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How Organizational Climates Reflect the Motives of Those in Power

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The initial intent of this chapter was to discuss how organizational climates reflect the motives of those in power. We remain somewhat on course in regard to this objective, in that the chapter discusses how some powerful leaders engender several types of climate. This discussion focuses on what is referred to as *channeling models*. As used here, channeling models begin with the hypothesis that the greater the desire for power, the greater the likelihood of engaging in political behaviors (i.e., tactics intended to accrue, exercise, and sustain influence). However, the channels through which this influence is exercised primarily are dependent on personality factors other than the need for power; that is, the expression of leaders' need for power is channeled through their other motives.

To elucidate precisely how this process works, the focus is on the channeling influence of two additional motives. First, it is argued that people who are high in need for power and are *also* aggressive will prefer influence tactics that bring harm to others, such as when leaders act as catalysts for inter-departmental conflict. The end result of this "high-high" motive profile is a toxic organizational climate wherein subordinates are exploited and competitors eliminated. Second, it is argued that people who are high in need for power but have a strong social awareness and concern for others will prefer influence tactics that bring cohesion to the group, such as when leaders act as catalysts for cooperation. The end result of this "high-low" motive profile is a developmental organizational climate wherein subordinates are nurtured.

Thus, the primary point is that a strong need for power should not be vilified as an inherently unsavory characteristic. Instead, it is posited here that the combination of a high need for power and aggressiveness engenders toxic organizational climates, which then lead to a downward spiral of political retribution and dehumanization. However, when a high need for power is coupled with a sense of concern and social awareness, climates are created that typify the very essence of what is healthy and good about effective leadership.

As we began to search the extant literature in politics to build our channeling models, it became clear that the study of organizational politics may be heading down the same road that leadership has traveled. That is, considerable effort has been devoted to documenting what it is that leaders do with little or no understanding of why they do it. In particular, the field of leadership has been strangely quiet as to what motivates people to be leaders in the first place. This is a problem because until we understand why people seek a particular objective, we will never fully understand why they engage in the behaviors that they use to obtain it (Allport, 1937; Murray, 1938).

Simply describing those who seek to exercise influence and those who do not, the methods and techniques of gaining and exercising influence, and the political skill a person has is a useful start, but not a psychologically meaningful end state (Vroom & Jago, 2007). Also, as with leadership, such a strategy will miss a main component of the essence of political behavior in organizations. So, the focus was shifted to aim at beginning to build an explanation of why, within the set of those who seek power and influence in organizations, different leaders use different influence (political) tactics.

THE DESIRE FOR POWER OR THE POWER MOTIVE

Human personality is often shaped by how people deal with basic conflicts both within and between conscious and unconscious motives (Allport, 1937; Murray, 1938; Westen, 1990, 1991). An example is the basic conflict between fight versus flight. In the face of danger or challenge, a small proportion of people are predisposed to fight whereas the majority of people are predisposed to seek safety. Over time, some of those predisposed to fight develop a fondness for fighting and hurting others, which evolves into an implicit motive to harm others. This is the basis for the aggressive personality (James & LeBreton, 2010; James et al., 2005).

In the realm of power, leadership, and organizational politics, an additional conflict is dominance versus submissiveness. Research findings have demonstrated that effective leaders often are socially skilled individuals who strive to be dominant (Foti & Hauenstein, 2007; Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002; McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982; Stricker & Rock, 1998; Veroff, 1992; Winter, 1973, 1992). These individuals want to be leaders (Chan & Drasgow, 2001) and are willing to devote years to attaining the experience and knowledge required to be effective and successful leaders (Yukl, 2009). As they gain knowledge and experience, effective leaders undergo increasing internal pressures to exert their will on decisions that determine the directions taken by their organizations (Resick, Whitman, Weingarden, & Hiller, 2009; Veroff, 1992; Winter, 1973). They believe that their organizations should follow the most rational and strategic courses of action, and they are increasingly confident that they know what these courses are (McClelland, 1985; Winter, 1992).*

On the surface, strategic decision making is pretty much as it appears. Throughout human evolution, leaders have been responsible for strategic decisions that affect the survival of their social collectives (e.g., family, clan, kingdom, government, military organization, social institution, business; see Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996; Hambrick, Finkelstein, & Mooney, 2005; Van Vugt, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2008). This broad mission is dependent on leaders' abilities to reason and solve problems in ways that engender the safety and security of the collective (e.g., protect the collective from enemies), assist the collective in acquiring resources (e.g., food, donations, raw materials, financing), promote efficient coordination and cooperation among components of the collective (e.g., design an organizational structure), oversee human relations issues (e.g., selection, promotion, administration of justice), and provide for effective delivery of a product (e.g., knowledge dissemination, art, health care, warfare, transportation, investments).

However, what is missing is an explanation of why only some people seek to exert their wills via positions of dominance in organizations when others do not. Specifically, what is it psychologically that motivates a person to seek influence and impact? Why do only some people attempt to attain positions where they can affect courses of events by influencing how people think (e.g., decisions they make), feel (e.g., how stressed are

* We have drawn liberally on a recent discussion of the power motive by James et al. (in press; to appear in Landis and Cortina). Also, we have added new material to the present discussion.

they), and act (e.g., how they perform; Foti & Hauenstein, 2007; House, Spangler, & Woycke, 1991; Judge et al., 2002; McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982; Winter, 1973)? These authors believe the answer is the need for power, often referred to as the *power motive* (Winter, 1973).

Our research, which is in the early stages, suggests that approximately 20% of people are predisposed to seek positions of influence and dominance in organizations. Underlying this tendency appears to be a desire to exert one's will over others, which draws sustenance from a sense of inner strength, forcefulness, and personal efficacy (e.g., intellectual, physical, devotional) that qualify the person to command the attention of others and to lead them (McClelland, 1985; Veroff, 1992; Winter, 1973, 1992). This is the essence of the power motive; it involves an intense desire to exert one's will over others because one is personally potent and forceful, superior in one or more ways, and thus highly qualified to influence others. It is accompanied by desires to control events or at least to have considerable influence over them. Also, it is accompanied by the desire to act effectively and to lead others to successful accomplishments (Winter, 1973).

