, we examined whether there were differences in attitudes toward the program for respondents who received the promotion, but members of their ethnic group appeared to lose promotion opportunities (disproportionate group outcome). A t-test revealed significantly less favorable attitudes toward program in the affirmative action scenarios when the individual was promoted but members of his/her ethnic group were not proportionately promoted ($M = 2.70$) compared to respondents in the diversity management scenarios that received promotions but members of his/her ethnic group were not proportionately promoted ($M = 3.70$).

The International Journal of Conflict Management, Vol. 15, No. 1

Overall, these additional analyses indicate that respondents were not simply reacting to their personal outcome, but were also affected by the type of justification presented for the diversity program and whether members of their ethnic group were also promoted.

Finally, hypotheses 5 and 6 predicted that gender and orientation toward other ethnic groups would moderate the relationships between program justification, personal and group outcomes, and backlash reactions. These two hypotheses were not supported for all four dependent variables. However, the main effect of gender was significant for the backlash indicator of attitude toward the type of program. Overall, female participants in the study reported more positive attitudes toward the specific diversity program, regardless of whether the program justification was presented as affirmative action or diversity management.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to extend our understanding of whites' backlash reactions to diversity efforts in organizations and examine how the diversity program justification for a recruitment and retention program for minorities may influence the extent of backlash. In addition, we examined how personal and group outcome favorability affected backlash, as well as the potential moderator effects of gender and orientation toward other ethnic groups on these predicted relationships.

The results of our study demonstrated that the type of justification for a workplace initiative for minorities did influence the extent of white backlash reported by respondents. Backlash in the form of less favorable attitudes toward the diversity program were stronger for an affirmative action justification than a diversity management justification. However, the affirmative action justification did not engender stronger backlash reactions in the form of emotional reactions, justice perceptions, and organizational commitment. Examinations of the mean level of negative emotions for the two types of justification indicate relatively low levels (1.48 for affirmative action and 1.58 for diversity management) reported by respondents in the study. The brevity of the description of the program and the hypothetical nature of a scenario study may have contributed to a lack of significant findings for emotional reactions. We suggest that future studies on reactions to diversity initiatives in organizational settings consider the measurement of emotional reactions as an indicator of backlash, as previous work has acknowledged the existence of "white rage" (Friedman & Davidson, 2001; Skitka, Winstock, & Hutchinson, 2003). With regard to the non-significant findings for perceptions of unfairness and organizational commitment, it may be that these types of backlash reactions are not as close in psychological proximity as attitudes specifically targeted at the program described in our scenarios. Program justification may be more proximally related to perceptions of fairness of the program itself, not broader selection procedures. Similarly, the focus of commitment we chose to measure may have been too distal of a dependent variable. Becker (1992) has shown that individuals have multiple foci of commitment and suggested that researchers attempt to match the focus of their independent variable with the focus of their dependent variable. Future studies that examine diversity program justification may want to

consider identification with top management or commitment to supervisor as possible measures of backlash reactions rather than the more global organizational commitment.

The results of our study confirmed the importance of examining outcome favorability when studying backlash reactions. Individuals that did not receive a promotion reported significantly more negative emotions, less favorable attitudes toward the diversity program, greater perceptions of unfairness of selection procedures, and less organizational commitment.

While prior research in the justice literature has shown that outcomes shape people's perceptions of procedural fairness (Skitka et al., 2003), our study demonstrates that there are other important affective and cognitive attitudinal responses. In the diversity literature, most studies examine respondents' racial group and gender as predictors of their opposition to diversity programs (Kravitz & Klineberg, 2000), but the results of our study highlight the importance of examining personal outcomes. Future research on backlash in organizational settings may want to ask respondents about their promotion history or their beliefs about their ability to receive a promotion in light of diversity programs being implemented in their organizations.

Our study also showed that group-level outcomes affected backlash reactions. Specifically, when minorities received a disproportionately high number of promotions, the subjects in our study indicated an affect-based emotional response and a cognitive-based fairness response in the predicted direction. As McLean Parks and Banas (1996) point out, threats to group identity may affect individuals both emotionally as well as in terms of rational, equity calculations. It was surprising that group-level outcomes did not significantly affect the respondents' specific attitude toward the diversity-related program or reports of organizational commitment. While the subjects in our study may be concerned over group-level outcomes, this concern does not seem to manifest itself into specific backlash reactions toward the diversity initiative or more global reactions of attachment to an organization.

In our study, we suggested that a positive orientation toward other ethnic groups would mitigate the effects of diversity program justification, personal, and group-level outcome favorability on reports of backlash. What we found instead was that the subjects in our study who differed with respect to their comfort level and interaction with people from other ethnic groups reported similar levels of emotions, attitudes toward the diversity program, perceptions of unfairness of selection procedures, and organizational commitment, regardless of program justification, outcome favorability, and group distributive justice. Although individuals may be motivated to learn and interact with other ethnic groups, it may not prevent them from reacting with self-interest when it comes to organizational initiatives favoring other identity groups. Our choice of measure may have also influenced the results in the study. Perhaps employees' specific experience with diversity in their work groups (e.g., extent of work experience in heterogeneous versus homogeneous groups and the quality of that experience) rather than a general orientation toward other ethnic groups would be a better individual-level variable to examine as a moderator of these relationships. Future research may also want to consider an

individual's own ethnic identity as a potential moderator since recent research has found that individuals with strong ethnic identity respond more favorably to organizations that value diversity (Kim & Gelfand, 2003). Our findings with respect to personal and group outcome favorability also suggest that future work on attitudes toward diversity programs should examine the extent of individuals' self- and group-interest as explanatory variables (Bobocel et al., 2001).

Our study did not provide support for gender differences in backlash reactions based on type of justification for a diversity program, nor personal and group outcome favorability. In general, however, females reported more positive attitudes than males toward the diversity-related programs for minorities. This finding confirms previous research with regard to reactions toward affirmative action (Beaton & Tougas, 2001; Kravtiz & Plantania, 1993) and extends the finding to programs framed under a diversity management justification. While white women may appreciate the importance of initiatives that help create a more diverse workforce, they may react similarly to white males in terms of potential backlash reactions when diversity programs exclude them as participants or when they do not receive promotions or members of their ethnic group do not receive promotions. Fernandez (1999) proposed that over the last decade, white women have realized that they are competing against people of color for promotion opportunities and may identify more with the perspective of white males than minority group members.

In sum, our study contributed to the diversity literature by examining a broader set of variables as predictors of backlash reactions and also exploring multiple types of reactions as manifestations of backlash. We found that outcome favorability had the largest impact on negative emotions, program justification had the most significant effect on attitude toward the program, group-level outcome favorability had the greatest influence on perceptions of unfairness of the selection procedures, and personal outcome favorability had the most significant effect on organizational commitment.

Implications

We offer several implications for managers confronting issues of potential backlash reactions to diversity efforts in the workplace. In general, providing a pro-business justification appears to result in more favorable support of a program for recruitment and retention of minorities than an affirmative action justification. Organizations that can effectively communicate the business advantages of a diverse workforce may be able to ameliorate the development of unfavorable attitudes toward diversity initiatives among white employees. However, putting a new "spin" on the need for programs for minorities will not necessarily be enough to avoid some types of backlash in the workplace. According to cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), individuals feel discomfort when their actions violate their values. In this case, if an individual does not believe in the value of diversity initiatives that are being espoused by his/her top management, then this discomfort may manifest itself in the form of backlash. This finding emphasizes the importance of assessing employees' attitudes toward workplace diversity before any initiative is implemented. Understanding whether employees hold positive or negative attitudes about the value of diversity for organizational effectiveness would help in

the design of potential diversity awareness training programs and the formulation of education and communication plans associated with diversity initiatives (Roberson, Kulik, & Pepper, 2003). For example, Ely and Thomas (2001) emphasize the importance of understanding a group's "diversity perspective", which is group members' "normative beliefs and expectations about cultural diversity and its role in their work group" (p. 234). Diversity training that emphasizes an integration-and-learning perspective to diversity where diversity is thought of as a resource for learning and adaptive change may help all employees feel valued and respected, and enhance group functioning (Ely & Thomas, 2001). In addition, even if employees value diversity, they may not necessarily know how to manage a team of diverse individuals well. Training should incorporate strategies on how to utilize diverse perspectives among group members to produce more effective solutions (Arnold, 1997).

