

Organizational Behavior

CHAPTER OUTLINE

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KEYNOTE: Henry II of England, Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Becket, and Rufus Miles of the US Bureau of the Budget: How a Medieval King, a Martyred Saint, and an American Bureaucrat Illustrate Miles's Law

Laws are enacted by governments to regulate our behavior in a seemingly infinite number of ways. Thus, citizens are obligated to stop at traffic lights when they turn red, pay their taxes on time, and not impose violence on fellow citizens who are merely rude or dishonorable.

Laws also govern the physical world. Isaac Newton (1642-1727) wrote that "To every action there is always opposed an equal reaction." This is known as Newton's "third law of motion." Because Newton discovered so many laws of the physical universe, he is widely considered to be the founder of modern physics.

Then there are laws that are not of the legal world or of the physical realm but that merely explain human behavior. This last category has a long tradition in both literature and the social sciences. For example, Jane Austen wrote as the first sentence in her novel *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) that "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." If you believe that, maybe you'll also believe what Tolstoy wrote in his novel *Anna Karenina* (1875): "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is the plot of countless other novels, plays, films, and real-life adventures. But in their essence, they are not laws, but merely observations.

The observatory nature of such laws is their chief commonality and characteristic. A law, to be truly a law, must be universal; this is the chief characteristic of the laws of science and the goal of laws enacted by governments. Observational laws as offered by literature, however great, invariably fail this test of universality.

Surely you have heard of single men "in possession of a good fortune" who are most decidedly not "in want of a wife."

For greater, if not universal, consistency in observational laws we must turn to the social sciences. The Austrian-born British philosopher Karl R. Popper is generally credited with being the first to promulgate the law of unintended consequences, that conscious human efforts to accomplish one goal will lead to "as a rule, the indirect, the unintended and often the unwanted by-products of such actions" (1945, p. 93). Thus, in 1964 the US Congress passed the Civil Rights Act with its Title VII equal employment opportunity provisions intended to help African Americans; but the most immediate beneficiaries of this new law were white women. Not a bad result and not an "unwanted by-product," but unintended and unexpected.

Another observational law is Laurence J. Peter's law from his book *The Peter Principle* that "In a hierarchy every employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence" (1969, p. 8). Corollaries of the Peter Principle hold that in time, every post tends to be occupied by an employee who is incompetent to carry out its duties" (p. 10). In answer to the logical question of who then does the work that has to be done, Peter asserts that "work is accomplished by those employees who have not yet reached their level of incompetence."

The problems with observational laws is that they are, of course, not laws at all, merely strong tendencies, just as Peter suggests when he asserts in his principle that "every employee tends to rise." Nevertheless, even if such laws or principles are not to be depended on for all occasions, they remain useful in explaining and understanding human behavior.

The preceding discussion has been the preamble to our main story that

"proves" one of the best-known observational laws in public policy and administration, Miles's Law. It was first put into words in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States, but it has always been applicable. We'll prove this by using a famous example of the law taking effect from England in the twelfth century.

Miles's Law

Miles's Law is named after a manager in the Bureau of the Budget (now the Office of Management and Budget) who first observed, Where you stand depends on where you sit Miles Jr., 1978, p. 399). Rufus E. Miles Jr. chronicled the history of his law in a 1978 Public Administration Review article after it had been folk wisdom among federal bureaucrats for many years.

While admitting that his "concept was as old as Plato," the "phraseology" evolved from a specific sequence of events that occurred when Miles was supervising a group of budget examiners in the 1940s. One of the examiners was offered a higher-paying new job as a budget analyst at one of the agencies he had been reviewing. Because he had been particularly critical of this agency in his capacity as a reviewing budget examiner, he told Miles (his boss) that he would prefer to stay in his present job if his salary could be raised. Miles, ever concerned about federal expenditure levels, refused to support a raise of his subordinate's salary. So the subordinate resigned his position with the Bureau of the Budget to accept a higher-paying job with an agency he believed was not very efficient with its use of public funds.

Miles then remarked to the remaining workers under his supervision that soon the former employee would be defending the new budget policies that he had so vociferously criticized. His co-workers were incredulous. After all, the exiting analyst was a man of strongly held judgments and great personal integrity. But Miles insisted this would happen and was proven correct by events. As his law states, "Where you stand depends upon where you sit."

Because the former employee was sitting elsewhere, his views would naturally evolve to reflect his new position. It wasn't a matter of ethics so much as it was a matter of perspective. In effect, no employee can be separated from the perspective of the particular responsibilities of his or her current position. Revised stances on issues and policies can be, and often are, the opposite of those previously held. This is not so much hypocrisy as it is loyalty to, and greater understanding of, one's new employer. World history offers no better example of this common phenomenon than the events that led up to the death and martyrdom of Thomas Becket during the reign of England's Henry II in the twelfth century.

The Rise of Thomas Becket

England's Thomas Becket (1118-1170) is one of those historical figures almost as well known for how they have been treated by legend and literature than for what they did in real life. While

Becket was a high achiever in what many consider to be a bad cause (that clergy should be above the common law), he remains a superb example of an extraordinarily successful bureaucrat. So successful that he earned the highest possible promotions (first as chancellor of England and then as archbishop of Canterbury); and so loyal that he willingly died for his agency (the church), was sainted for his sacrifice, and thus became the world's most famous example of Miles's Law in action.

Becket's patron was King Henry II (1133-1189), was the great-grandson of William the Conqueror, who brought his army from France and conquered England in 1066 by killing the then-resident king, Harold, during the Battle of Hastings. To place Henry II in his historical era, just remember that he was the father of (1) Richard I, "the Lion-heart," who was the famous crusader, and (2) King John (who doesn't get a number, being the only John ever to sit on the English throne). John, when his time came to rule, proved to be such a bad king that his nobles forced him to sign the Magna Carta in 1215, which limited his powers and started England down the road to a constitutional monarchy.

The land ruled by Henry II was not only England, but half of France as well. The rest of Western Europe (what is now Germany, Italy, and Spain) was still fragmented into relatively tiny political entities. Consequently, Henry's realm was Europe's largest and richest kingdom. Becket as its chief administrator and chief tax collector used his office, as was considered appropriate at the time, to make himself the richest man in the kingdom after the monarch.

Becket's Predicament

As the two men spent more and more time together, Henry increasingly relied on Becket's competence and judgment. To the extent it was ever possible to be so with an absolute monarch, Becket became Henry's best friend, both socially and professionally. This friendship was key to the events that followed because it was what earned Becket his new appointment as archbishop of Canterbury and what doubled Henry's sense of betrayal when Becket's later actions were decidedly unfriendly to the king.