Not surprisingly, the power motive is thought to be primarily implicit (McClelland, 1985; Veroff, 1992; Winter, 1973). Motives tend to be implicit (i.e., not accessible to introspection) because they involve desires that, if known to the possessors of the motive, would cause them to experience guilt, anxiety, disbelief, or embarrassment (Bandura, 1999; Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003; Cramer, 1998, 2000, 2006). The norms of society for socially adaptive behavior focus on personal rights, equality, egalitarian power sharing, teamwork, participative decision making, and the avoidance of selfish, self-aggrandizing activities, such as the seeking of status, privilege, entitlements, and personal power as primary goals.

Most people, including those with strong power motives, tend to internalize the ideologies and arguments that support these socially normative behaviors and beliefs as part of being socialized (James et al., 2005). Their conscious thinking about what constitutes reasonable and socially appropriate behavior in social situations, including work situations, is shaped by these internalized ideologies and arguments. It is simply not acceptable to most people with strong power motives to consciously think of themselves as having intense desires to exert their wills over others, because their inner strength, superior intelligence (or attractiveness, strength, devotion), and skills at persuasion entitle them to dominate and control others (an exception would be narcissists with strong power motives).

Nonetheless, the power motive does assert itself because people who possess the motive are strongly attracted to positions of dominance, influence, and control (Bargh & Alvarez, 2001; Chen, Lee-Chai, & Bargh, 2001; House et al., 1991; Winter, John, Stewart, Klohn, & Duncan, 1998). What makes the seeking of these positions consciously acceptable to people with strong power motives is the use of biases to cover the true driving force of their desires to exert their wills. Specifically, people with strong power motives often engage in the use of cognitive biases that allow them to disengage ideologies and arguments against the seeking of power (see Bandura, 1999 on moral disengagement), to neutralize societal norms that disapprove of the seeking of power (see Sykes & Matza, 1957 on neutralization techniques), and to build self-illusionary logical rationales (i.e., rationalizations) for seeking to control others (see the following discussion).

In the discussion that follows, these cognitive biases are referred to as *justification mechanisms* (JMs). Also, an attempt is made to show that the understanding of the power motive is perhaps best accomplished by studying the operation of the self-deceptive biases that people who possess the motive use to rationalize the seeking of power. Then, it is argued that the specific form of these self-deceptive biases influence the specific political tactics that individuals use to attain and maintain power, which in turn help to shape organizational climate.

However, first there is a need to address the fact that discussions of the power motive seldom consider the latent driving forces behind the seeking of influence. Rather, they tend to focus on the extrinsic rewards that accrue to leaders who hold positions of influence. We do not deny that extrinsic rewards play an important role in the acquisition of power; indeed, it is posited that they influence the channeling process by helping to provide a type of rational cover under which one's true motives can be concealed. Position and power bestow a leader with status, prestige, privilege, access to an unequal distribution of resources, and, frequently, enlarged wealth (Overbeck, 2010). Increases in status and prestige help to satisfy ego needs and to enhance a person's sense of self-worth (Maslow, 1954). The privileges, prestige, and resources that accrue from attaining rank and position in an authority hierarchy also are conducive to feelings of significance, pride, accomplishment, and mastery (Kipnis, 1976; see also McClelland, 1985; McClelland, Koestner, & Weinberger, 1989; Winter, 1973, 1992).

Status, prestige, privilege, unequal distributions of resources, and the like are natural byproducts of the evolutionary proclivity of humans

to arrange themselves into hierarchical authority structures (Bargh & Alvarez, 2001; McAdams & Pals, 2006; Van Vugt et al., 2008). Presumably, these incentives came about as means for the group to attract and reward competent and trustworthy people who were willing to step forward and take on the responsibilities of initiating and directing actions that promote group welfare and keep the group safe and secure.

The *evolved leader psychology* (Van Vugt et al., 2008, p. 182) is that good leaders are also willing to share their resources generously with their followers. Moreover, they are expected to engage in egalitarian (e.g., democratic, delegated, participative) forms of leadership whenever possible. Also, they are expected to make strategic decisions that place the welfare of the group ahead of their personal ambitions and gains. It is acceptable to have status and privilege in the evolved leader psychology as long as one is not ostentatious about it and perhaps is even a bit uncomfortable with it.

Unfortunately, the seeking of power often is attributed to leaders' placing their personal ambition ahead of group welfare (see Bargh & Alvarez, 2001), which is not acceptable in the evolved leader psychology model. This negative attribution stimulates visions of leaders who are willing to engage in force, threat, and coercion to gain power, privileges, and resources. According to the evolved leader psychology (Van Vugt et al., 2008), when it appears that leaders are motivated by personal gain, individuals hark back to domains ruled by chieftains and warlords. These domains often were (are) subject to tyranny, threat, exploitation, greed, class warfare, and oppression by aggressive individuals representing soldier classes and narcissistic ruling elites. It is a vision of dominance and oppression that conflicts strongly with implicit theories of what constitutes good leadership (see Lord, Foti, & DeVader, 1984), and it may fuel a sense of reactance toward the idea that a high-power motive can serve as a healthy and beneficial characteristic among leaders.

We agree with scholars such as Bargh and Alvarez (2001) who argued that a general tendency exists, especially in some social science circles, to denigrate power motives because the motives are thought to be energized primarily by self-centered if not aggressive desires (e.g., the seeking of status, privilege, and unequal resources, or worse, by desires to oppress, force, corrupt, and tyrannize). However, it is believed that vilifying the power motive has stifled scientific interest in it and retarded attempts to develop objective ways to measure it. As a result, the field of leadership has done little to advance understanding of a key motivational factor that

drives and shapes the reasoning and behaviors of leaders (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005; Kaiser, Hogan, & Craig, 2008; Vroom & Jago, 2007). Indeed, Winter (1992) was one of the first to note that the field of leadership misses the mark, when he observed that the seeking of power in the United States is associated with “suspicions, doubts, and denials” (p. 302). Winter (p. 302) went on to state:

Leaders almost never say that their actions are motivated by a desire for power; instead they talk of “service” or “duty.” As a result, one might expect Americans to be defensive or unaware of their power motivation....