In addition, managers should take into consideration the fact that personal and group outcome favorability influence important workplace reactions. Organizations that plan to increase their identity-conscious practices in an effort to promote a positive diversity climate should ensure that standards for performance and qualifications for promotions are clearly communicated in the organization. When diversity policies are introduced, uncertainty may increase about the impact of those policies on the evaluation of personnel. Members of the majority culture may feel that they are being evaluated differently from those participating in a diversity-related program or benefiting from a diversity-related policy (Swanson, 2002). In addition, supervisors may be able to play a critical role in alleviating backlash reactions if they hold honest feedback sessions with employees about promotion decisions so that external and often inaccurate attributions are not placed upon diversity initiatives as reasons why white employees do not receive promotions.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study is not without limitations. Most importantly, while scenarios are useful tools for transmitting complex problems in a controllable way, they are role-playing situations rather than actual experiences. It is possible that the subjects in our study may react differently to the justification of diversity initiatives, and personal and group-level outcome favorability, if it were to happen in their actual workplace rather than in a hypothetical scenario. Future research should examine the prevalence of backlash and the factors that may influence levels of backlash within organizations that have a variety of diversity initiatives. For example, the methods of communication about the diversity initiative (e.g., supervisor, organizational newsletter, e-mail from HR director, etc.) may influence how employees respond. Also, perceptions of the amount of resources allocated to the initiative and level of top management support may affect attitudes toward a particular program.

Another limitation of our scenario study may have been the descriptions used in the scenarios. While we did conduct numerous pre-tests and manipulation checks to ensure the scenarios effectively captured the independent variables, it is still possible that the wording of the scenarios may have been unparallel in an area that we did not measure such as positive or negative tone of the scenario. This lack

of parallelism may have contributed to the error in measurement of our variables, which reduced the possibility for significant findings.

In this study, backlash was measured through assessments of emotional reactions, attitude toward the diversity-related program, perceptions of unfairness of promotion procedures, and commitment to an organization. More research is needed on the operationalization of the construct of backlash and whether these negative reactions have adverse consequences for the diversity climate of an organization. For example, is white backlash toward diversity initiatives in an organization more likely to manifest itself in heterogeneous versus homogeneous work groups (e.g., greater group conflict, less cohesiveness)? Future studies should also explore other indicators of backlash such as heightened levels of discriminatory behavior. For example, white backlash could present itself in the form of biases in performance evaluations of minorities, negative opinions of participants in diversity programs, and less respectful treatment (interactional justice) of minorities (Yoder, 1991). In addition, organizational commitment is a measure of behavioral intentions rather than actual behavior. Individuals may feel or express attitudes and emotions towards diversity initiatives and state they would alter their behaviors, while in reality their behaviors may not in fact change. Future research measuring actual behaviors following the implementation of a diversity program in an organization would help address this concern. Examining turnover, decreases in work quality, and organizational citizenship behaviors may be fruitful areas for investigation (Skitka et al., 2003). Finally, our analysis was intentionally limited to whites only. Future work should include members of other ethnic groups as Kravitz and Klineberg (2000) have found that there are important differences in predictors of attitudes toward various types of affirmative action programs for different ethnic groups.

Conclusion

Backlash toward diversity initiatives in the workplace is a potentially destructive reaction to workplace experiences of diversity and represents second-order diversity conflict. While discrimination represents first-order conflict, second-order conflict refers to disputes over remedies designed to eliminate discrimination (Friedman & Davidson, 2001). Second-order diversity conflicts are less understood and may escalate conflict between people of different identity groups. Framing diversity programs in terms of a business necessity may not be enough to mitigate the negative conflict associated with identity groups in organizations. In addition, knowing that individuals are concerned with personal and identity-group outcomes is helpful in understanding the conflict that can occur when diversity initiatives are introduced in the workplace. As more organizations contemplate the implementation of organizational practices for minorities and historically lower status identity groups, it is important to understand the various reactions that may occur from historically higher status identity groups. It is hoped that this study will spark future research in this area.

References

- Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Arnold, J. (1997). *Managing careers into the 21st century*. London: Paul Chapman.
- Beaton, A. M., & Tougas, F. (2001). Reactions to affirmative action: Group membership and social justice. *Social Justice Research, 14*, 61–78.
- Becker, T. E. (1992). Foci and bases of commitment: Are they distinctions worth making? *Academy of Management Journal, 35*, 232–244.
- Bies, R. J. (1987). The predicament of injustice: The management of moral outrage. In L. L. Cummings & B. M. Staw (Eds.), *Research in organizational behavior* (Vol. 9, pp. 289–319). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Bies, R. J., & Moag, J. S. (1986). Interactional justice: Communications criteria of fairness. In R. J. Lewicki, B. H. Sheppard, & M. Bazerman (Eds.), *Research on negotiation in organizations* (Vol. 1, pp. 43–55). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Bobocel, D. R., Son Hing, L. S., Davey, L. M., Stanley, D. J., & Zanna, M. P. (2001). Justice-based opposition to social policies: Is it genuine? *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 75*, 643–669.
- Bond, M. A., & Pyle, J. L. (1998). Diversity dilemmas at work. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 7*, 252–269.
- Brewer, M. B., & Brown, R. J. (1998). Intergroup relations. In D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (4th ed., vol. 2, pp. 554–594). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Brief, A. P., & Buttram, R. T. (1997). Beyond good intentions: The next steps toward racial equality in the American workplace. *Academy of Management Executive, 11*, 59–73.
- Brockner, J. (1988). The effects of work layoffs on survivors: Research theory, and practice. In B. M. Staw & L. L. Cummings (Eds.), *Research in organizational behavior* (Vol. 10, pp. 213–255). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Cobb, A. T., Stephens, C., & Watson, G. (2001). Beyond structure: The role of social accounts in implementing ideal control. *Human Relations, 54*, 1123–1153.
- Cox, T. H. (1993). *Cultural diversity in organizations: Theory, research and practice*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Cox, T. H., & Blake, S. (1991). Managing cultural diversity: Implications for organizational competitiveness. *Executive, 5*, 45–50.
- Cropanzano, R. (1993). (Ed.) *Justice in the workplace: Approaching fairness in human resource management*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Cropanzano, R., Byrne, Z. S., Bobocel, D. R., & Rupp, D. R. (2001). Moral virtues, fairness heuristics, social entities, and other denizens of organizational justice. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 58*, 164–209.
- Crosby, F., & Gonzalez-Intal, A. M. (1984). Relative deprivation and equity theories: Felt injustice and the undeserved benefits of others. In R. Folger (Ed), *The sense of injustice: Social psychological perspectives* (pp. 141–166). New York: Plenum Press.
- Ely, R. J., & Thomas, D. A. (2001). Cultural diversity at work: The effects of diversity perspectives on work group processes and outcomes. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 46*, 229–273.

The International Journal of Conflict Management, Vol. 15, No. 1

- Fernandez, J. P. (1999). *Race, gender, and rhetoric*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Festinger, L. A. (1957). *Theory of cognitive dissonance*. Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson.
- Friedman, R. A., & Davidson, M. N. (2001). Managing diversity and second-order conflict. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 12, 132–153.
- Galen, M., & Palmer, A. T. (1994, January 31). White, male, and worried. *Business Week*, pp. 50–55.
- Gates, D., & Cose, E. (1993, March 29). White male paranoia. *Newsweek*, p. 48.
- Gilbert, J. A., Stead, B. A., & Ivancevich, J. M. (1999). Diversity management: A new organizational paradigm. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 21, 61–76.
- Gottfredson, L. S. (1992). Dilemmas in developing diversity programs. In S. E. Jackson (Ed.), *Diversity in the workplace: Human resources initiatives* (pp. 279–305). New York: Guilford Press.
- Graves, L. M., & Powell, G. N. (1994). Effects of sex-based preferential selection and discrimination on job attitudes. *Human Relations*, 47, 133–157.
- Heilman, M. E., McCullough, W. F., & Gilbert, D. (1996). The other side of affirmative action: Reactions of nonbeneficiaries to sex-based preferential selection. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 81, 346–357.
- Jackson, S. E., & Alvarez, E. B. (1992). Working through diversity as a strategic imperative. In S. E. Jackson (Ed.), *Diversity in the workplace: Human resources initiatives* (pp. 13–29). New York: Guilford Press.
- James, K. (1993). The social context of organizational justice: Cultural, intergroup, and structural effects on justice behaviors and perceptions. In R. Cropanzano (Ed.), *Justice in the workplace: Approaching fairness in human resource management* (pp. 21–50). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (1988). Prospect theory: An analysis of decision under risk. In P. Gaerdenfors & N. E. Sahlin (Eds.), *Decision, probability, and utility: Selected readings* (pp. 183–214). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kim, S. S., & Gelfand, M. J. (2003). The influence of ethnic identity on perceptions of organizational recruitment. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 63, 396–416.
- Konrad, A. M. & Linnehan, F. (1995). Race and sex differences in line managers' reactions to equal employment opportunity and affirmative action interventions. *Group & Organization Management*, 20, 409–439.
- Kravitz, D. A. (1995). Attitudes toward affirmative action plans directed at blacks: Effects of plan and individual differences. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 25, 2192–2220.
- Kravitz, D. A., Harrison, D. A., Turner, M. E., Levine, E. L., Chaves, W., Brannick, M. T., Denning, D. L., Russell, C. J., & Conrad, M. A. (1997). *Affirmative action: A review of psychological and behavioral research*. Bowling Green, OH: Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology.
- Kravitz, D. A., & Klineberg, S. L. (2000). Reactions to two versions of affirmative action among Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85, 597–611.