The problem was the church. The church in twelfth-century England was not the Church of England that exists today; that was created in the sixteenth century by Henry VIII when he had England break away from the Roman Catholic Church so that he could more conveniently arrange for a divorce from his first wife. In the twelfth century there was only one Christian church in England, and it considered itself loyal to the doctrines espoused by the pope in Rome. Problems arose when church practices came into conflict with mandates of the secular rulers, the kings, to whom the churchmen also owed loyalty.

Henry's problem with the church as an institution was that it considered itself above or beyond the law of the land. Thus, priests could, and frequently did, plunder or even murder innocent peasants without answering to the king's justice. And Henry II took his justice very seriously. He practically invented the modern criminal justice system by being the first to use 12-man juries and creating different courts for different types of legal cases.

Nevertheless, the church held that its members, its priests, were answerable only to canon or church law. And this law was notoriously unsympathetic to the interests of aggrieved peasants. The essence of the conflict between Henry II and the church could be summed up in one question: should clerics accused of crimes be tried in royal (civil) or ecclesiastical (church) courts?

The leaders of the church believed that church law outranked all other laws, that God's concerns were more important than those of any individual king. Consequently, the church also believed that neither the king nor his representatives should interfere with church affairs even if the affair was the robbery and/or murder of an innocent peasant. The church also held that if the king did interfere, church leaders had the God-given right to resist him. But Henry, a king of remarkably modern sensibilities in this regard, was equally adamant that all church members in his land, from an archbishop on down, should be subject to his will and the laws he promulgated—especially if criminal acts were at issue.

A New Archbishop of Canterbury

By 1162 the king and the church, led by the archbishop of Canterbury, were at an impasse over this issue. The king was hesitant to push too hard on his goal of a unified criminal justice system because the English churches could always appeal to the pope in Rome to announce an unpleasant edict or threaten the excommunication (meaning eternal damnation) of any civil officer who sought to arrest church personnel.

Just as this issue was about to become very nasty, God seems to have intervened. The archbishop of Canterbury, the king's major opponent on this issue, died. Score one for Henry, because it is the king (or queen) of England, then as well as now, who appoints the next archbishop whenever God creates a vacancy. Henry thought he could resolve this church-versus-state impasse once and for all by making his most trusted friend and his most intimate adviser, Becket, the next archbishop of the church in England.

Becket had never been a priest, but this was a mere technical detail that could be, and was, quickly attended to. After all, he already was the archdeacon of Canterbury, and had been for some years. This meant that he was the second in command to, the chief administrator for, the archbishop. Even if he had not been the king's dearest friend, he would have been an obvious choice to be on the shortlist of realistic appointees for the new vacancy. It was common in those days for influential courtiers to hold multiple positions with multiple incomes. And Becket held many. This was one of the means by which he became so wealthy—all with the king's blessing. This wasn't corruption; merely good fortune. But Becket's fortunes were about to change.

The king assumed that Becket would continue as chancellor in addition to being archbishop. With the two offices held by one man, and that man the king's best friend, Henry assumed there would be no more conflict between church and state because the king's friend would see to it that the state prevailed. But Becket saw things differently and surprised the king by resigning as chancellor, feeling that his duty to God was greater than his duty to his king. The king wasn't pleased.

Miles's Law in Action

As the king's chancellor, Becket naturally sided with his monarch on the issue of civil-versus-church courts for errant priests. Miles's Law was in effect: where he stood depended on where he sat. And he sat at the king's side. But after his appointment as archbishop, he suddenly had a new seat; he then sat as head of the church in England. Consequently, his stands, his policy positions, on errant priests and a host of other issues reversed themselves. The new archbishop became the king's new arch foe, and a far more brilliant, tenacious, and dangerous foe than the previous occupant of his seat. After all, Becket was still the ablest bureaucrat and most eloquent advocate in the land. Only this time, his client was the church, not the king.

Henry was bitterly disappointed in Becket's new attitude as well as by the loss of a dear friend. A kind of bureaucratic civil war ensued. Becket refused to surrender either his policy positions or his appointment, which was for life. Fearing for his life, he fled England and took refuge under the protection of the King of France for six years. Eventually, reconciliation was arranged, and in 1170 Becket returned to England and his duties as archbishop.

When he returned, the old problems flared up. The breaking point came when Becket refused to lift the excommunication orders on several churchmen who had previously supported the king. Then came Christmas Day of 1170, when Becket, back in Canterbury Cathedral for the first time in six years, shocked his congregation by telling them that he would soon die, possibly as a martyr. Then he confirmed the excommunication orders, which he had already issued, and excommunicated another half-dozen of the king's supporters.

When Henry learned of this, shortly thereafter, he was furious. Once again he felt betrayed by Becket. In a bout of frustration, he supposedly shouted words to this effect: "Will nobody rid me of this turbulent priest?" No one knows the exact words generated by Henry's uncontrolled anger, but they were clear enough to trigger two actions: (1) send four knights—who believed they were acceding to the king's wishes—into the night to murder Becket in Canterbury Cathedral; and (2) provide Henry with plausible deniability when he asserted that he wasn't complicit in the death of England's leading churchman.

The murder itself, and the heated discussion that preceded it, has been extremely well documented by Becket's attendants. The knights, thinking they were on the king's business, felt no need to also murder the witnesses to the most famous murder in a cathedral. On December 29, at dusk, the knights found Becket enjoying his evening meal in a building near the cathedral. They sought to reason with him. They demanded on behalf of the king that Becket reverse his orders of excommunication. Becket told them it was now a matter for the pope.

The knights argued that because Becket had issued the orders, he should be able to reverse them. Becket refused. The knights implied that he was insulting the king. Becket angrily responded that anyone who challenged the church might also be excommunicated. This was a direct threat to the knights as well as the king. To excommunicate a king is to absolve his subjects from the requirement to obey him: it was equivalent to inciting revolution. Becket was

Careful with words, so his use of such language can lead one only to conclude that he was asking for his death.

The knights, who had approached Becket unarmed, left to gather their weapons, while Becket walked into the cathedral. He knew what was coming. The knights found him at prayer and took turns slashing this willing martyr. There was method in Becket's madness, his seeming unreasonableness. He knew that the only way he could defeat the king on the issue of church supremacy in its own sphere was to "force" the king to kill him, by becoming a bloody martyr for his cause, for his church. He knew the result would be universal condemnation of the king.