People with strong power motives may be defensive or unaware of what motivates them, but they nonetheless feel compelled to exert their will over others. How then do they deal with the prevailing social stereotype that power should be treated with suspicion, because it is associated with exploitation, inevitable corruption, and coercion? At least as important is how do they deal with the fact that the motivation for the seeking of power does involve socially disagreeable characteristics, namely, the belief that one’s inner strength and superior characteristics place one ahead of others in regard to commanding the attention of others and leading them? How do they disengage ideologies and arguments against the seeking of power and neutralize societal norms that disapprove of the seeking of power?

A strong part of the answers to these questions is that, like any motive that has garnered social disapproval, the exercise of the power motive is protected by defense mechanisms (see Cramer, 2006). It is believed that the defense mechanism of rationalization is of particular interest in regard to the power motive. This is because people with strong power motives often justify exerting their wills by embedding their actions in strategic decision making. The propensity to select their own personal strategies is attributed to the objective merit and rational superiority of these strategies over the strategies proposed by others (see Pfeffer, 1994).

In most cases, people with a strong power motive do not think that they are seeking or exercising power. Rather, they see themselves as thinking rationally and arriving at the best strategic decisions, which is the primary evolutionary function of leadership (Van Vugt et al., 2008). In fact, their decision making often does have objective and rational components. In addition, however, it often is molded by unseen forces that serve the defense mechanism of rationalization. This means that the reasoning gives

rational support to the release of the implicit power motive. Another way of saying this is that people for whom the power motive directs behavior have developed ways of reasoning that make exerting *their* wills appear to be rational and sensible.

Again, these ways of reasoning help to enhance the rational appeal of power, and therefore, are referred to as *justification mechanisms* (James, 1998; James & LeBreton, 2010; James et al., in press), which operate from below the level of consciousness (i.e., implicitly) to direct reasoning in predetermined ways (a bias). Reasoning focuses on building logical support (i.e., a defense) for releasing an underlying desire to use power. It is this desire to exert one's will over others that serves the motivation to lead and gives impetus to achieving significant outcomes as a leader.

Justification Mechanisms for Power

Individual differences in desires to exercise power have received comparatively little scientific attention (see Overbeck, 2010). James et al. (in press) studied the extant but scant professional literature to gain insights into how people with strong power motives build seemingly objective and rational cases for exercising their wills. This search involved attempts to uncover the implicit or unconscious biases that shape the interpretations people with strong power motives place on power activities and the slants in logic they use to argue for the rationality of strategic decisions that involve a personal use of power.

James et al. (in press) identified four justification mechanisms for power, each of which helps people with strong power motives (hereafter referred to as POs) to build strategic decisions that rationalize their use of power. These four justification mechanisms comprise an initial but developable set of biases that enable the release of the power motive. No claim was made that these four justification mechanisms exhaust the entire set of salient justification mechanisms for power. However, they do appear to offer a reasonable base on which to begin studies of how to measure the strength of a person's power motive.

Agentic Bias

When attempting to think rationally and objectively about strategic decisions, POs instinctively take the perspective of the agents or initiators

of actions (see Moskowitz, 1994; Overbeck, 2010; Veroff, 1992; Winter, 1992). Consequently, their thinking often reflects a propensity to confirm (e.g., build logical support for) the agents' ideas, plans, and solutions. These ideas, plans, and solutions are viewed as providing logically superior strategic decisions. Whether others embrace these superior decisions is seen as determined by the agents' political skills to persuade, convince, and convert people to their ideas (House et al., 1991; Veroff, 1992). The adoption of strategic decisions is thus judged to be contingent on the superiority of the agents' reasoning skills and how effectively they influence others to follow their plans (see Hogan & Kaiser, 2005; Van Vugt et al., 2008; Yukl, 2009).

The key to the *agentive bias* is the *perspective* from which people frame and reason. POs instinctively look down; that is, they identify with the people who reside in management positions, create strategic plans, and then lead others to carry out the plans. People with weak or nonexistent power motives (referred to as NPs) instinctively look up; that is, when thinking about strategic decisions, they take the perspectives of those lower in the organization who are affected by the decisions and actions. Naturally, they think in terms of the implications and consequences of the decisions on the feelings and actions of followers like themselves.

To illustrate, suppose a group of people is told that employee theft usually decreases after surveillance cameras are installed in workplaces, but the cameras also make many employees nervous and unhappy. Individuals in the group are then asked to draw what they think represents the most salient and reasonable inference based on the information given. The NPs among the group instinctively will see this problem through the eyes of employees, and many will infer that employees are unhappy because surveillance cameras are perceived to be an invasion of privacy. In contrast, the POs in the group instinctively will see the problem through the eyes of those who must decide whether to install surveillance cameras. To them, the primary issue, based on the information given, is the seriousness of employee theft in a given company.

An implicit bias to think like a PO (or an NP) does not denote error, for one's predisposition to reason from the perspective of those in power, the agents or initiators of action, often engenders a plausible way of examining the problem. However, a purely rational model calls for dialectics, where the pros and cons of each of several possible points of view are considered (see James, 1998). The connotation of bias here is that one favors the point of view that is consistent with one's latent personality. POs may well

subscribe consciously to the idea of multiple points of view and even may express strong beliefs that the pros and cons of each of these views need to be objectively evaluated. However, when tasked with analyzing specific real-world problems, POs instinctively and consistently will lean toward seeing the problems through the lens of an agent or initiator or controller of action.

However, NPs do not view the problem through the lens of a leader. This is because a considerable proportion of people, perhaps the majority, possess low or very modest power motives and typically neither seek nor enjoy leadership responsibilities (Chan & Drasgow, 2001; McClelland, 1985; Winter, 1973, 1992). A weak power motive denotes a low need to exercise one's will by attaining positions of influence, which indicates that a desire to exhibit impact and influence on others is not especially salient as a work career goal (Winter et al., 1998).

In more specific behavioral terms, a weak power motive often is manifested by not taking the initiative to lead groups and avoiding jobs that have supervisory responsibilities (Chan & Drasgow, 2001); never having run for office in school, clubs, or teams (Stricker & Rock, 1998); seldom if ever taking strong, forceful actions that affect others (Winter, 1992); avoiding situations which require taking responsibility for the welfare of others (Winter et al., 1998); passing on opportunities to plan and organize projects (Moskowitz, 1994); experiencing discomfort when attempting to persuade others that one's ideas are objectively superior (House et al., 1991); and seldom expressing disagreements with or criticism of those in authority (Moskowitz, 1994).