- Kravitz, D. A., & Platania, J. (1993). Attitudes and beliefs about affirmative action: Effects of target and of respondent sex and ethnicity. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 78*, 928–938.
- Lee, C., & Farh, J. (1999). The effects of gender in organizational justice perception. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 20*, 133–143.
- Levine, J. M., & Moreland, R. L. (1987). Social comparison and outcome evaluation in group contexts. In J. C. Masters & W. P. Smith (Eds.), *Social comparison, social justice, and relative deprivation* (pp. 105–127). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Lind, E. A., & Tyler, T. R. (1988). *The social psychology of procedural justice*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Linnehan, F., & Konrad, A. M. (1999). Diluting diversity: Implications for intergroup inequality in organizations. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 8*, 399–414.
- Little, B. L., Murry, W. D., & Wimbush, J. C. (1998). Perceptions of workplace affirmative action plans: A psychological perspective. *Group & Organization Management, 23*, 27–47.
- Lynch, F. R. (1989). *Invisible victims: White males and the crisis of affirmative action*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Lynch, F. R. (1997). *The diversity machine: The drive to change the "white male workplace."* New York: Free Press.
- Major, B., Bylsma, W. H., & Cozzarelli, C. (1989). Gender differences in distributive justice preferences: The impact of domain. *Sex Roles, 21*, 487–497.
- McCullough, M. A., Berry, L. L., & Yadav, M. S. (2000). An empirical investigation of customer satisfaction after service failure and recovery. *Journal of Service Research, 3*, 121–137.
- McLean Parks, J., & Banas, J. (1996, June). *Backlash fact or fiction? A theoretical model of employee reactions to diversity training*. Paper presented at the International Association for Conflict Management annual conference, Ithaca, NY.
- Mobley, M., & Payne, T. (1992). Backlash! The challenge to diversity training. *Training & Development, 46* (2), 45–52.
- Nemetz, P. L., & Christensen, S. (1996). The challenge of cultural diversity: Harnessing a diversity of views to understand multiculturalism. *Academy of Management Review, 21*, 434–462.
- O'Reilly, C. A., & Chatman, J. (1986). Organizational commitment and psychological attachment: The effects of compliance, identification, and internalization on prosocial behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 71*, 492–499.
- Opatow, S. (1996). Affirmative action, fairness, and the scope of justice. *Journal of Social Issues, 52*, 19–24.
- Parker, C. P., Baltes, B. B., & Christiansen, N. D. (1997). Support for affirmative action, justice perceptions, and work attitudes: A study of gender and racial-ethnic group differences. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 82*, 376–389.
- Phinney, J. S. (1992). The multigroup ethnic identity measure: A new scale for use with diverse groups. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 7*, 156–176.
- Phinney, J. S. (1996). When we talk about American ethnic groups, what do we mean? *American Psychologist, 51*, 918–927.

- Richard, O. (2000). Racial diversity, business strategy, and firm performance. A resource-based view. *Academy of Management Journal*, *43*, 164–177.
- Richard, O. C., & Kirby, S. L. (1998). Women recruits' perceptions of workforce diversity program selection decisions: A procedural justice examination. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *28*, 183–188.
- Ridgeway, C. L. (1991). The social construction of status value: Gender and other nominal characteristics. *Social Forces*, *70*, 367–386.
- Roberson, L., Kulik, C. T., & Pepper, M. B. (2003). Using needs assessment to resolve controversies in diversity training design. *Group & Organization Management*, *28*, 148–174.
- Russell, C. J., & Bobko, P. (1992). Moderated regression analysis and likert scales: Too coarse for comfort. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *77*, 336–342.
- Scott, M. B., & Lyman, S. M. (1968). Accounts. *American Sociological Review*, *33*, 46–62.
- Shapiro, D. (1991). The effects of explanations on negative reactions to deceit. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *36*, 614–30.
- Sidanius, J., Devereux, E., & Pratto, F. (2001). A comparison of symbolic racism theory and social dominance theory as explanations for racial policy attitudes. *Journal of Social Psychology*, *132*, 377–395.
- Skitka, L. J., Winkler, J., & Hutchinson, S. (2003). Are outcome fairness and outcome favorability distinguishable psychological constructs? A meta-analytic review. *Social Justice Research*, *16*, 309–341.
- Smith, K. K. (1982). *Groups in conflict: Prisons in disguise*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall-Hunt.
- Society for Human Resource Management/Commerce Clearing House Survey on Diversity. (1993). *Diversity management is culture change, not just training*. Alexandria, VA: Society for Human Resource Management.
- Solomon, C. M. (1991). Are white males being left out? *Personnel Journal*, *70*, 88–90.
- Swanson, D. R. (2002). Diversity programs: Attitude and realities in the contemporary corporate environment. *Corporate Communications*, *7*, 257–268.
- Sweeney, P. D., & McFarlin, D. B. (1997). Process and outcome: Gender differences in the assessment of justice. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *18*, 83–98.
- Swim, J. K., & Miller, D. L. (1999). White guilt: Its antecedents and consequences for attitudes toward affirmative action. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin*, *25*, 500–514.
- Tajfel, H. (1982). *Social identity and intergroup relations*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 7–24). Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- Tata, J. (2000). She said, he said. The influence of remedial accounts on third-party judgments of coworker sexual harassment. *Journal of Management*, *26*, 1133–1156.

- Tata, J., & Bowes-Sperry, L. (1996). Emphasis on distributive, procedural, and interactional justice: Differential perceptions of men and women. *Psychological Reports, 79*, 1327–1330.
- Tornblom, K. Y., & Vermunt, R. (1999). An integrative perspective on social justice: Distributive and procedural fairness evaluations of positive and negative outcome allocations. *Social Justice Research, 12*, 39–64.
- Tyler, T. R. (1989). The psychology of procedural justice: A test of the group value model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 57*, 830–838.
- Watson, D., Clark, L. A., & Tellegen, A. (1988). Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: The PANAS scales. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 54*, 1063–1070.
- Weick, K. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Wheeler, M. J. (1994). *Diversity training: A research report*. New York: Conference Board.
- Yakura, E. K. (1996). EEO law and managing diversity. In E. E. Kossek & S. A. Lobel (Eds.), *Managing diversity: Human resource strategies for transforming the workplace* (pp. 25–50). Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Yoder, J. D. (1991). Rethinking tokenism: Looking beyond numbers. *Gender and Society, 5*, 178–192.

APPENDIX A

Scenario Manipulations

(Note: Text that varied by scenario is in *italics*)

Please read the following scenario, then respond to the questions that follow.

For the past six years, you have been a mid-level manager at Nixell Corporation, a computer software company employing about 1,200 people across the United States. Nixell Corporation was founded in the mid-1980's by Chris Johnson and Sandy Thomas, both graduates of your MBA program. Nixell Corporation's headquarters are located in Chicago. Last year, Nixell reported 8.4 billion dollars in revenue and 1.2 billion in net income. The company enjoys consistently strong consumer demand and projects reaching 15% of the US market share by the year 2001. Nixell common stock (NXL) was first listed on the New York Stock Exchange in 1985 and is also traded on the Chicago, Boston, and Philadelphia exchanges. During its history, the company has been awarded over 800 patents and is considered to be a leader in environmental responsibility.

Affirmative-action justification	Diversity management justification
<p><i>Co-founders Chris and Sandy are concerned about meeting affirmative action goals to meet Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) guidelines for minority representation in upper management. Because of this, they have implemented an affirmative action program to actively seek, hire and promote minority group members.</i></p>	<p><i>Because the company's customer base has become increasingly diverse, co-founders Chris and Sandy feel that it is important to have employees who reflect this diversity and know and understand this customer base. Although Nixell does not have an affirmative action program, they have voluntarily implemented a diversity initiative to actively seek, hire and promote minority group members.</i></p>

The International Journal of Conflict Management, Vol. 15, No. 1

Last month you found out that you are in line for one of a number of regional manager positions to be filled. Many new positions were created due to a recent expansion into the Western U.S.