Henry immediately sent a message to the pope declaring his innocence in Becket's murder. At the same time he told the four knights to hide out in Scotland. His deniability existed in absence of a direct order on his part; but everyone believed that the king was complicit. To further atone for his role in the murder, however unintentional, Henry volunteered to perform any penance the pope might require. As might be expected, the pope wanted just what Becket wanted. In addition to a shopping list of church benefits, Henry agreed that royal courts would be powerless to try any member of the clergy; only church courts could try churchmen.

The church won. Becket won at the cost of his life. But it was only a tactical— and, from a historical perspective, temporary—victory, because the idea of a common law for all wouldn't die. It would take another 300 hundred years, but the secular courts gradually gained jurisdiction over all subjects of the king. Henry was right. Becket was wrong. Nevertheless, it was Becket the martyr who is remembered. It was Becket who was made a saint in 1173. Henry II, the absolute monarch and criminal justice system reformer, lives on through the ages only as a supporting player to Becket's story.

Occupational socialization is the process by which an individual absorbs and adopts the values, norms, and behavior of the occupational role models with whom he or she interacts. Occupational socialization is complete when an individual internalizes the values and norms of the occupational group. By that time, where he or she sits has long determined where he or she will stand. In the long history of the Western world there is no better, nor better known, example of occupational socialization in general and Miles's Law in particular than that of Thomas Becket, the martyred archbishop of Canterbury.

For Discussion: *A worker who has been extremely critical of management is made a supervisor and immediately changes his or her attitude; is this an example of Miles's Law?*

A number of city police departments in the United States are reexamining their behaviors and attitudes in light of the protests about discrimination towards minority communities—to what extent do you think occupational socialization plays a role in creating toxic organizational cultures?

ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

The study of organizational behavior includes those aspects of the behavioral sciences that focus on the understanding of human behavior in organizations. Students of public administration have always been interested in the behavior of people in government organizations. In these early days, there was also great concern about micro issues: how individuals within organizations operated and how decisions were made. Mary Parker Follett (1868-1933) made significant contributions in public administration's quest to understand how organizations worked. Indeed, one might say that she was a major voice for what today would be called participatory management. She wrote about the advantages of exercising "power with" as opposed to "power over." Her "law of the situation" was contingency management in its humble origins. Follett was one of the first to focus on the theory of individuals within organizations, which of course is the crux of understanding organizational behavior.

But fundamental assumptions about the behavior of such people at their work did not change dramatically from ancient efforts at organization until only a few decades ago. Using the traditional authoritarian, militaristic, and paternalistic set-



Mary Parker Follett. In her lecture at the newly opened London School of Economics. Let me speak to you for a moment about something of the utmost importance, but which has been far too little considered, and that is the part of the followers in the leadership situation. Their part is not merely to follow, they have a very active role to play and that is to keep the leader in control of a situation.

(Follett, 1949)

Follett's speeches and writings on administration appeared in the 1920s and 1930s, at a point where most of the management literature was focusing on the works of Frederick Taylor or

Henri Fayol. Her viewpoints differed strongly from the classical management tradition and are now seen as anticipating the organizational development school of thought in the 1960s and 1970s. Many consider her the first modern management scholar who focused on the true nature of the relationship between supervisor and subordinate —her concept of followership saw this as a special and interdependent (as opposed to the dependent) role in the supervisor-subordinate team. She also noted its significance in determining work-group behaviors and overall organizational performance. Follett stressed that it is this dynamic between the leader and follower that is critical and enables the "team" to dominate situations, not the ability of the leader to dominate the follower. This debate — now a central pillar in the leadership literature continues in the form of how teams need to be managed in the twenty-first century.

of attitudes toward work organizations, Hugo Münsterberg pioneered the application of psychological findings from laboratory experiments to practical matters. He sought to match the abilities of new hires with a company's work demands, to positively influence employee attitudes toward their work and their company, and to understand the impact of psychological conditions on employee productivity. Münsterberg's pre-World War I approach was typical of how the behavioral sciences tended to be applied in organizations well into the 1950s.

In contrast to Münsterberg's traditional perspective on organizational behavior, a new style of applied behavioral science emerged in the 1960s. It focused attention on seeking to answer questions such as how organizations could encourage their workers to grow and develop. The belief was that organizational creativity, flexibility, and prosperity would flow naturally from employee growth and development. The essence of the relationship between organization and people was redefined from dependence to codependence. In contrast, managers in Münsterberg's day did not believe (assume) that codependence was the "right" relationship between an organization and its employees.

There has long been considerable interest in the behavior of people inside bureaucracies. After all, the whole purpose of organization theory, as discussed in the previous chapter, is to create mechanisms for regulating the behavior of people in organizations. However, it was not until 1960, with the publication of Douglas McGregor's *The Human Side of Enterprise*, that our basic assumptions about the relationship between organizations and people truly began to change. This new approach to analyzing organizations focused on people, groups, and the relationships among them and the organizational environment. It was built around the following assumptions:

1. Organizations are created to serve human ends.
2. Organizations and people need each other (organizations need ideas, energy, and talent; people need careers, salaries, and work opportunities).
3. When the fit between the needs of the individual and the organization is poor, one or both will suffer: individuals may be exploited or may seek to exploit the organizations, or both.

4. A good fit between individuals and organizations benefits both because people gain meaningful and satisfying work-and organizations receive the talent and energy they need to thrive.

It is instructive to contrast these assumptions with the paternalistic authoritarian attitudes that preceded them. Previously, when new technology was to be introduced, new orders were given for its installation and operation. There was no concern about what the workers would think about such changes. They simply had no say. Once in a while some **Luddites** might surface, but they were quickly suppressed. Compare this "orders is orders" approach to how modern organizational behaviorists contemplate the introduction of a new technology. They immediately start thinking about and planning a specific approach:

1. Minimize fear of change by involving people at all levels in designing the introduction of the changes.
2. Minimize the negative impacts of the change on groups of workers at risk (such as older, less-skilled, or younger workers).
3. Co-opt informal and formal (usually union) leaders, especially those who might become antagonistic.
4. Find alternatives for employees who do not see the changes as consistent with their personal goals.

Because the modern perspective places a high value on the individual, employees are provided with maximum amounts of accurate information, so they can make informed decisions about their future.

The assumptions of the Münsterberg traditional perspective continue to be alive and well in many less-sophisticated organizations—where it is still assumed that people should be fitted to the organization. With the classical organization theory of Frederick Taylor and others, the organizational role of the applied behavioral sciences largely consisted of helping organizations find and shape people to serve as human replacement parts for the organizational machine.