The data suggest that not all or even most people want to be leaders (Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Stricker & Rock, 1998). Some of these people have not only low power motives but also desire to be led (i.e., a full submissive). That is, some people prefer to be dependent on leaders for their survival and social welfare (Moskowitz, 1994; Winter, 1992; Winter et al., 1998). Others have strong desires to be independent or to be unharried by leadership responsibilities in order to pursue other types of objectives (e.g., create, write, build).

Many additional possibilities exist, but the key is that as a group these people share the common attribute of little to no aspiration toward power and leadership. The data support the idea that these people are unlikely to emerge as leaders (Kenny & Zaccaro, 1983) and that when placed in leadership positions they tend not to perform well because they lack

the motivational and behavioral characteristics required to be effective leaders (Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Foti & Hauenstein, 2007; Judge et al., 2002; McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982; Stricker & Rock, 1998; Yukl, 2009).

Social Hierarchy Orientation

Reasoning from this orientation reflects implicit acceptance of hierarchical authority structures as the primary form of human organization. Reasoning often is based on the unstated, and for many POs unrecognized, premise that disproportionate influence, privilege, and distribution of resources are rational ways of organizing and leading (as opposed to egalitarian power structures; see Buss, 2005; Overbeck, 2010; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Simon & Oakes, 2006). As an example of this way of thinking, consider the following premise: Decision making in most companies is effective when managers are organized in terms of graded levels of authority, where they have a sphere of influence in which they are responsible for making decisions.

Members of a group of managers are asked to analyze this premise and, individually, to identify an unstated assumption on which it is based. POs in the group are predisposed to accept the premise that graded levels of authority and spheres of influence are rational ways of organizing many companies. The unstated assumptions they identify thus are likely to be supportive of the premise. An assumption such as the following is illustrative: Decisions can be made quickly without lengthy discussion or dissention.

NPs on the other hand are unlikely to be supportive of the premise because they do not implicitly accept hierarchical authority structures as the primary and most natural form of human organization (see Bargh & Alvarez, 2001; Van Vugt et al., 2008). In fact, they may be disposed to reason that power structures that involve disproportionate influence, privilege, and distributions of resources often produce less than optimal decisions. The unstated assumptions they identify thus are likely to be critical of the premise. An illustration of a subtle and indirect criticism is that the premise assumes that individuals can make better decisions than groups composed of diverse and knowledgeable individuals (place *incorrectly* in front of *assumes* to capture the true meaning of NPs).

Presumably, NPs are critical because they, like a great many people, subscribe to the evolved leader psychology that leadership is best when it is based on egalitarian (e.g., democratic, participative) forms of decision

making (Lord et al., 1984; Van Vugt et al., 2008). Such thinking evolved from hunter-gatherer societies, where people experienced a sense of “empathetic responsiveness” to one another, a product of having experienced pleasures and suffered pain together (Bandura, 1999, p. 200). This sense of common togetherness and empathy engendered perceptions of similarity and common social obligations (Bandura, 1969), which is to say an egalitarian society. Their preferred leadership pattern also reflected empathetic responsiveness and was characterized by transitory, democratic, consensually appointed leaders whose power was limited to their areas of expertise (see Van Vugt et al., 2008). Hierarchical authority structures are viewed as necessary evils that need not have a permanent basis, when they are considered necessary for such things as defense of the collective (Van Vugt et al.).

Note that NP’s preferred form of leadership allows people without strong desires to be leaders to be dependent on strong leadership when conditions call for strong leaders (e.g., the group is in peril of being attacked) and to have a voice in decisions that affect them in more stable and tranquil contexts. NPs will be receptive to reasoning that supports this form of leadership. On the other hand, POs may give explicit recognition to this leveling of the authority structures in stable and tranquil conditions, but their true, unstated, and often unrecognized allegiance is to hierarchically graded systems of power.

Power Attribution Bias

Reasoning with this bias reflects a predisposition to logically connect the use of power with positive behavior, values, and outcomes. Acts of power are interpreted in positive terms, such as taking initiative, assuming responsibility, and being decisive (McClelland, 1985; Russell, 1938; Veroff, 1992; Winter, 1973, 1992). These same acts logically are associated with positive outcomes, such as organizational survival, stability, effectiveness, and success. The powerful are viewed as talented, experienced, and successful leaders. In like manner, successful leadership rationally is attributed to the use of power.

The *power attribution bias* stands in contrast to the tendency of society, including a great many NPs, to correlate the exercise of power with entitlement, corruption, and tyranny (Kipnis, 1976; Lord Acton, 1865). More specifically, the power motive is held culpable for (1) placing personal gain ahead of group welfare; (2) the seeking of influence simply to dominate

others; (3) the willingness to use threat and coercion to gain power, status, and entitlements; and (4) the building of organizations ruled by narcissistic tyrants who oppress, exploit, and victimize subordinates and employees (see Bargh & Alvarez, 2001; Chen et al., 2001; Kipnis, 1972; Lord Acton, 1865; Resick et al., 2009; Van Vugt et al., 2008).

NPs who make attributions that those seeking power are dishonest or corrupt believe their framing and analyses are logical and rational. Often, they bolster their arguments by pointing to specific examples from history where individuals sought power for corrupt, criminal, or self-serving purposes. On the other hand, POs are predisposed to infer that seeking power is necessary for the survival of the collective and the achievement of important goals. Also, they believe that their framing and analyses are logical and rational, and may point to examples from history supportive of their inferences (e.g., Abraham Lincoln).

Basically, POs' desire to engage in power clearly places them on the defensive in a climate that tends to frame power in derogatory terms. Justification mechanisms, such as the *Power attribution bias*, are needed to give POs ostensibly objective and rational reasons for engaging in acts of power (e.g., use of power *is necessary* [in the minds of POs] for organizational survival). It is the apparent objectivity and rationality of this reasoning that deflects the proclivities of NPs to seek less attractive attributions for POs' use of power.