Positive personal outcome favorability manipulation:	Negative personal outcome favorability manipulation:
<i>This morning, you were happy to find out that you received one of the 10 regional manager positions.</i>	<i>This morning, you were disappointed to find out that you did not receive one of the 10 regional manager positions.</i>

About 10% of managers in the company are minorities.

Positive group outcome favorability manipulation:	Negative group outcome favorability manipulation:
<i>You noticed that 90% of the positions went to a white manager and 10% went to minority managers.</i>	<i>You noticed that only 60% of the positions went to white managers, while 40% of the positions went to minority managers.</i>

Positive personal outcome favorability manipulation, continued:	Negative personal outcome favorability manipulation, continued:
<i>You're glad to see that your hard work was appreciated, and look forward to your new assignment in Portland, Oregon.</i>	<i>You wish that your hard work had been more appreciated, as you were looking forward to moving out West.</i>

APPENDIX B
Principal Axis Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation

Variable Items	Factor Loadings ¹				
	1	2	3	4	5
Negative Emotions ($\alpha = .90$)					
Distressed	.69				
Upset	.90				
Hostile	.74				
Irritable	.77				
Attitude toward Program ($\alpha = .80$)					
The affirmative action/diversity management program at this program is a good policy.				.73	
I would not like to work for a company with such an affirmative action/diversity management program. (R)				.71	
All in all, I oppose affirmative action/diversity management programs in industry for minorities. (R)				.69	

Appendix B cont.**Perceived Unfairness of Promotion****Procedures** ($\alpha = .87$)

The regional manager promotion decisions in this company were fair. (R)	.67
The way Nixell decides who gets promoted is unfair.	.59
The procedures used to decide who gets promoted in this company are fair. (R)	.84
Nixell's promotion decisions were unfair.	.78

Organizational Commitment ($\alpha = .82$)

I would feel a sense of "ownership" for this company.	.68
I would be proud to tell others that I work for Nixell.	.69
I would talk up Nixell to my friends as a great organization to work for.	.62

Other Group Orientation ($\alpha = .77$)

I like meeting and getting to know people from ethnic groups other than my own.	.73
I often spend time with people from ethnic groups other than my own.	.66
I am involved in activities with people from other ethnic groups.	.61
I enjoy being with people from ethnic groups other than my own.	.77

¹Factor loadings under .40 not reported. (R) = Scales for these items were reverse coded.

Received: November 14, 2002

Accepted after three revisions: April 4, 2004



Biographic Sketches

Frances Brew received her Ph.D. in cross-cultural organizational psychology at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. She lectures in cross-cultural psychology at undergraduate and postgraduate levels at Macquarie University and in organizational behavior at the Sydney Institute of Business and Technology. She has published and presented at national and international conferences in the area of conflict management in the international workplace. Her current research interests include the role of facework in intercultural conflict and the issue of career progression for migrant groups in Australia. (Fran.Brew@psy.mq.edu.au)

David Cairns is a Senior Lecturer in the Psychology Department of Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. He teaches statistics at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and has supervised over 50 postgraduate students. He has over 55 research publications and over 30 national and international conference presentations. His publications are mainly in the areas of health psychology, medical clinical trials, and statistics. His research interests are mainly methodological aspects of psychology especially exploratory multivariate graphical procedures and Facet Theory. Currently, he is president of the International Facet Theory Association. (dcairns@psy.mq.edu.au)

Shu-cheng Chi (Ph.D. SUNY-Buffalo) is a Professor at the Department of Business Administration of National Taiwan University. His research focuses on how social/cultural contexts in Taiwan or in China affect processes and outcomes within organizations. (n136@mba.ntu.edu.tw)

Carsten De Dreu (Ph.D., University of Groningen) is Professor and Chair of organizational psychology at the University of Amsterdam, and scientific director of the Kurt Lewin Graduate School for Social Psychology. He served as president of the International Association for Conflict Management, and currently serves as associate editor for the *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. His research is concerned with psychological processes in conflict and negotiation, in group decision making, and in creativity and innovation. (c.k.w.dedreu@uva.nl)

Maria Dijkstra is a Ph.D. candidate in organizational psychology at the University of Amsterdam. Her research interests are in the area of work motivation, conflict, and occupational health. (m.t.m.dijkstra@uva.nl)

Raymond A. Friedman (Ph.D. University of Chicago) is an Associate Professor of Management at Vanderbilt University. His research interests include conflict management, negotiation, managing diversity, and Chinese approaches to conflict and negotiation. He is the author of one book (*Front Stage, Backstage: The Dramatic Structure of Labor Negotiations*) and numerous academic journal articles. (ray.friedman@owen.vanderbilt.edu)

Deborah L. Kidder is an Associate Professor in the Department of Management at Towson University. Her Ph.D. is in Industrial Relations from the University of Minnesota. Her research interests involve issues of trust and equity, perceptions of (un)fairness at work, and the consequences of (un)fair treatment for employees and organizations. (dkidder@towson.edu)

Melanie J. Lankau is an Assistant Professor of Management at the Terry College of Business, University of Georgia. She earned her Ph.D. at the University of Miami. Her area of expertise is in organizational behavior. She teaches and conducts research on leadership, mentorship, team process, and diversity in the workplace. (mlankau@terry.uga.edu)

Donna Chrobot-Mason is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of Colorado at Denver. She earned her Ph.D. from the University of Georgia in 1997 and worked in human resources at Xerox Corporation for 4 years. Donna conducts research in identity development, diversity management, and leadership across differences. (dchrobot@carbon.cudenver.edu)

Kelly Mollica is a Consultant and Trainer with the Centre Group in Memphis and an instructor at Bethel College in McKenzie, Tennessee. She has a Ph.D. in business administration from Penn State University. Kelly taught organizational behavior, human resource management, and negotiation skills while on the faculty at the Babcock Graduate School of Management at Wake Forest University. (kmollica@frontiernet.net)

Hwa-Hwa Tsai is a Ph.D. student in National Taiwan University and an instructor in the Department of Business Administration of Chung Hua University of Taiwan. Her research interests include conflict management, dispute resolution, and organizational justice system. (hwahwa@chu.edu.tw)

Ming-Hong Tsai is an MBA graduate of National Taiwan University. His research interests include goal orientation, feedback seeking, and the effects of Chinese personality traits on individual behaviors. (mich23.tw@yahoo.com.tw)

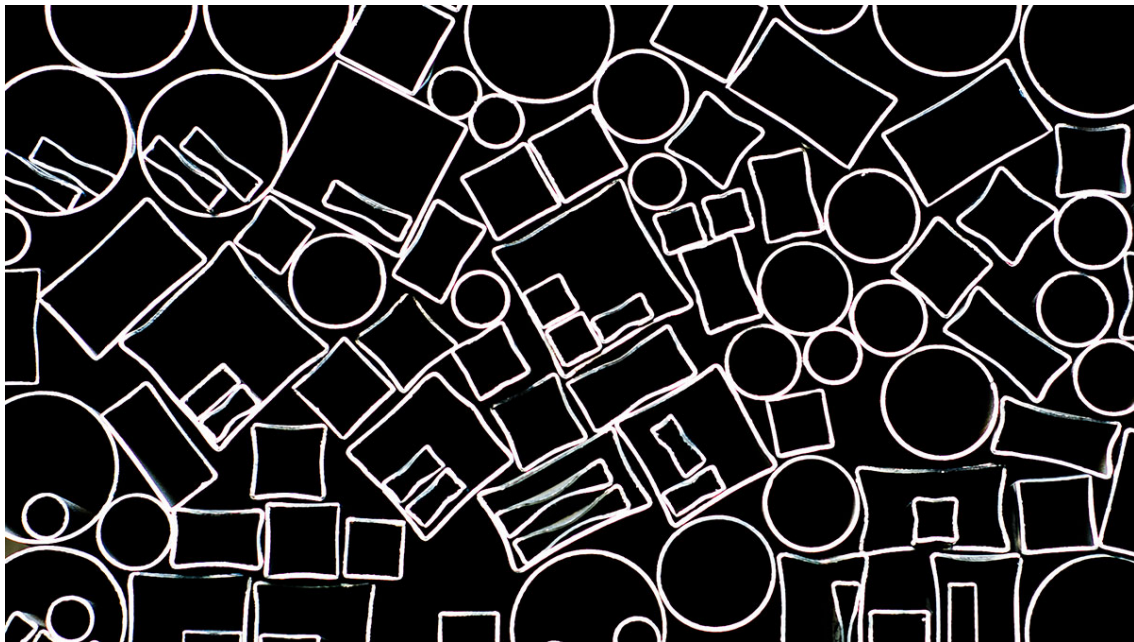
Dirk van Dierendonck (Ph.D. Utrecht University) is an Associate Professor in organizational behavior at the School of Management, Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands. At the time of collaborating on this issue, he was employed at the University of Amsterdam. His research focuses on positive organizational psychology, more particularly motivation and leadership processes. (d.vandierendonck@fbk.eur.nl)

Diversity

Women and Minorities Are Penalized for Promoting Diversity

by Stefanie K. Johnson and David R. Hekman

March 23, 2016



Roughly 85% of corporate executives and board members are white men. This number hasn't budged for decades, which suggests that white men are continuing to select and promote other white men.