Yet, under the right circumstances, people and organizations will grow and prosper together. Individuals and organizations are not necessarily antagonists. Managers can learn to unleash previously stifled energies and creativities. Two of the most important "tools" for doing this are group dynamics and organization development.

Group Dynamics

¹ **Luddites**

Originally English workers in the early nineteenth century who destroyed new textile machinery that was displacing them in factories; now the term, after the legendary Ned Ludd, refers to anyone who sabotages high-tech equipment to protect jobs.

Since the earliest days of the Industrial Revolution, workplace organizations have been constructed on the foundation principles of specialization and division of labor (remember Adam Smith's pin factory). In our complex organizations of today, few jobs can be done² from start to finish by one person. Specialization allows an organization to use people's skills and efforts more systematically and to focus their knowledge and energy on a limited number of tasks. Employee learning curves are minimized.

Most employees who perform sets of specialized functions are organizationally clustered in work groups, which are organized into units, or branches, which are organized into divisions or departments, which are organized into agencies, and so forth. Work groups attract people with similar backgrounds—for example, professional training, socialization, and experience as accountants, teachers, engineers, or computer programmers. All such shared backgrounds involve the socialization of people into common value/belief/behavior systems. We learn how to think and act like lawyers, teachers, or accountants—and like Virginians or Southern Californians.

Practically all groups, and particularly purposeful, specialized, organizational groups, develop their own sets of norms of behavioral assumptions about things such as the nature of their organizational environment and appropriate relations with other groups. All groups expect their members to conform to their norms. By rewarding activities the organization wants done and punishing counterproductive behavior; managers engineer the accomplishment of organizational goals. Virtually all organizations attempt to motivate employees through combinations of rewards-

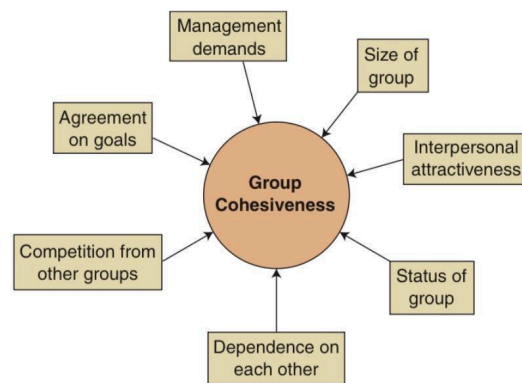


FIGURE 7.1
Factors contributing to group cohesiveness

and punishments. **Reinforcement** theories of motivation assume that people at work seek rewards and try to avoid punishments.

Acceptance of and adherence to group norms permits people to know what to expect from each other and to predict what other members will do in different circumstances. Norms cause people to behave in patterned and predictable ways.

² **Learning curve** • The time it takes to achieve optimal efficiency in performing a task. When workers repeatedly do a new task, the amount of labor per unit of output initially decreases according to a pattern that can be plotted as a curve on a graph.

Thus, by institutionalizing common expectations, they stabilize the organization. Always remember, though, that too much adherence to norms causes excessive conformity. This can hurt or destroy individualism—and even lead to groupthink (see the section on groupthink in this chapter). The potential damage here is not limited to individuals who work in organizations. Excessive conformity may result in so much organizational rigidity that the organization's overall ability to achieve its mission is degraded.

When a group becomes institutionalized in an organization, such as a production unit or a branch office, these shared beliefs, values, and assumptions—these norms—become the essence of a cohesive group and of an organizational sub-culture. Most group subcultures have a resemblance to the overall organizational culture but also contain unique elements that form through the impacts of events, circumstances, and personalities. Considering the normal loyalties that groups demand and the affiliational needs they meet, it becomes easy to understand why in-groups and out-groups and feelings of we-and-they and we-versus-they are so characteristic of life in organizations.

3

Group dynamics is the subfield of organization behavior concerned with the nature of groups, how they develop, and how they interrelate with individuals and other groups. Usually the term "group" refers to what is more technically known as a primary group—a group small enough to permit face-to-face interaction among its members that remains in existence long enough for some personal relations, sentiments, and feelings of identification or belonging to develop. There are two basic kinds of primary groups: formal and informal.

Formal groups are officially created by a larger organization, usually for the purpose of accomplishing tasks. Employees are assigned to formal groups based on their position in the organization. There are two basic types of formal groups. First, there are command groups that are specified in a formal organization chart. These include both supervisors and the people who report directly to them. Groups of this type are the essential building blocks of organizational structure. They vary from a mail room staff to the employees of a small branch office to an entire headquarters staff. Second, there are task groups, formally sanctioned job-oriented units with short lives. Here you will find employees who work together to complete a particular project or task and then are disbanded. Any **ad hoc** ("for this") **task force** or temporary ("for this") committee is an example.

³ **Reinforcement**-An inducement to perform in a particular manner.

Positive reinforcement occurs when an individual receives a desired reward that is contingent on some prescribed behavior. Negative reinforcement occurs when an individual works to avoid an undesirable outcome.

Ad hoc • A Latin term meaning "temporarily, for this one time." It is sometimes used to criticize methods that substitute for standard procedures.

Task force • A temporary interdisciplinary team within a larger organization charged with accomplishing a specific goal. Task forces are typically used in government when a problem crosses departmental lines.

Informal groups are made up of individuals who have spontaneously developed relationships and patterns of interactions in work situations. Included here are employees who associate voluntarily, primarily to satisfy social needs. Although informal groups at work may have goals and tasks (for example, ethnic support groups, bowling clubs, and luncheon speaker groups), their primary reasons for existence are friendship, affiliation, and shared interests. Although informal groups seldom are formally sanctioned, they are extremely important to the working of organizations. Their norms, values, beliefs, and expectations have significant impacts on work-related behavior and attitudes. Chester I. Barnard in *The Functions of the Executive* has provided the classic statement on the vital significance of informal⁴ groups:

Informal organization, although comprising the processes of society which are unconscious as contrasted with those of formal organization which are conscious, has two important classes of effects: (a) it establishes certain attitudes, understandings, customs, habits, institutions; and (b) it creates the condition under which formal organization may arise.