Leader Intuition Bias

Decisions and actions appear more reasonable (to POs) when they are based on resources and strategies that confer power to the leader. A great many managers solve problems in much the same way as expert decision makers, analogous to grand chess masters who simply look at a chessboard and see potential winning strategies (see Kahneman & Klein, 2009). The experience and training of more mature leaders allows them to see promising strategies quickly. They differ from less experienced and less well-trained leaders in their "unusual ability to appreciate the dynamics of complex [situations] and quickly judge whether a [strategy] is promising or fruitless" (Kahneman & Klein, 2009, p. 515).

These "expert" decision makers often think of this process as reflecting their (leader) intuition (Klein, 1998). What these expert decision makers do not realize is that the ones among them who are POs are predisposed

to intuitively think of strategies that confer power to themselves (i.e., or people like themselves, see McClelland, 1985; Winter, 1973, 1992). Among these expert decision makers, NPs will be significantly less prone to intuitively identify these same types of strategies as promising.

What likely has happened here is that, over the years, POs selectively attended to patterns and decisions that not only were efficacious, but also that involved resources that conveyed power to the leader. Examples of such resources include: (a) receiving recognition for such things as being an expert or a first-mover (French & Raven, 1959; Van Vugt et al., 2008; Winter, 1973); (b) being able to inflict pleasure (rewards) or pain (punishment) on subordinates (French & Raven, 1959); (c) being in the nexus of communication or influence structures (French & Raven, 1959); (d) being in control of resources (French & Raven, 1959); (e) functioning in hierarchical authority structures where one has personal responsibility for important decisions (Overbeck, 2010); and (f) working in cultures where the accumulation and exercise of power via forming alliances and coalitions is expected, even encouraged. The result of selective attention and learning is that strategies and actions that allow POs to develop a power base become part of their tacit knowledge structure. This tacit knowledge is accessed automatically (i.e., without awareness, Schneider & Shiffrin, 1977), which makes it appear as experience-based intuition of how to solve strategic problems (see Kahneman & Klein, 2009).

Like the *Agentic bias* above, it is important to note that the *Leader intuition bias* inherently involves organizational politics. As described by Pfeffer (1981) and reiterated by Ferris and Treadway (Chapter 1 in this volume), power, politics, and influence are intertwined. Power refers to the exercise of influence, politics refer to the means used to exercise influence (as illustrated in the preceding paragraph), and political skill refers to how accomplished one is in the use of the political influence strategies. Clearly, skilled use of political influence tactics is critical to the effective use of at least two of the four justification mechanisms. To use the *Agentic bias* to build a justification for exercising power is dependent upon the POs being able to persuade others to adopt their strategic decisions, and this requires the use of skilled influence tactics.

The *Leader intuition bias* suggests that POs develop and internalize these skilled influence tactics as they develop a tacit knowledge structure of how best to lead. Then, the tactics are used automatically as part of what appears to POs to be an intuitive understanding of leadership. NPs also may

develop tacit knowledge structures, and then rely on experienced-based intuition to solve strategic decisions. However, these knowledge structures are unlikely to involve cognitive associations between effective leadership and resources that enhance the NPs' power. This is because NPs have no power motive to direct their perceptual process toward selectively attending to opportunities to exercise power.

Implications of JMs for Organizational Climate

It is important to note that these JMs set the stage for a basic organizational climate that reflects the fact that influence is being wielded by powerful individuals. That is, the climate that results from the mere fact that an organization is being led by a PO is qualitatively different from an organizational climate that would result if an NP were in-power (i.e., which does sometimes happen, typically via patrimony, appointment, small organization size, or chance). Specifically, the default organizational climate that develops out of the influence of POs and the relevant JMs they utilize includes: (a) a climate that favors the interests of those at the top, which stems of their use of the *Agentic bias*; (b) a certain level of insulation from the perspectives of those at lower levels, which stems from their use of the *Social hierarchy orientation*; (c) a climate wherein decisions are expected to be accepted without formal discussion or recourse, which comes from their use of the *Power attribution bias*; and (d) a climate wherein a given course of action is assumed to be just, correct, and so forth, simply because it represents the position of the status quo, which comes from their use of the *Leader intuition bias*. As seen later, there is nothing inherently wrong or evil about this baseline climate. Instead, what determines whether this power structure yields a positive or negative organizational climate largely is dictated by the additional motives that characterize those at the top. Again, this shaping of power by other personality variables is referred to as a "channeling model."

Channeling the Power Motive and Organizational Climates

As outlined previously, a strong power motive often sets in motion behaviors toward acquiring positions of leadership, exerting one's will over others, and the foundations of the baseline organizational climate outlined previously. However, the relationship between the power motive and

how one actually exerts one's will, which is to say their politics or methods and techniques of influence (Ferris & Treadway, Chapter 1 in this volume), is not direct. There are many ways that the desire to exert oneself can be channeled into methods and techniques of influence, or as some would say, a style of leading. These styles include transformational (methods and techniques), charismatic, empowering, transactional, interpersonal, task oriented, laissez faire, and toxic. What direction this channeling takes largely is determined by personality variables other than the power motive (Bargh & Alvarez, 2001; Chen et al., 2001; House et al., 1991; James et al., in press; Winter et al., 1998).

To illustrate briefly, people who want to exert their wills and also are aggressive tend to channel their power motives into abusive and threatening behaviors that create toxic environments for their subordinates (Bargh & Alvarez, 2001; James et al., in press). People who are narcissistic tend to channel their power motives into arrogant and imperious forms of leadership (Resick et al., 2009). People who are nurturing, communal, and charismatic are prone to channel their power motives into transformational forms of leadership (Bargh & Alvarez, 2001; House et al., 1991). Extraverted people with strong power motives tend to value relationships with others as they attempt to fulfill their desires for impact. Introverted people with strong power motives tend to place less value on relationships and to avoid impactful careers that require extensive interactions with others (Winter et al., 1998).