It is well known that people tend to favor and promote those who are similar to them — and that this in-group bias is problematic because it reinforces stereotypes and inequality. However, while it is a

common tendency, not everyone is allowed to advocate for their own group. Sometimes when women and minorities promote their own group, it garners criticism from others.

We see this play out in all kinds of contexts. For example, both Madeleine Albright and Gloria Steinem were criticized for telling young women that they should support presidential candidate Hillary Clinton. Likewise, Rosalind Brewer, an African-American woman and Sam's Club CEO, was called racist for advocating for diversity. These widely publicized examples demonstrate that women and minorities are scrutinized when they try to favor those like them, in a way that white men are not.

This idea prompted us to examine whether women and nonwhite executives really are penalized if they help other women and minorities — and why that may be happening. In our research, recently published in the *Academy of Management Journal*, we surveyed 350 executives on several diversity-valuing behaviors — e.g., whether they respected cultural, religious, gender, and racial differences, valued working with a diverse group of people, and felt comfortable managing people from different racial or cultural backgrounds. We defined diversity-valuing behavior as that which promotes demographic balance within organizations.

By balance we mean the organizational demographic profile resembles the demographic make-up of the broader geographic area. Thus gender balance would involve a 50/50 split between men and women employees, and racial balance would involve the same percentage of minorities working within an organization as there are in the surrounding region.

Much to our surprise, we found that engaging in diversity-valuing behaviors did not benefit any of the executives in terms of how their bosses rated their competence or performance. (We collected these ratings from their 360-degree feedback surveys.) Even more striking, we found that women and nonwhite executives who were reported as frequently engaging in these behaviors were rated much *worse* by

their bosses, in terms of competence and performance ratings, than their female and nonwhite counterparts who did not actively promote balance. For all the talk about how important diversity is within organizations, white and male executives aren't rewarded, career-wise, for engaging in diversity-valuing behavior, and nonwhite and female executives actually get punished for it.

To see if we could replicate this effect, we asked 307 working adults to review a hiring decision made by a fictitious manager. Participants read a description of the hiring decision, saw a photo of the manager that revealed their race and gender, and then completed a survey where they rated the manager on competence and performance.

Participants rated nonwhite managers and female managers as less effective when they hired a nonwhite or female job candidate instead of a white male candidate. Similar to our first study, it didn't matter whether white male managers chose to hire a white male, white female, nonwhite male, or nonwhite female — there was no difference in how participants rated their competence and performance. Basically, all managers were judged harshly if they hired someone who looked like them, unless they were a white male.

So why does this happen? We know that in the U.S., there is still a power and status gap between men and women and between whites and nonwhites. High status groups, mainly white men, are given freedom to deviate from the status quo because their competence is assumed based on their membership in the high status group. In contrast, when women and nonwhite leaders advocate for other women and nonwhites, it highlights their low-status demographics, activating the stereotype of incompetence, and leads to worse performance ratings.

This has serious implications. Our set of studies suggest that it's risky for low-status group members to help others like them. And this can lead to women and minorities choosing *not* to advocate for other women and minorities once they reach positions of power, as they don't want to be perceived as incompetent, poor performers.

Our research set out to determine whether penalties against nonwhite and women leaders for engaging in diversity-valuing behavior may serve to reinforce the “glass ceiling” on achievement for these groups. We found clear and consistent evidence that women and ethnic minorities who promote diversity are penalized in terms of how others perceive their competence and effectiveness. This might help explain why nonwhite job applicants who include experiences related to their ethnicity on their resumes are more likely to be passed over for jobs — even at companies that openly value diversity.

Of course, our research does have some limitations. In the field study we measure perceptions of leaders’ diversity-valuing behavior using peer ratings rather than actually observing leaders’ behavior.

Naturally, it is possible that these evaluations are also subject to unconscious biases; however, we tried to overcome this limitation in the second study in which we manipulated leader behavior. While the experimental setting of the second study does not have the realism of the first, we believe that, together, they provide compelling evidence of these negative effects.

As organizations seek to reflect the broader societies in which they operate, increasing racial and gender balance is becoming more urgent. The harsh reality discussed here highlights the importance of putting appropriate structures and processes in place to guarantee the fair evaluation of women and minorities. The challenge of creating equality should not be placed on the shoulders of individuals who are at greater risk of being crushed by the weight of this goal.

Stefanie K. Johnson is an associate professor of management and entrepreneurship at University of Colorado’s Leeds School of Business and author of *Inclusify*. Dr. Johnson studies the intersection of leadership and diversity, focusing on how unconscious bias affects the evaluation of leaders, and strategies that leaders can use to mitigate

bias. She is a member of the MG 100 Coaches and the 2020 Thinkers50 Radar List.

DH

David R. Hekman is an associate professor of management and entrepreneurship at the University of Colorado's Leeds School of Business. His work has been published in *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, and *Organization Science*, and he is focused on improving organizational health by examining remedies for pervasive workplace racial and gender biases, sources of professional workers' motivation, and sources and outcomes of virtuous leadership. He earned his Ph.D at the University of Washington's Foster School of Business.

The only people who aren't penalized for promoting diversity at work are white men



REUTERS/ADNAN ABIDI

Bad news.

FROM OUR OBSESSION
New American Economy



By **Frida Garza**

March 25, 2016 • This article is more than 2 years old.

If we're ever going to reach gender equality, it may have to be white men who lead the charge. New research shows that managers are actively penalized for promoting diversity in the workforce, regardless of gender or race—unless they are white men.

To find out why 85% of C-level leadership positions at top companies are filled by white men, and why that number seems to be holding, David Hekman from the University of Colorado Boulder led a team of management researchers in a study that evaluated over 350 executives on how well they tried to improve the diversity of their teams.

In their study, published in the *Academy of Management Journal* (subscription), Hekman and his team evaluated the managers on their “diversity-valuing behaviors,” like hiring women and minorities, and respecting other cultures, religions, genders, based on peer reviews of their subjects.

“Much to our surprise,” Hekman and the study’s second author Stefanie Johnson write in the *Harvard Business Review*, they found two startling discoveries: First, no one gets a pat on the back for promoting diversity at work. No one, regardless of race or gender, was evaluated more positively by their bosses for advocating for more diversity in the workplace. Second, however, women and non-white executives were judged more harshly by their bosses when they did engage in “diversity-valuing” behaviors in the workplace.

Which means that the only group that isn’t punished in some way for advancing diversity in the workplace is white men.

This does not bode well for many people leading diversity initiatives. If women and people of color are vocal about these kind of issues at work, they may be second-guessed or criticized—because doing so acknowledges their low-level status, as Hekman and Johnson explain in HBR.

“We argue that diversity-valuing women and non-whites are rated lower than their non-diversity-valuing counterparts because diversity-valuing behavior activates subtle and unconscious stereotypes about women and non-whites as being less competent,” the authors write in their study.

Those stereotypes may then influence how managers review their employees’ performance and competence. On the other hand, white men enjoy a higher status, and aren’t viewed any less favorably for wanting to lend a hand to other racial or minority groups.

The results of Hekman’s second study, in which about 300 subjects looked at photos of fake hiring managers and evaluated them based on their hiring practices, were just as depressing: white manager saw “no effect on performance ratings” when they promoted diversity, the authors write. On the other hand, “among the non-white

managers, diversity-valuing behavior had a negative effect on performance ratings.”

The implication, the authors say, is that when women and minorities become high-level leaders, they may be less inclined to help other women or minorities advance their careers. The onus, then, is on managers and executives of all backgrounds to be aware of this bias and override it.

 **Kick off each morning with coffee and the Daily Brief (BYO coffee).**

Enter your email

By providing your email, you agree to the [Quartz Privacy Policy](#).