(1938)

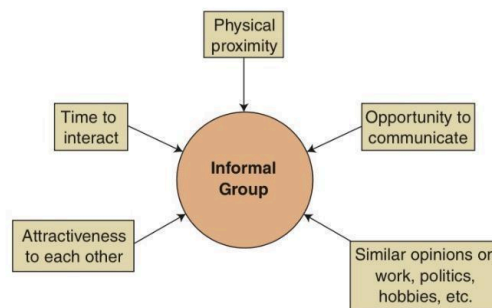


FIGURE 7.2
Factors leading to the creation of informal groups

Groups in organizations of all types are of high importance and interest to students and practitioners of organizational behavior, both for what happens in them (and why) and what happens between them.

Organization Development

The French Foreign Legion, when it occupied most of the North African desert early in the twentieth century, had the slogan "march or die"-which meant that a legionnaire could not survive unless he kept his place in the moving column.

⁴**Future shock**- Alvin Toffler's term, from his book *Future Shock*, for the "distress, both physical and psychological, that arises from an overload of the human organism's physical adaptive systems and its decision-making processes. Put more simply, future shock is the human response to overstimulation.

A similar slogan should be on the walls of all organizations: "Change or die." The message here is that without constant change, renovation-indeed reinventing this social organism will die just as surely as the solitary legionnaire of old.

Organization development (OD) is planned organizational change. Organizations exist in a dynamic environment, both internally and externally, to which they must respond or become ineffectual. The responsibility of OD advisers, specialists on applied behavioral science, is to facilitate change—to use their knowledge of the behavioral sciences for organizational improvement. These advisers can be internal in that they already work for the organization or external independent consultants.

A frequently desired change is the installation of a beneficent managerial philosophy. More modest goals might be the creation of an atmosphere of trust in order to facilitate communications or the development of participatory mechanisms that would stimulate productivity. Any organization that wishes to survive or simply to remain healthy must periodically divest itself of those parts or characteristics that contribute to its malaise.

OD itself is not a philosophy. It is an approach or strategy for increasing organizational effectiveness. As a process, it has no value biases, but it is usually associated with the idea that effectiveness is found by integrating the individual's desire for growth with organizational goals. There is no universal OD model that can easily be plugged into a troubled organization. The basic task of the OD adviser is to adapt appropriate portions of the generally available OD technology to the immediate demands of his or her organizational problem. This is why the OD adviser must be thoroughly conversant with the findings of the behavioral technology of modern management. Because no textbook will have a case study of the exact organizational problem to be remedied, these advisers must be prepared to draw on their backgrounds to improvise. OD advising, like much of the rest of public administration, contains a large element of art.

The OD process is made all the more difficult to implement in the public sector because top management, which must first be sold on the OD process, is fractured, consisting of political and career executives, legislative committees, client groups, and so on. Hostility can also be expected from line management. As an OD role for the personnel department implies a greater involvement with management's traditional line prerogatives, it may take some time before personnel's agitation in this regard is viewed as supportive instead of threatening.

A decision on the part of top management to suddenly replace a highly structured authoritarian organizational climate with an atmosphere of greater employee participation and collaboration probably would create a great sense of shock and suspicion among employees. All changes in organizational climate or culture must be well planned in advance and implemented gradually. OD is not something that can be accomplished in an afternoon. It is a slow process that extends, at the very least, over many months and requires the commitment and cooperation of all of the principal actors in the organizational drama. The first phase of almost all OD models is the education of top management in basic OD objectives and strategies.

OD as a process is one that must flow from the top down. As leadership sets the tone of organizational life, it is futile to seek to change the pace and quality of that life without uninhibited cooperation from the top down.

OD is concerned with deep, long-lasting organization-wide ⁵change or improvement—not in superficial changes in isolated organizational pockets. This concern for broad-based and long-term change led OD practitioners to an interest in the concept of organizational culture long before it became a fashionable management topic in the 1980s. OD advisers have developed numerous strategies and techniques for improving organizations: most of them utilize **interventions** facilitated by outsiders (often called change agents). Some of the most common strategies include organizational diagnosis, process consultation, team building (in many forms), action research, data feedback, job enlargement, job enrichment, and conflict management. But each adviser has his or her own preferred tactics.

The origins of the organization development movement can be generally traced to the Hawthorne studies (discussed later in this chapter). But the specific understandings of organizational behavior-oriented change processes came out of the sensitivity training (or T-group) movement that started in 1946 when Kurt Lewin and associates collaboratively conducted a training workshop to help improve racial relations and community leadership in New Britain, Connecticut. During their evening staff meetings, they discussed the behavior of workshop participants and the dynamics of events. Several workshop participants asked to join the night discussions, and the results of the process eventually led to the initiation and institutionalization of T-group technology. Although the early T-groups focused primarily on individual growth and development, they quickly were adapted for organizational application. T-groups became the method by which organizational members learned how to communicate honestly and directly about facts and feelings. (From the human relations perspective, feelings are facts.) Thus T-groups became a keystone strategy for increasing organizational effectiveness by improving interpersonal communications (e.g. feedback), reducing defensiveness (and thus rigid-ity, and otherwise helping organizations achieve greater effectiveness through the development of coping processes. The meaning of coping here is twofold: coping with the job and coping with fellow workers.

But the T-group needed to be part of a larger overarching methodology. Survey research methodology, when combined with feedback/communication (T-group) techniques and applied to planned organizational change, resulted in the development of the action research model of organizational change—the mainstay of OD practitioners and theorists. The action research model is a process for identifying needs for organizational improvement through the use of external consultation but also through fostering psychological ownership of problems and solutions by organizational members. Briefly, action research involves the following:

⁵ **Intervention** -The entering of an outsider into an ongoing system of relationships, such as an organization, to help make it perform better.

Psychological ownership- Emotional involvement with, and commitment to, an intangible something, such as an organizational reform effort.

1. Collecting organizational diagnostic data (ascertaining the problem) usually either through written questionnaires or interviews
 2. Systematically feeding back information to the organization members who provided input.
 3. Discussing what the information means to members and its implications for the organization in order to be certain if the "diagnosis" is accurate and to generate psychological ownership of the need for actions to improve the situation.
- Jointly developing an improvement plan, using both the knowledge and skills of the consultant and the insider perspective of members.
5. Repeating all of the preceding as needed.

The key to long-term OD success is this very last step: repeat as needed. Lewis is well known for his assertion that social change must be viewed as a three-step process of unfreezing, change, and refreezing. If one focuses only on the change process per se, change will be short lived at best. The organization must put the change in place to see if it takes. The process is called action research because the thing being experimented on—the organization—is constantly in action. When Lewin says "unfreezing," he means opening up the organization to change.