Two forms of channeling are the focus of attention in this chapter. One form of channeling model focuses on how nurturing, communal, socially concerned and aware leaders channel their power motives into influence (political) strategies that advance the common good of the organization and society (e.g., Collins, 2001). They exercise their influence instrumentally; that is, they use influence to create climates that promote cooperation, maintain order, dispense justice, avoid conflict, develop people, and enhance productivity and profits—again, characteristics that are not inconsistent with the baseline climate outlined previously. This type of leader has been described as high in socialized power (McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982; Winter, 1973, 1992; Winter et al., 1998). The term *instrumental influence* is used to describe the strategies of these leaders and the climates they seek to create (i.e., a climate characterized by instrumental influence; see James & LeBreton, in press).

Another form of channeling model focuses on how aggressive leaders channel their power motives into influence (political) strategies that create toxic organizational climates. This channeling model was recently described in James et al. (in press) and James and LeBreton (in press). Aggression was chosen as a personality variable for channeling power because it was believed that power has been held culpable for abuses that were actually perpetrated by aggression. The countless abuses of power documented in papers and books over the history of humankind are noted. It is believed that power often is not the culprit for these abuses, and throughout history people have attributed to power what truly belongs to channeling variables involving other motives, such as aggression and narcissism. Aggression is a particularly worthy candidate for study. The description of the channeling models is initiated by considering aggressive people with strong power motives.

Toxic Leaders and Toxic Organizational Climates

The defining characteristic of aggressive people with strong power motives is that they seek and use power in ways that prove to be detrimental to those around them, organizations, or even themselves (e.g., Hogan & Kaiser, 2005; Kaiser et al., 2008; Kellerman, 2004). These are leaders who abuse their authority and engage in illegitimate uses of vested powers, often for self-aggrandizing reasons, such as the seeking of status and privilege (Bargh & Alvarez, 2001). These leaders are referred to as *toxic* when their abuses of power unfairly frustrate and hinder the performance, development, and advancement of qualified and motivated individuals, cause short- or long-term harm to the organization, or lead to self-destructive behaviors (Resick et al., 2009; Van Vugt et al., 2008). Organizations are referred to as having *toxic climates* when the abuses of the leader create situations characterized by unfair hindrance of the performance, development, and advancement of qualified and motivated individuals, which result in short- or long-term harm to the organization.

There are some who believe that access to, and sustained use of, power inherently is corrupting (e.g., Kipnis, 1976). In agreement with Bargh and Alvarez (2001), we believe this implicit theory is unsupportable. If it were valid, then it would follow logically that all leaders who accrue power necessarily become corrupt, which is not the case. Toxic leaders are not created by giving people power and allowing them to keep or to enhance it. Instead, toxic leaders are created by the fact that some people have a high need not

only for power but also for aggression. The result of this *combination* is that they seek power in aggressive ways, and if they are successful in attaining power then they use it in aggressive ways, which is to say in ways that harm others. Examples of harmful behaviors include decisions that (1) unfairly frustrate and hinder the performance, development, and advancement of qualified and motivated individuals, (2) damage the organization's reputation or viability, or (3) endanger employees or customers.

In the following sections, this position is developed by providing an overview of the typical pattern of influence strategies used by toxic leaders, the biased types of reasoning that underlie their strategic decision making, and the idea that this engenders a toxic organizational climate.

The (Political) Influence Strategies Used by Toxic Leaders

People who seek and use power in aggressive ways (i.e., toxic leaders) often attempt to control others by use of intimidation, threat, force, and bribery. They frequently are viewed as bullies who exploit their followers for personal gain. If they do express interest in or concern for their subordinates, usually it is for an ulterior motive, such as gaining insight into their subordinates' views to better manipulate them. They have little real concern for people, their chief desire being to enhance their own power and entitlements. They may appear to be attentive and caring, but this is almost always done to make themselves "look good" so they can enhance their power and status (McClelland, 1985; Winter, 1973). Almost inevitably, their true nature eventually will be manifest in ways that harm the development or performance of their subordinates.

Toxic leaders evaluate tasks in terms of opportunities to gain recognition and power. Similarly, they evaluate risk in terms of the effects of outcomes on their personal power and reputation. Such leaders serve others primarily to extend their own power and status and are often proficient at manipulating and managing impressions of their superiors. They use their power to advance personal interests (e.g., wealth, prestige, prominence), and they evaluate others in terms of their title, status, pedigree, and reputation. Toxic leaders network and form relationships with others to enhance their opportunities to take dominant roles, with any consideration given to the effectiveness of their organizations taking a backseat to their personal ambitions and agenda (Winter, 1992).

Toxic leaders often exert their power just for the pleasure of seeing others submit. They tend to set impossible standards and then fire those who fail to satisfy them, to demand unquestioning loyalty and submission, to claim to be entitled to treatment that exceeds legitimate bounds of leader–subordinate relationships, and to actively create the false perception of conflict for scarce resources. These tactics often are exercised under the guise of order, justice, and success, but the true intent is to evoke a sense of unease among followers.

This toxicity may escalate to the level of hostility; illustrations include leaders who constantly ridicule and degrade subordinates, act as catalysts for dissention and conflict among peers and subordinates, or engage in harassment, including sexual harassment (Judge et al., 2006; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Not surprisingly, not only do these actions create an environment of fear among subordinates, but they also communicate messages about what is considered appropriate behavior. Thus, when supervisors engage in these influence tactics, it eventually comes to be viewed as normative.

The willingness to cause injury and injustice to gain or retain power also may extend to unethical if not corrupt actions, such as breaking the law (e.g., financial transgressions) and then demanding that subordinates condone it and cover it up. Also, toxic leaders may place subordinates in harm's way for selfish gain (e.g., taking unwarranted and self-interested risks with employee pensions, setting subordinates up to “take the fall” for the leader's indiscretions). Toxic leaders' penchant for causing injury may turn inward and engender self-destructive behaviors, such as abuse of drugs and alcohol, excessive spending, sexual escapades, petty larceny (e.g., shoplifting), and increases in serious traffic violations, often the result of road rage (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005; Resick et al., 2009).

The Conditional Reasoning of Toxic Leaders

Toxic leaders think of power and strategic decision making in terms of their personal potency—that is, their ability to personally dominate, control, intimidate, assert their will, and instill fear (Winter, 1973). What they want from others is deference and submission, which they often frame as allegiance and respect. This proclivity to think of interactions with others as dominance contests, in which the objective is to take control by making others submit, is known as a *potency bias* (James et al., 2005).