BUSINESS

A Workplace-Diversity Dilemma

What if the employees best positioned to hire undervalued minority candidates are ... white men?

BOURREE LAM APRIL 7, 2016



SHENG LI / REUTERS

Several of my female friends working in various industries have recently expressed a similar disheartening sentiment: “It’s not that I prefer male bosses, but they’re the only ones who give me opportunities and successfully fight for me.”

The first time I heard this, I was outraged, but soon I started to worry if this is a belief that actually undermines female leadership. It’s troubling in a couple of ways, but most of all, how can female managers succeed if those who report to them don’t trust their ability to navigate workplace power structures? Put more pointedly, what if talented employees prefer and benefit from male leadership because professional culture enables men to have an edge in getting things done?

One of the common strategies for achieving greater gender and racial diversity in the workplace is to promote more women and people of color to leadership roles, in the hope that such people will promote diversity from within. In theory, women

and minority leaders are likely to think about diversity more when making personnel decisions. They're also thought to be better at identifying talented but overlooked job candidates and may push for workplace policies that could enable those women and people of color to thrive.

RECOMMENDED READING

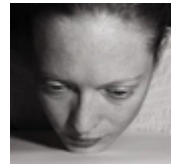
You're Gonna Miss Zoom When It's Gone

OLGA KHAZAN



Only Your Boss Can Cure Your Burnout

OLGA KHAZAN



Is this how things play it out in reality? David Hekman, an associate professor at the University of Colorado's Leeds School of Business, studies the ways businesses manage their employees, and specifically keeps an eye on gender and racial biases at work. "It always baffled me that my nonwhite and female coworkers would put up with what I perceived to be blatant racist/sexist comments in the workplace," Hekman wrote to me in an email. "It also really surprised me when women would advocate to hire a male job candidate when I thought a female candidate was clearly more qualified ... It struck me that maybe as a white man I was the only one who could advocate for women/nonwhites without suffering major career/status repercussions, even though doing so was outside my comfort zone."

So Hekman, along with researchers from the National University of Singapore and the University of Texas, decided to look into these office dynamics. He led a study that surveyed 350 U.S. executives in 26 industries on what happens when women and nonwhite executives advocate for more diversity at their companies.

To start, the researchers pored over the peer reports they collected from the colleagues of those executives. They identified a set of behaviors that they thought suggested a commitment to diversity—understanding and respecting different

cultures, valuing working with a diverse group, being comfortable managing people of diverse backgrounds—and then looked for indications of them in the reviews.

Then they looked at performance reviews from the bosses of those executives. They found that white women and nonwhite executives who, in the study's framework, valued diversity were rated as being less competent and having lower performance. In contrast, white male executives who promoted diversity experienced slightly better ratings: This group was perceived as competent regardless of whether they had made an issue of diversity. In a second study, the researchers asked a group of people to rate hiring decisions. The same dynamic turned up yet again, as participants gave bad ratings to white women and nonwhite managers when they hired white women or people of color, whereas white male managers were not judged harshly for promoting diversity of hiring from their own group.

So why is it that white women and people of color are punished for promoting diversity? Hekman says it has to do with social status. White men are a high-status group, and with that comes the freedom to make bold decisions without fear that they'll be judged as incompetent. "For the most part, whatever white men do is viewed to be normal, legitimate, and expected," says Hekman. "So if I as a white man advance diversity, people look at me weird, but they pretty much let me keep on doing it. Sure, I have to endure some teasing, but I don't lose my social status. I can still talk and voice my opinion on a variety of issues without being stereotyped as incompetent or as someone who is weird or different or illegitimate."

For anyone who's not a white man, all of this, for lack of a better word, sucks. It also might explain why some of my friends might prefer white male bosses, because they're the ones with the most agency. Women and nonwhite executives know there are professional repercussions for promoting other women or people of color, so a (natural) desire for self-preservation can keep their hands tied. "As demographically low-status individuals, women really are damned if they do help other women," says Hekman.

Stefanie Johnson, one of Hekman's co-authors on the paper and an assistant professor at the University of Colorado's business school, recommends that companies should be ensuring that a large number of women and minorities are considered for hires and promotion. She thinks unconscious-bias training might

help too. Johnson says that having a diversity policy is good, but concrete top-level actions are important because ultimately, when companies put the onus on their employees to fight for diversity, it might unfairly punish women and people of color. An unconventional policy recommendation, from the National Association of Women and Information Technology, is to put a white man in charge of a company's diversity efforts, since that person won't be punished.

But there's just one problem with that. When Hekman shared his research with his peers, they teased him. "Diversity is threatening to most white guys," said Hekman. "For example, I shared the HBR article"—he wrote an article about his research in *Harvard Business Review*—"with my basketball buddies (who are all tall white men) and the only response I got was 'Burn that bra, bro.' Basically, they feel there's a zero-sum competition between races and sexes and so they feel like I am betraying my own tribe. Maybe I am."

"But," he went on, "I think it's the right thing to do, even though it will probably make me have to work harder to maintain my position in the long run. I'm convinced breaking up the old boys' network is the best thing for society in the long run."



BOURREE LAM *is a former staff writer at The Atlantic. She was previously the editor of FREAKONOMICS.com.*

Connect

Open in app



Hillary Wen

Follow

6 Followers About

Understanding Your Power In The Workplace



Hillary Wen Aug 5, 2017 · 9 min read



This post is inspired by and dedicated to a good friend of mine who approached me raising the issue of his lack of power, authority, and influence in the work environment.

I hear these types of questions frequently, and every time they arise, it makes me smile a little because there's so much potential they've yet to discover & acknowledge.

Power isn't something you hold or keep, it's something you create. In order to own your power, you must build it yourself, and continue building it every day. Here's a personal story for you, followed by the body of the post to guide you to understanding your power within the office environment.

When I got out of college, I could have taken several different jobs. I graduated my undergrad in half the time it took everyone else to, had quite the professional experience, and one lovely tale. The options seemed endless, but I chose to start from the bottom up. Or so it seemed.

I applied as an executive assistant at a large corporation, and within a month, I held brainstorming sessions alone with the CEO, solved daily puzzles with the CFO, established a long-term friendship with the CPO, and contributed to the exclusive team leading the big new product.

Once that was over, I applied to a different, extremely different company for a similar position. The first thing I asked in the interview was, "Do you see an opportunity for me to create a role around my skills and aspirations?" They answered yes I and ended up leading much of the initiatives contributing to the transformation of the company.

I didn't take these positions because I wasn't sure what I wanted. I took those positions because I knew exactly what it is that I loved, and what it was that I still lacked. I was an absorber, and I absorbed every ounce of information and knowledge they threw at me. I knew that if I was going to start something of my own, I needed more than my skill & talent. I needed to know best practices, processes, systems, technique. And boy did I learn voraciously.

And let me tell you, I didn't feel powerless at all. I had all the information, I knew all the right people, I knew exactly what was going on. Everything that happened in the organization, I was the first to see. I had exposure to daily practices and sentiment that management didn't, and the information and knowledge that everyone outside of the management team didn't.

When I left my job, my boss told me that the management team had a meeting about me, and concluded that they were all going to work for me one day.

*I'm not here to boast, but rather to say that it's our job to understand our power. This position could have just as easily become a secretarial role — copying papers, scheduling meetings. Instead, I automated, designed, planned, created, and most importantly, **ABSORBED**. And what I absorbed was precisely the piece I needed to be where I am today.*

This is based on the work of social psychologists John French and Bertram Raven, and my observation and experiences with different types of power. Use these types of powers to assess not only your own leadership style, but also those who you follow.



1. Titular or legitimate power

This is the hierarchical *command and control* power that comes with the position, role, or title. This traditional type of power comes with the responsibility of making decisions and commanding others to follow orders, and also ensures that when a decision is made, the responsibility links back to someone.

The weakness of legitimate power is that the power follows the title, and not the person. Also, this type of power is situational, and applies only under specific conditions & environments. Legitimate power, if used exclusively, does more harm than good, and the overuse of this power generates distrust and resistance in subordinates. The managers I've seen who rely on this type of power to justify obedience and compliance are often least effective, and don't realize how unreliable the power is. These people often lead and work with high levels of insecurity, causing variance of stability in performance and leadership. If your position allows you to make important decisions, use it carefully. When exerting legitimate power, understand that the power doesn't belong to you. Try to combine this power with other types of power, and you'll find yourself in a more stable position.

Likewise, if you're working under someone who abuses this power, be sure to assess the situation before carrying out orders.