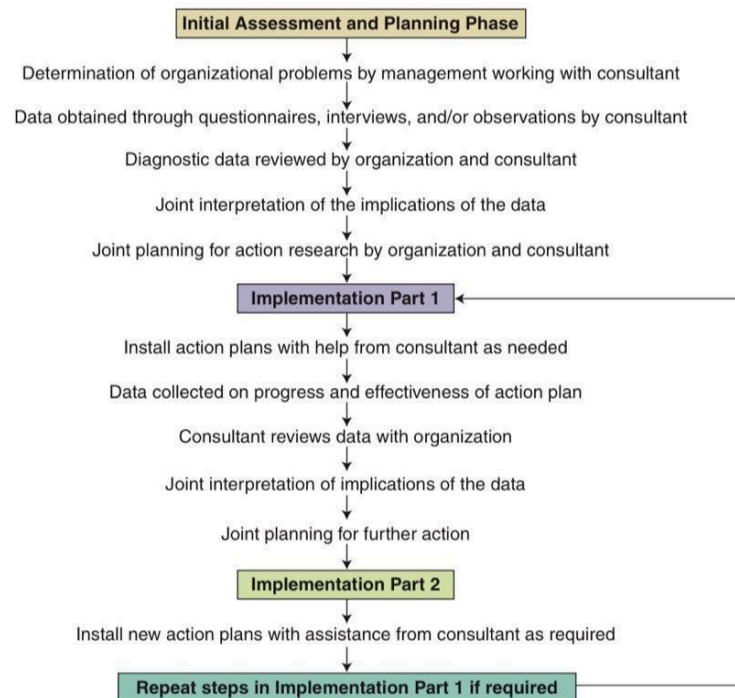


FIGURE 7.3

The organization development action research model

The "refreezing" process is installing the new change, then watching it to see if the "refreezing" is an improvement. This OD effort toward continuous improvement is a precursor to the total quality management (TQM) movement discussed in Chapter 8.

The ultimate question here is not whether organizations should change. They are constantly changing in response to the dynamic environments in which they all exist. Of course, some environments are more dynamic than others. But change, fast or slow, is inexorable. The best line Thomas Wolfe ever wrote was the title of his 1940 novel *You Can't Go Home Again*. The home you left, because of the simple passage of time, is no longer the home to which you return. The home in which you once lived, just like the office in which you once worked, changes every day. People get older, attitudes evolve, and new skills are learned no matter what we do. So the question for would-be managers of organizations is not change: yes or no, but unplanned change or planned change. OD as planned change is just a tool for managers to gain control of and give direction to the inevitable changes within their organizations.

The Impact of Personality

Chris Argyris, a preeminent analyst of organizational phenomena for more than four decades, first became noteworthy with the publication of his 1957 book *Personality and Organization*. In it he claimed that there was an inherent conflict between the mature adult personality and the needs of modern organizations. The problem, simply put, was that most organizations were treating adults like children. As the truth of this finding was made increasingly evident, ways of treating employees changed. A new dogma evolved that organizations should give their citizens all the responsibilities they could handle—and then some.

While this nicely dovetailed with concerns for greater productivity and effectiveness, the inherent problem of personality was not so much superseded as ignored. After all, in the era of equal employment opportunity and workforce diversity, efforts to address the impact of individual personalities on organizations could be dangerous. Who needs lawsuits claiming that an employee's cultural heritage is being "attacked" by an inherently oppressive organization and a supervisor insensitive to the subtleties of managing in a multicultural environment?

Nevertheless, organizational analysts have once again begun, despite the diversity issue minefield, to look anew at the impact of personality. And they are beginning to say things that will make some people uncomfortable. They are not rejecting what Argyris said about adults and organizations. But they are saying that different kinds of adults fit organizations differently, that individuals who might have been heroes in an earlier age because of their inherent aggressiveness and disdain for established authority are too often misfits in a contemporary bureaucratic culture.

The issue here is inherent temperament. According to journalist Winifred Gallagher, there is still much to be said for the validity of four basic human temperaments first described in ancient Greece by Hippocrates 2,500 years ago. His four "humors" are still commonly used today to informally describe personality types.

We have all seen people who are sanguine (optimistic and energetic), melancholic (moody and withdrawn), choleric (irritable and impulsive), and phlegmatic (calm and slow). Indeed, many people have displayed all of these "humors" or moods at one time or another.

Even if we discard Hippocrates' "humors" as a classification system, it is just common sense that a "Dirty Harry" (the archetypal aggressive police officer portrayed by Clint Eastwood in a series of films) should not be placed in charge of the police department's computer system. Similarly, an extremely shy, soft-spoken person would not usually be the best individual to represent your organization on radio and TV. And someone prone to constant anxiety and worry will probably not do well in a high-stress position. Yet such mismatches are so commonplace that they are a leading cause of organizational incompetence.

THE IMPACT OF BUREAUCRATIC STRUCTURE ON BEHAVIOR

The impact of bureaucratic structure on the behavior of its denizens results from their unique personalities interacting with the organizational structures in which they must function. Each organization has structures that define the unique ways labor is divided, how specialized roles and functions are coordinated (related to each other and to other organizational levels and functions), how information flows among people and groups, and how the system of controls (how tasks are measured, evaluated, and altered) is to work. These structures, often visualized in the form of an organization chart, establish how roles, expectations, and resource allocations are determined for people and groups in any given organization. Structure is a primary reason why organizational behavior differs from behavior in everyday life and thus why organizational behavior developed as a separate field of study within the applied behavioral sciences. Structure, however, is only one of a variety of forces that affect the behavior of people in organizations. Attitudes and behaviors are also shaped by peer group pressure, shared group norms of behavior, social and technical aspects of work tasks, and the organization's internal and external cultures (discussed in Chapter 2).

The structures of a large bureaucracy are inherently conservative in that they are slow to change. Thus one of the perennial complaints about bureaucracy is its lack of responsiveness to changing conditions. But this notorious slowness to change is very often a function of its legal mandate. No public bureaucracy in a democratic government does anything that is not provided for by its enabling legislation. This alleged slowness, from another point of view, is simply its obedience to the law. What a chief executive would streamline and make more efficient, the power brokers of the legislature would just as often keep bloated and inefficient. And if government jobs for their constituents are at stake, efficiency and economy in government suffer even more. This is exactly what members of the US Congress must confront every time the Department of Defense seeks to close military bases. Congressional doves suddenly turn into defense hawks when the jobs of the voters in their district are at stake.