Reasoning shaped by a potency bias furnishes toxic leaders with what to them is a rational basis for attaining and using personal power. Toxic leaders often frame people such as themselves as strong, assertive, brave, powerful, bold, and in control. These positive characterizations suggest that attempts to gain control over others by accruing personal power is not only reasonable but also laudatory. Perhaps at least as telling is toxic leaders' framing of leaders who do not seek personal potency. They think of such leaders as weak, impotent, timid, fearful, and not in control (James & Mazerolle, 2002). Thus, the presence of a climate wherein subordinates operate in fear and do not express their own will is viewed not only as acceptable but also as the norm associated with how to effectively manage others.

Such reasoning suggests that one of the great fears of toxic leaders is being seen as weak (Veroff, 1992). It indicates further that if their quest for dominance is frustrated and they are at risk of being seen as weak, then toxic leaders are prepared to use injurious and unjust methods to show that they are strong, powerful, bold, and in control (Baumeister et al., 2003; James & Mazerolle, 2002). In fact, their pride, honor, and self-respect are tied to their personal potency and status (Baumeister et al., 2003). Anything that threatens such potency and status is regarded as a form of personal disrespect and dishonor that is deserving of immediate retribution. Losing an argument or not being accorded the office with the greatest status are examples of triggers for retaliation. This proclivity for retaliation is known as the *retribution bias* (James et al., 2005).

Toxic leaders are not interested in sharing or delegating authority. Indeed, they regard questions about their ideas or plans, or any hesitation to implement them, as signs of mutiny (Winter, 1992). Moreover, toxic leaders believe that they are much more able than others to decipher hostility and disrespect in the words and actions of others. They think of themselves as having great skills to see clearly and intuitively into the true nature of human behavior. People with less insight and perceptiveness are thought to be blinded by their naiveté and goodness and thus fail to discern the dark side of human behavior (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). However, the self-ascribed insight, perceptiveness, and intuitiveness of toxic leaders are illusory. The true, but unrecognized, explanation for toxic leaders seeing hostility and disrespect in the actions of others is that they are paranoid, or in more contemporary terms, suffer from a *hostile attribution bias* (Dodge & Coie, 1987).

Proclivities to see hostile intentions in the actions of others and a desire to dominate relationships with these others often result in callous leadership styles and hostile work environments. An authoritarian, dictatorial, domineering style is especially likely if toxic leaders sense disloyalty, for they now feel the need to quell potential rebelliousness and to seek retribution for traitors to the cause. Paranoia, a desire to dominate, and a proclivity to seek retribution also can trigger other forms of unethical behavior, especially if these biases are accompanied by other biases, such as the judgment that one is being unfairly victimized by powerful others such as government agencies, a competitor, or organized labor (Bandura, 1999; Frost, Ko, & James, 2007).

To illustrate, a proclivity to believe that competitors use unfair business tactics to gain advantage to intentionally create financial distress for one's company (i.e., a hostile attribution bias) may be thought to justify issuing false reports of earnings to counteract potential damage. To toxic leaders, this is not an act of corruption but rather a justifiable act of self-defense. The illusion of rationality for corrupt behavior is strengthened if the unethical leader also is prone to think of regulations or even laws as rules built by bureaucrats that place unfair and often dysfunctional restrictions on competition. While toxic leaders may be of sufficient emotional intelligence to stifle their disdain for regulations and laws in typical circumstances, in times of stress, especially very intense stress triggered by survival instincts, they may give in to a natural proclivity to seek retribution in whatever way is necessary (James et al., 2005).

In sum, toxic leaders are driven by a desire for *personal* power or potency. Their reasoning is shaped by biases such as the potency bias, the retribution bias, and the hostile attribution bias. These biases allow them to justify engaging in toxic behaviors to enhance the self-perception that they are not weak but in fact are dominant and in control. Their toxicity often takes the form of the four types of unethical leader behaviors identified by Kellerman (2004): corruption, callousness, evil, and insularity. Several of these behaviors were illustrated, to which other activities (e.g., misinformation about costs, miscalculation of resources, lying about market demands, sabotage of competitors, exaggeration of earnings, not paying taxes, gambling employee pensions, dissolving healthy companies for short-term profits, and misinforming the public about the safety of a product) would be added (Kipnis, 1976).

The products of these activities are organizations with climates that are toxic to the people who work in them. That is, chronic exposure to

corruption, callousness, sabotage, and general recklessness have direct and indirect negative effects on the lives and well-being of followers. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to stress, tension, collusion, paranoia and, perhaps worst of all, acceptance that toxic political maneuvers are not only acceptable but are also necessary means of survival in a dog-eat-dog world. Moreover, these organizations tend to be ineffective largely because they are full of alienated and demoralized followers (Van Vugt et al., 2008).

Identifying Toxic Leaders

Acts of aggression are protected by a unique set of justification mechanisms, which differ from those for power. The objective of the aggression justification mechanisms is to create the self-deception that acts of aggression can be justified as self-defense, attempts to restore honor, or legitimate strikes against injustice, disloyalty, or oppression. These rationalizations conceal from awareness the true but unacceptable cause of aggressive actions, namely, a willingness to harm others in pursuit of self-centered goals. The aggression justification mechanisms thus protect aggressive persons from realizing that they are truly hostile, malicious, or malevolent individuals (James & LeBreton, 2010; James et al., 2005).

Over the last 15 years, we have engaged in over 20 studies designed to develop and validate a conditional reasoning test that identifies aggressive individuals. The Conditional Reasoning Test for Aggression (CRT-A) has been the subject of more than 40 peer-reviewed papers and articles in respected scientific journals. It is now recognized as a leading instrument for identifying aggressive individuals in organizational settings (Landy, 2008). The ways aggression-based items have been melded with those designed to assess power motives to better detect potentially toxic leaders is described in James et al. (in press).

Leaders and Climates Characterized by Instrumental Influence

The key personality variable that channels the power motive into instrumental influence is social awareness and concern (McClelland, 1985; Winter, 1973, 1992). As noted earlier, leaders fitting this pattern use their influence to promote cooperation, maintain order, dispense justice, avoid

conflict, develop people, and enhance productivity and profits. This socialized use of power suggests that the leaders serve as catalysts for successful accomplishments by others (McClelland, 1985).