2. Coercive Power

Another type linked closely to legitimate power is coercive power, the ability to punish for noncompliance. This is perhaps the most ineffective means of power, yet used most often to strike fear. People who use this form of power set up consequences for disobedience, and force others into compliance. Variations of this power come in the forms of threatening and bullying, and lead to resentment and dissatisfaction.

While your position may allow you to punish others, the power alone doesn't give you the right or justification to do so. In fact, you could force them to leave and therefore lose that power in the process. Be careful if you overuse this power, because people often respond to threats with greater threats.

Coercive power suggests insecurity and discomfort, and therefore takes away from legitimacy. If you are a coercive power user, just know that each time you threaten

someone, you compromise trust and encourage disconnection. Make sure that's what you want because you will see immediate effects.

3. Reward Power

Perhaps the opposite of coercive power is reward power, also closely linked to legitimate power. While coercive power is the power to punish, reward power is the ability to reward. Simple, right?

Like coercive power, this is a type of conditional & short-term power, only as valid as one's position and ability to reward. Overuse of this type of power establishes high expectations for return, and focuses the subject's attention on their gains rather than the bigger picture.

Managers often take advantage of the fact that they have the right to reward their employees, and seek to control their employees by giving them a reward once a task is completed correctly. A classic case of conditioning, they establish a culture of "do this and get that." This is the type of power I've seen used most incorrectly; it's far too easy to misuse rewards, and more often than not, it heightens employee expectations, frustration, and dissatisfaction in the long-run. A quick tip: if you're going to reward your employees, take the time out to figure out what their values and desires are. One of the biggest mistakes you can make as a manager is not knowing how to properly motivate your employees. When rewards aren't perceived as valuable, your power weakens.

4. Informational Power

Knowledge is power. And having information that others want or need places you in a position of power. I'm not referring strictly to knowledge that you've assembled over the years, but also your access to information. Examples of informational power are if you know what the new title structure looks like, can access financial reports, understand approval workflows...etc.

Informational power is one of the top 3 most effective forms of power, and among the least utilized. When you have informational power, people look to you for answers and next steps. Your decision to distribute this information can serve as a catalyst for massive transformation. While you are in a position to share it, you have the options of

withholding, concealing, distorting the information, giving you the power to manipulate people, systems, opinions, and your environment. You can use this tool to help others or as a bargaining chip, but ultimately, acknowledge that it may not be your information to share. If you abuse this type of power, you may lose it.

Many people do not understand the power of information. Don't be one of them.

5. Expert Power

Expert power is very similar to informational power on many levels. It narrows in on an area of expertise, and the ability to do something better than everyone else. Like informational power, expert power is both functional and accessible. These types of power are easy to recognize by others, and therefore easy for the individual to leverage in a variety of situations. There's so much untapped potential within these non-traditional sources of power that when used correctly, gives you substantial leadership force. A high level of expertise and experience allows you to naturally gain the respect and trust of others. In other words, if you offer value in your expertise, others will look to you for leadership, making expert power an excellent foundation for leadership. This, coupled with integrity, charisma, and vision establishes you as a powerful leader beyond your expertise.

6. Referent Power

Referent power, combined with integrity and character, is the among the most effective, influential, and stable forms of power. Individuals who have referent power attract followers through charisma and the ability to connect with others on a deeper level. When I think of referent power, I think of celebrities who have the ability to start trends and influence taste & opinions.

The most important thing about referent power is character, integrity, and responsibility. Because some people are born with a natural charisma & seduction, referent power can be powerfully dangerous if abused. It could be used to alienate large groups and create trends with extreme negative impact. I'm personally very skeptical of those who rely on referent power alone.

As mentioned prior, referent power, combined with strong values, creates a foundation of respect. Add expert power to this concoction and you have yourself a

fan (Me).

7. Connection Power

This is the last on our list, but certainly not least. Connection power bears similarities with referent power and informational power, and is becoming increasingly powerful in our days of networking and finding like minds. Connection power is the ability to connect people, and also the access to connections.

When you have connection power, people look to you for guidance, for their answers. They approach you with the illusion that you have the ability to transform their future, and they're not wrong. This type of power multiplies by spreading connection and developing more power. By connecting people together, you stand at the core of people's friendships, create more friendships, and expand this vibrating frequency of network, community, and energy.

Conclusion

The most effective people and leaders understand **how** to use these different types of power, and equally important, **when** to use them.

Below are helpful questions and considerations inspired by Mindtools:

Carefully examine these types of power, and how you've used them in the past. Then create a list of ways you can use these powers to gain influence in your workplace. Be sure to assess how ready you are for these types of power, because if you're not ready, these techniques will be ineffective.

If you have used these powers in the past, analyze the expected and unexpected consequences. Were you ready for them? If not, what do you need to gain in order to use them appropriately? What will you do differently next time?

How have others used these types of power with you? What was your reaction to them? If necessary, develop a strategy to reduce someone else's illegitimate use of power over you.

Remember that you are never without power. Try to plan ahead for the next time you feel powerless. What types of power do you have, and when would they be appropriate to use? How can you be more aware of your power and when you use it?

I hope that this post will inspire my friend to discover his power at work, and also in day to day life. It's incredible how very little of our power we recognize, and far less we actually use. But beyond that, this post is meant to show us how to use our power and how **NOT** to use it. In this day, it's so easy to abuse power and use what we have to gain what we want. Use your power with integrity and have some faith in people. Your power is only as strong and the energy you use to earn it.

For the people I've seen who continuously abuse their power, I just have one question for you: why not spend that energy making positive impact and growing yourself rather than fretting over your power? If you focused on the right things, you wouldn't have to worry about your insecurity and position.

At *When Toys Age*, these are the types of questions we examine to close the gap between management & employee expectations, and align individual aspirations with the company's strategic goals. Our goal is to see potential, and the foundation of that is guiding you to understand your power and use it to build yourself and build your company.

Thank you for reading.

Warmest Regards,

H

When Toys Age

Get the Medium app

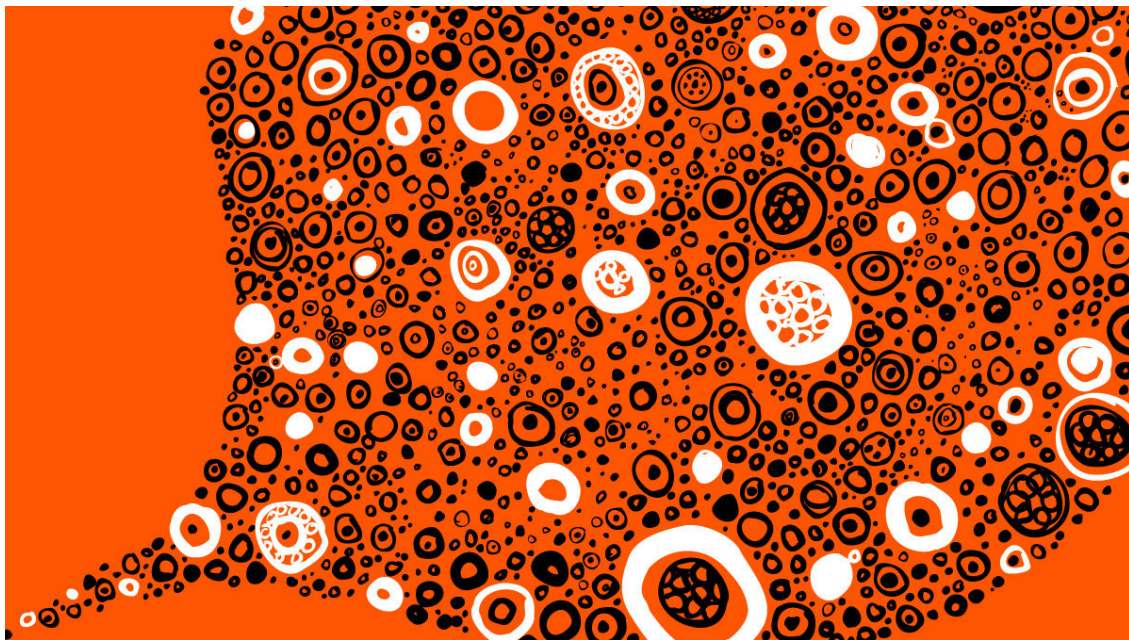


Influence

How to Increase Your Influence at Work

by Rebecca Knight

February 16, 2018



lok fung/Getty Images

Summary. To be effective in organizations today, you must be able to influence people. Here are some tips on how to position yourself as an informal leader, even if you're not a formal one. (1) Strategize. Create a "power map" — an org chart of decision makers related to the initiative you wish to promote — to guide your campaign. Think about how and when you will approach your colleagues. (2) Craft your message. Prepare a concise elevator pitch about your idea. Then, based on your map, customize your pitch, taking into account your individual colleagues' needs, perspectives, and temperaments. (3) Cultivate allies. Ask colleagues for their advice and incorporate their feedback. Enlist colleagues who are enthusiastic about your idea to serve as ambassadors. (4) Develop expertise. Stay up-to-date

about your topic area. Attend conferences, enroll in a certification program, or assume a leadership position in a professional organization. These visible steps help you become that go-to person that others look to for advice. [close](#)

To be effective in organizations today, you must be able to influence people. Your title alone isn't always enough to sway others, nor do you always have a formal position. So, what's the best way to position yourself as an informal leader? How do you motivate colleagues to support your initiatives and adopt your ideas? How can you become a go-to person that others look to for guidance and expert advice?