As organizations grew from small offices and shops into large corporations and government agencies, the disciplined hierarchies and unambiguous functional assignments of bureaucracy

evolved as the ideal structural form. This structure allowed for pervasive control from the top of an organizational pyramid. But tight control is a good news/bad news story. The good news is that it is possible to centrally monitor and regulate the behavior of the employees. The bad news is that there are high costs involved with excessive control and the line between tight control and excessive control is a thin one. Employees in organizational straitjackets are unlikely to exercise initiative. Like automatons—human robots—they perform their prescribed duties until appropriate bureaucratic authority tells them otherwise. A properly designed bureaucratic organization can be impressively efficient even though none of its individual bureaucrats are in any way exceptional individuals. These machines, whether governmental or industrial, can be extraordinarily impressive in performance even when run by mediocre people. Thus the French novelist Honoré de Balzac called bureaucracy "the giant power wielded by pygmies." In this sense bureaucracy, far from being incompetent, is a bastion of super-competence—its overall performance far exceeding the quality that could otherwise be expected from its miscellaneous human parts.

Bureaucratic Dysfunctions

Unfortunately, bureaucracies often have within them the seeds of their own incompetence, like a bad genetic inheritance. Contemporary writers such as Robert K.

Merton and Victor A. Thompson have argued that bureaucracies have inherent dysfunctional and pathological elements that make them inefficient in operations.

Merton found that bureaucracies have a "trained incapacity." This refers to a "state of affairs in which one's abilities function as inadequacies or blind spots. Actions based on training and skills that have been successfully applied in the past may result in inappropriate responses under changed conditions." According to Merton, bureaucracy exerts constant pressures on people to be methodical and disciplined, to conform to patterns of obligations. These pressures eventually cause people to adhere to rules as an end rather than a means—as a matter of blind conformance.

It is this blind conformance that gives bureaucracy its Catch-22 quality, its trained incapability to respond to contradictory requirements. This "catch," from Joseph Heller's 1961 novel of the same name about American bomber crews in World War II, meant that you could get out of flying combat missions if you were insane. All you had to do was ask. But if you asked, you demonstrated that you were not insane because seeking to avoid combat was a rational, not insane, act. In Heller's words a pilot "would be crazy to fly more missions and sane if he didn't, but if he was sane, he had to fly them. If he flew them, he was crazy and didn't have to, but if he didn't, he was sane and had to" (Heller, 1961, p. 46). The "catch" is beautifully circular in its perversity. Because the book was such an enormous best seller, "catch-22" entered the language as the code word for the essence of bureaucratic dysfunctionality, for being trapped between contradictory bureaucratic regulations. A common example of catch-22 is this double bind: a person can't get a job without experience but can't get experience without first having a job.

Bureaucratic structure also stresses depersonalized relations, and power and authority gained by virtue of organizational position rather than by thought or action. Thus ideas and opinions are valued not according to their intrinsic merit but according to one's rank. This would be perfectly fine if the bosses truly were always smarter than the workers. Robert Merton sees bureaucratic structure as more than affecting organizational behavior and thinking: it also determines and controls. It determines that not all of the organization's brain power will be used and that the objectively less deserving may remain in control. Of course, there is always the bright, aspiring bureaucratic leader who holds his tongue or her brains in check while climbing the bureaucratic career ladder. But the danger here is that he or she suffers from "evaporation." Historian B.H. Liddell Hart observed in his *Why Don't We Learn from History?* that "ambitious officers when they came in sight of promotion [to high rank] would decide that they would bottle up their thoughts and ideas, as a safety precaution, until they reached the top and could put these ideas into practice. Unfortunately the usual result, after years of such self-repression for the sake of their ambition, was that when the bottle was eventually uncorked the contents had evaporated" (Liddell Hart, 1972, p. 20).

As a form of organization, bureaucracy has many advantages: order, predictability, stability, professionalism, and consistency. Nevertheless, the behavioral consequences of bureaucratic structure are often negative. To illustrate this, Victor Thompson combined "bureaucracy" with "pathological" to describe the all-too-familiar "bureaupathic official." Such a person "usually exaggerates the official, nontechnical aspects of relationships and suppresses the technical and the informal." Being insecure, he or she "may be expected to insist on petty rights and prerogatives, on protocol, on procedure—in short, on those things least likely to affect directly the goal accomplishment of the organization" (1961 pp. 164-165). His is the classic stereotype of "the bureaucrat." Thus an otherwise "functionless reviewing officer will often insist most violently on his right to review and scream like an injured animal if he is bypassed." Moreover, "if he has a counterpart at a higher organizational level, he will probably insist on exclusive contact with that higher clearance point. By controlling this particular communication channel, he protects his authority and influence." This stereotype has been around, quite literally, for ages. In *Measure for Measure* (Act II, Scene 2) Shakespeare writes of the "petty officer," the "proud man, dress'd in a little brief authority, most ignorant of what he's most assur'd."

Bureaucratic Impersonality

Max Weber referred to bureaucracy's "special virtue" as "dehumanization." Hardly anyone would argue that bureaucracy does not have dehumanizing consequences for its employees and, to a lesser extent, for its clients as well. By dehumanization, Weber meant the elimination "from official business [of] love, hatred and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements." In Weber's view, formalization, hierarchy, and the other central features of bureaucracy render the individual bureaucrat "only a single cog in an ever-moving mechanism which prescribes to him an essentially fixed route of march" (Weber 1978, p. 988). Consequently, "the individual bureaucrat is forged to the community of all functionaries who are integrated into the mechanism." He cannot "squirm out of the apparatus in which he is harnessed."

Today the term impersonality is generally used in referring to this aspect of bureaucratic behavior. Viewed against a historical background of administrative organizations characterized by such "irrational" elements as nepotism, personal subjugation⁶, and capricious and uninformed judgment, impersonality can be seen as a step in the direction of greater rationality; a step further in the direction of Aristotle's ideal of "a government of laws; not of men."

Bureaucratic impersonality has three major advantages. First, it increases organizational effectiveness by enabling administrators to do things that are otherwise difficult for people to do. In the course of their normal functioning, organizations may create considerable hardships for individuals. This is especially true of public organizations, which are often engaged in punishment, taxation, and the withholding of benefits such as food stamps, unemployment compensation, or welfare funds. Impersonality creates a desirable moral insensitivity. For example, it is much easier—emotionally speaking—for military planners on a general staff to select targets for bombardment than it is for a rifleman to shoot an enemy soldier who is a few yards ahead of him and whose face is clearly visible. Similarly, it is far easier for welfare agency budget analysts to cut school lunch funding for poor students than for a food service worker at a school cafeteria to see children go hungry when they cannot pay for lunch.