Such leaders seek responsibility for directing others in the interest of seeing that the collective's goals are accomplished (Bass, 1985, 1990). They are willing to commit intense effort, over long periods of time if necessary, to helping people accomplish the collective's objectives. These leaders experience a sense of accomplishment and take pride not so much in their personal achievements as in the achievements of the collectives whose success they have taken responsibility for engineering (McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982). These leaders are referred to as *instrumental influencers* or simply *influencers*.

Instrumental influence carries with it a cost, namely, huge responsibilities for the welfare and success of the people whom one influences. Influencers must accept responsibility for maintaining a safe, stable, and secure climate, where people are treated with integrity, equity, and justice. They know that they will be held liable for the failures of their people and thus must develop, implement, and maintain influence networks that result in the overall success of their collectives. It is the process of satisfying these responsibilities that creates a sense of intrinsic satisfaction. The essence of instrumental influence lies in the commitments and sacrifices that a leader is willing to make to promote cooperation, maintain order, dispense justice, avoid conflict, develop people, and enhance productivity and profits (Avolio, Sosik, Jung, & Berson, 2003; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990).

Influencers are aware that people within the collective have values and goals that differ from their own. They seek to understand the needs, values, and hopes of their people (Bono & Judge, 2004). Being attentive to the moods, concerns, and ideas of others allows them to conceive and articulate visions that will be consistent with followers' needs, values, and hopes, thereby motivating the followers toward collective goals rather than the leader's own self-interest (House et al., 1991). Influencers want people to be committed to their strategic vision and to work toward goals with enthusiasm and passion but in ways that make them feel a sense of morale and to be concerned about the overall success of the collective. Accordingly, influencers work hard at gaining insight into what motivates others and

then at developing the planning and persuasive skills they need to win these others over (House et al., 1991).

The Conditional Reasoning of Influencers

When reasoning about strategic decisions, influencers tend to rely on their own ideas, visions, solutions, and strategies. What is referred to by *their own* are the ideas, visions, solutions, and strategies that they developed themselves, had assistance in developing, or adopted as their own. Influencers consistently reason that the chance of success is greater if they personally define problems, build visions, and make, or at least have strong influence on, final strategies (Eden, 1992). It is this sense of efficacy in their own reasoning and strategic problem solving that motivates influencers to take on leadership responsibilities, seek out leadership opportunities, and attempt to persuade others that their visions and goals will be effective (Bass, 1985; House et al., 1991).

The preferred leadership style of influencers is persuasion based on promoting the subordinates' own needs, values, and interests (Bass, 1985; Van Vugt et al., 2008). Influencers want to provide value-added contributions to subordinates' effectiveness, sense of self-confidence, and feelings of morale if not commitment to the collective. Influencers feel a sense of reward when subordinates are successful, and this success can be attributed, in part, to how the subordinates were led. Also, they are pleased when subordinates display high morale and commitment (e.g., high retention rates, minimal grievances, interdepartmental cooperation).

Concern for the success of subordinates reflects both a desire to be instrumental in guiding the collective toward success and a genuine interest in having impact in how the people in the collective are treated (Judge et al., 2002; Winter, 1992). Through their direction, influencers want to ensure that justice is administered fairly, that rewards are distributed equitably, that the people in the collective are safe and protected from threat, that the leadership is sensitive to follower's needs and values, that people believe in the mission of the collective, and that followers are given the opportunities to develop and maximize their skills (Bono & Judge, 2004; Van Vugt et al., 2008). Influencers also want to guarantee that the collective adheres to ethical principles, which means that they should serve as role models (Kaiser et al., 2008). Here again, strong personal investments are seen in

what is right and good for the collective (i.e., rather than just focusing on what is good for the self).

In sum, leaders who fit the pattern of instrumental influence design strategies to benefit their collectives. The result is that their collectives tend to be composed of people who view their work environment as being instrumental in serving the needs of the collective as well as their social and personal needs (i.e., a climate of instrumental influence) and to be more effective than collectives led by toxic leaders (Kellerman, 2004; Resick et al., 2009). Greater effectiveness is related directly to influencers' attempts to understand the needs of their people and to use this understanding to win the people over to their visions and strategies.

Of course, the leaders must have the political skills required to understand others and to design effective methods of persuasion. If successful in this persuasion, then influencers believe that people will work toward strategic goals with enthusiasm and passion. Psychologically, successful influencers tend to have strong self-confidence in their abilities to define problems, to build visions and strategies, and to show their people how to realize these visions. This sense of efficacy is coupled with a strong desire to be instrumental in seeing that their people are safe and treated fairly and with respect.

Identifying Influencers

Currently, problems are in the process of being added to the CRT-L to distinguish between toxic leaders and (instrumental) influencers. An illustrative problem is presented and discussed in James and LeBreton (in press). Preliminary results suggest that between 12.3 and 19.4% of the variance in monthly store profits can be predicted by using conditional reasoning to assess the constructs outlined in this chapter, namely, need for power and aggression. Although much developmental and validation work is still necessary before finalizing these instruments, we are confident that ultimately they will not only be able to continue to be used to predict outcomes such as profits but, more importantly, the political styles that leaders will be most likely to demonstrate and whether they will engender a toxic climate characterized by deceit and distrust or a supportive climate characterized by mutual respect and shared commitment. We believe that this has important implications not only for organizations' financial functioning but also for subordinates' quality of life derived from their experiences in different organizational climates.

CONCLUSIONS

One of psychology's main benefits is that it provides empirically verifiable explanations of why certain individuals do and do not behave in particular ways. The study of politics, influence and power as well as the effects of these forces on follower perceptions of organizational climate is no exception. First, however, psychologists must avoid making premature value judgments about the effects of one's need for power. Instead, a more nuanced perspective is encouraged, where the need for power is not inherently viewed as a negative attribute. Also, thinkers are encouraged to critically examine the ways other motives, *in combination with* a high need for power, consciously and unconsciously encourage the use of political tactics in either prosocial or antisocial ways. Specifically, it is argued that the distinction between *aggression* on the one hand and *concern* on the other hand is a useful means not only to predict the behavior of individual leaders but also to begin to understand the ways their conditional reasoning influences the organizational climates they create.

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