What the Experts Say

Having influence in the workplace has “clear value,” says Dorie Clark, author of *Entrepreneurial You*. “You get more done and you advance the projects you care about and are responsible for,” which means “you’re more likely to be noticed, get promoted, and receive raises.” But gaining influence in the modern workplace is difficult, according to Nick Morgan, author of *Power Cues*. “It’s never been harder to influence others, because they’ve never been more distracted,” he says. “Information overload and the pace of our digital lives have [led to short attention spans].” And yet, “it’s more important than ever to be able to command influence, because of the increased pressure on getting results.” It all comes down to your approach. Here are some tips.

Build connections

It’s not quite a junior high school popularity contest, but “at a fundamental level, one of the reasons that people do things for you” — support your idea, or approve your budget — “is because they like you,” Clark says. You don’t have to be “the awesome-est person in the room” or make sure “everyone is blown away by your charisma.” You just need to have good rapport with your colleagues. This won’t translate directly into influence, of course, but it does “make it more likely that others will at least hear you out.” So, work on

cultivating personal connections with your colleagues, and allow them to get to know you. “That way, they won’t impute negative intentions or motives to you.”

Listen before you try to persuade

The best way to prime colleagues for backing you and your agenda is to make them feel heard. Start by giving them your undivided attention in one-on-one situations. “Most of us walk around with a running to-do list in our heads,” Morgan says, and it shows. We’re fidgety, preoccupied, or ready to reach for our phones. Instead, you should “practice the discipline of focus.” To do this, “turn your body toward the other person, freeze in place, and listen.” Clark agrees: “A big part of workplace resentment is people feeling disrespected and that their voices aren’t being heard.” So, ask colleagues for their perspectives and advice.

Mind your body language (and your tone)

People are constantly assessing whether to trust you or not, Morgan says. “[We’re] hardwired to be asking the question, ‘Is this person a friend or foe? Is this person trying to undercut me, or are we on the same side?’” Your body language is critical to conveying the right message. Standing up straight with your shoulders back helps you come across as confident and commanding; slouching and looking down at your feet has the opposite effect. “When you adopt a certain [slumping] posture, you think in subordinate terms and you talk in subordinate terms, and it increases the likelihood that you’ll be seen as less authoritative,” Morgan says. Say, for instance, you have a meeting with a colleague you don’t know well from another division. Morgan suggests signaling that you are a friend by keeping your arms uncrossed, your hands by your sides, and “your torso open and pointed at the other person.” He also advises “pitching your voice a little lower than you normally do” in order to connote power. “This is useful to work on because it counteracts the effect of nervousness, which tends to push your tone higher.”

Develop expertise

Another way to increase your influence at work is to “be seen as a recognized expert” within your industry or organization, Clark says. This won’t happen overnight, but you can take steps to develop business-critical expertise and knowhow. She suggests “immersing yourself in your topic area” by regularly attending industry conferences, enrolling in a class or specialized certification program, or taking on a leadership role in a relevant professional organization. “Those are visible and public signs” that you are staying up-to-date and informed, she says. Don’t keep your knowledge under wraps. “Blogging about your subject on LinkedIn or for your company newsletter” is another way to show what you know.

Map a strategy

When it comes time to leverage the influence you’ve built to promote a particular initiative or idea, be strategic. Clark recommends creating a “power map” to guide your campaign. “Create an org chart of decision makers related to your issue,” she says. As you go through the levels, “ask yourself, ‘Can I influence this person directly? If not, whom can I influence who can influence that person?’” Then begin to think about how and when you will approach these various colleagues. “War-game the situation,” she says. “Who might be threatened by your plans, and how can you bring them over to your side?” You’re not scheming; you’re strategizing.

Give people what they want

You can increase your influence on a particular issue by authentically framing it as a benefit to the people you want on your side. Consider each stakeholder’s needs, perspectives, and temperaments. “Do your homework to find out what they need to hear and what will capture their attention,” Morgan says. For each person, “make sure you’re answering the question, ‘What’s in it for me?’” He also recommends talking about how an idea will “benefit the organization” as a whole. “Use the word ‘we,’ as in ‘We’ll see value,’” he says. Clark concurs. “If your proposal is fundamentally self-interested, people won’t line up.”

Principles to Remember

Do:

- Cultivate personal connections with colleagues so they assume positive intent when you attempt to influence them.
- Make it clear to your colleagues that you value their opinions.
- Take steps to develop expertise by attending conferences or taking on a leadership role in a professional organization.

Don't:

- Worry that your attempts to gain sway are manipulative. You're being strategic.
- Slouch as you talk. Standing up straight with your shoulders back helps you come across as confident and commanding.
- Use "I" too much. In your quest for influence, talk about how your ideas will benefit the entire organization and how "we" will see value.

Case Study #1: Stay current and build relationships with your colleagues so that you understand what motivates them

Marcy Shinder, chief marketing officer at Work Market, the New York City –based firm that helps businesses manage their freelancers and consultants, was working on establishing herself as an influential member of the team before she even started the job.

Before her first day of work, she arranged to meet several colleagues for informal coffees and lunches – one-on-one meetings that were “more personal, less structured, and allowed us to establish rapport.” “I went in with a listening agenda,” she explains. “I wanted to learn: What are their goals? What is important to them? What do they think is working at the company? And what do they want me to accomplish?”

Marcy made sure her body language conveyed that she was fully focused on these conversations. She sat up straight, made eye contact, and looked open and engaged. “Body language is so important — we coach salespeople on it,” she says. “I tried to listen with intent.”

Those early meetings allowed her to understand the perspectives, personalities, and motives of her colleagues, which proved to be useful when she recently had an idea to revamp the company’s website and needed their support to move forward.

Thanks to those early one-on-one conversations, she could customize her pitch to each individual. For example, with Stephen Dewitt, the CEO, she talked about the company’s vision. With Jeff Wald, the president and COO, an analytic thinker, she started with the metrics. And with the chief customer officer, she focused on the customer side.

“It is the same story, just with a different emphasis,” she says. Her efforts paid off. The new Work Market website will go live this spring.

Another way Marcy increases her influence is by staying up-to-date on industry trends and news. “I spend 25% of my time talking to customers, other chief marketing officers, people on boards of companies, potential customers, and mentoring young people,” she says. “By doing that, I stay informed and I have a finger on the pulse of what’s happening beyond the four walls of this company.”

Case Study #2: Create a message that resonates, and forge a path for others to become proponents

George Gallegos, CEO of Jitterbit, the data integration software provider based in Oakland, California, is not a top-down leader. “It’s not ‘my way or the highway,’” he says. “I want people to feel that they have a voice and are part of the decision-making process.”

In 2011, when Gallegos first started at Jitterbit, the company had about 50 customers. George knew the company's future was in the cloud, but "it was a new territory, and it was going to be a challenge," he recalls. "It required engineering resources being diverted and getting investors comfortable with that, and we had to make sure marketing could figure out how we were going to reposition ourselves."

George began strategizing about how he would win support for the change. The toughest sell was going to be "Jeff" — Jitterbit's senior technology leader — who was skeptical of the cloud.

George reflected on Jeff's personality in order to craft a message that would resonate with him. "I knew he was passionate about customer success and that — like me — he hated losing," he says. "So I knew I had to give Jeff visibility into the challenges we were facing" by maintaining the status quo.

George brought Jeff to a two-day pitch meeting with a potential Jitterbit client. "I brought him into the trenches, and I let him get bloodied up with me," George says. "I wanted him to feel the customer's pain."

Jitterbit had its first cloud-based release in 2012. Today the company has 50,000 customers.

RK

Rebecca Knight is currently a senior correspondent at Insider covering careers and the workplace. Previously she was a freelance journalist and a lecturer at Wesleyan University. Her work has been published in *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *The Financial Times*.