A second advantage of impersonality flows from the fact that as Peter Blau and Marshall Meyer observed in *Bureaucracy in Modern Society* that when emotional or subjective personal aspects drive or shape administrative choices, efficiency or cost considerations will be sacrificed. If, for example, recruitment and promotions within an organization are based on personal preference, or ascriptive criteria (such as race or class), rather than competence, that organization's administrative processes will over time become less efficient.

Finally, impersonality tends to produce relatively evenhanded rule application. Thus procedural, if not necessarily actual, justice is ensured. "By the book" behavior requires equal treatment of those in the same categories, regardless of their social status. While this attitude may cause hardship for some, there has long been great philosophic support for it. For example, eighteenth-century philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau denied that it was an abridgment of anyone's freedom to do the general will. Rousseau defined freedom in this context as simply being treated the same as everyone else. He would have loudly applauded modern bureaucracy's institutionalized lack of respect for a person's station in life.

Although impersonality may further procedural justice, it may at the same time fail to provide substantive or actual justice. The decisions bureaucrats reach may fail to fit the individual cases

⁶ **Nepotism** • Any practice by which officeholders award positions to members of their immediate family. It is derived from the Latin nepos, meaning "nephew" or "grandson." The rulers of the medieval church were often thought to give special preference to their nephews in distributing churchly offices—at that time, "nephew" being a euphemism for an illegitimate son.

General will • Jean Jacques Rousseau's ideal from *The Social Contract* (1761) that there is a collective will or consensus among the people, which is the ultimate locus of all political power.

in terms of providing a just resolution. Many people fail to accept that their case is no different from those of others. They resent being treated on the basis of categories to which they do not feel they rightly belong.

This tendency of bureaucracy has often aroused considerable hostility—sometimes even violence—on the part of clients. But the nature of impersonal organization is such that bureaucrats must apply established rules and procedures, even when they realize that these will not provide a reasonable or just resolution of a specific problem. Consequently, it has frequently been argued that a characteristic pathology of bureaucracy is an inversion of ends and means whereby the rules become more important than the objectives underlying their creation.

While impersonality is acknowledged as a central feature of bureaucratic behavior, there is disagreement over its desirability. Given that it has both advantages and dysfunctions, it would appear that the most sensible approach is to try to maximize the former while minimizing the latter. At the very least, this requires that students and practitioners of public administration avoid sweeping generalizations about bureaucratic behavior. The focus of concern ought to be the operations of individual bureaucratic units. By the same token it is imperative that the serious student recognize that some popular analyses of bureaucratic behavior—for example, **Parkinson's Law** that "work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion" (Parkinson, 1957, p. 2) and the **Peter principle** that "in a hierarchy every employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence" (Peter, 1969, p. 8)—are generally more amusing than descriptive of reality.

Bureaucrat Bashing

Bashing is extreme and public criticism (often unwarranted and irrational) of a person, policy, or nation. Domestically, bashing has often followed the word bureaucrat. During the 1980s, the constant complaints and jokes about the competence of government employees—led by President Ronald "Government Is the Problem" Reagan—helped to create an acceptance of bureaucrat bashing. Following his 1964 campaign for governor of California, Reagan was constantly complaining that "government is like a big baby—an alimentary canal with a big appetite at one end and no sense of responsibility at the other"

The term *bureaucrat bashing* has been used so frequently in so many contexts that it has taken on two meanings that are the opposite of each other. Those on the ideological right who tend to oppose big government use it to refer to justified criticism of "lazy and incompetent" government employees. At the same time, those on the ideological left, who tend to be more supportive of big government, use it to refer to the political right's "unnecessary and inappropriate" condemnation of public employees. But the meaning goes beyond rhetoric. The term now also refers to widespread support for specific policies that adversely impact or demean public employees. For example, monitoring phone calls to prevent personal use, reducing office sizes, and curtailing free parking privileges all reduce the quality of bureaucratic life on the job. And being asked to take a urine test to detect drug use or to sign an anti-leak (of information) pledge may be personally demeaning

The problem with bureaucracy from the point of view of the cultural conservatives is that the values they most cherish seem to be under attack by bureaucratic institutions. They see a red flag in both the literal (meaning danger) and political senses when a government agency such as the National Endowment for the Arts subsidizes works of art they consider to be obscene or when a government welfare agency takes the social stigma out of illegitimacy by making no distinction between widowed (or divorced) women with dependent children in financial need and never-married mothers. The bureaucratic grouping of them together as simply "single mothers" is morally offensive to many cultural conservatives who view it as a policy that only encourages a continual rise in the number of children born outside of marriage. (In 1960, that was 5 percent, rising to 32 percent in 1995, and reaching 41 percent by 2008—where the number has stayed—41 percent in 2013 (Congressional Research Service, 2014). Thus the bureaucracy with its subsidizing of single motherhood is castigated by conservatives as seeking to destroy the traditional family, the indispensable weaver of the social fabric.

There is really nothing new in American politics about attacking the bureau-crazy. Indeed, the middle of the Declaration of Independence of 1776 contains a major assault on the bureaucracy of King George's colonial government. But what is new is that the people running the bureaucracies, not just their political opposition, are also on the attack. Ronald Reagan won election in 1980 by running against the federal bureaucracy. After four years of being responsible for it, he successfully ran against it again in 1984. Bill Clinton pledged in his successful 1992 presidential campaign to reinvent federal bureaucracy, asserting that he would cut 100,000 jobs from the federal workforce within one year if he was elected. The bureaucracy is an easy political target to bash because, being largely politically neutral, it does not bash back.

The Case for Bureaucracy

Despite widespread berating of "the bureaucracy" and a constant stream of jokes about the efficiency of government employees, Americans often like their bureaucrats and think highly of the quality of the services they receive. Charles T. Goodsell, a professor of public administration at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, got so enraged about the popular "vision of a failed bureaucracy" that he wrote *The New Case for Bureaucracy* (revised several times and now in a 2014 edition), exploring what he called "the great falsehood about American government." After reviewing a wealth of research reports, he found "satisfactory citizen treatment as the norm rather than the exception."

Goodsell's argument is that the accepted view of political conservatives that government never performs as well as business is basically an urban myth. In comparing American bureaucracy to that of other countries he holds that in terms of service, competence, and integrity (that is lack of corruption) it is "light years ahead" of other countries. Goodsell's book is a perennial rebuttal to all those misguided or malicious bureaucrat bashers.