

# Utilizing Power in Relation to EDI At Work



Employment and Social Development Canada

Emploi et Développement social Canada

## PURPOSE

This guide aims to highlight power at both individual and structural levels and the relative impact it has on EDI work. The individual level will focus on utilizing *French & Raven’s model of Individual Leadership Power*. The structural level focuses on additional contributing factors and utilizes some of *Patricia Bradshaw’s model of the Four Concepts of Power*. This guide and accompanying resources are informed through the lens of experiences most common to Black employees but also are shared by individuals who identify as BIPOC or from other historically excluded groups.

## EDI LENS OF FRENCH & RAVEN’S LEADERSHIP POWER MODEL

### Six Individual Leadership Powers

Type of Power	Explanation & Resources
Coercive Power	<p><b>Definition:</b> Power from force and threat of negative consequences.</p> <p><b>Ways to Practice this Power</b></p> <p>Oftentimes coercion is a detractor to EDI efforts. There are only nuanced specific scenarios in which this type of power should be use. These circumstances are usually regarding HR and disciplinary manners or to align business goals and leaders.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reinforcing disciplinary action in the event of bullying, harassment, and discrimination.</li> <li>Ensuring leadership KPI’s, results and variable pay are in alignment with EDI initiatives to ensure that all leaders are prioritizing EDI goals and work.</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact to Black Community Members</b></p> <p>Statistically, Black employees are more over monitored and scrutinized in their work and penalized at greater levels than peers. This has appeared in a variety of scenarios including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The “Angry Black Woman” trope</li> <li>Supertokenization</li> <li>The “Pet to Threat” trope</li> </ul> <p><b>Questions to Ask Yourself</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do you critique or provide feedback to team members on their work? Are there any team members that are more heavily criticized in their work than others?</li> <li>What does psychological safety mean to you and your team? What steps are you taking to create this environment?</li> <li>How do you encourage your team to share feedback with you? If your team rarely shares feedback with you, how are you working to create a space where they do it more?</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Giving &amp; Receiving Feedback</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">The Bias of “Professionalism” Standards</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Creating Psychological Safety for Black Women</a></li> </ul>
Reward Power	<p><b>Definition:</b> Power from providing a benefit or positive reinforcement.</p> <p><b>Ways to Practice this Power</b></p> <p>Acknowledging individual team member contributions in 1:1, team and organizational wide settings and ensuring the right people are credited for their work.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing acknowledgments in public communication channels.</li> <li>• Correcting mistakes for credited work and/or ensuring not just leaders are included in acknowledgements.</li> <li>• Ensuring team members receive positive feedback for their contributions in performance reviews and are financially credited for contributions where possible.</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact to Black Community Members</b></p> <p>Black employees are often less credited for their contributions and receive less positive feedback and recognition for their work.</p> <p><b>Questions to Ask Yourself</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who receives praise more within your team or organization?</li> <li>• How does recognizing team members for their contributions impact them within the team and across the organization?</li> <li>• What steps can you take to ensure team members are recognized and credited for the work that they do?</li> </ul> <p><b>Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Providing More Positive Feedback</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Biased in Performance Feedback of Black Women Employees</a></li> </ul>
Referent Power	<p><b>Definition:</b> Power from respect, loyalty and likeability.</p> <p><b>Ways to Practice this Power</b></p> <p>Using your influence to raise support or advocacy for initiatives that are less visible within your organization.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending learning events and inclusion-based initiatives in your workplace and amplifying the work to your team and peers.</li> <li>• Volunteering your own time to support events related to inclusion-based initiatives and sharing these opportunities more broadly with others.</li> <li>• Calling out microaggressions you witness and taking on the onus of educating other team members off the backs the people personally impacted.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Impact to Black Community Members</b></p> <p>Individuals have a bias towards liking people who are more like themselves and bias against those who are different. This creates ingroups (similar to yourself) and outgroups (different from yourself). Similarities could be based on demographics, shared experiences and more.</p> <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In terms of race, historically, Black and other racialized individuals often end up part of outgroups as the more marginalized and nondominant team members within a workplace or social setting.</li> </ul> <p><b>Questions to Ask Yourself</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do common interests or life experiences tie into who you tend to mentor and share more opportunities with?</li> <li>• How do you use the influence you have to uplift team members who don't have that same level of influence?</li> <li>• Why do you like the people you like and what is stopping you from getting to know other colleagues better?</li> </ul> <p><b>Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Similarity Bias Deep Dive</a></li> </ul>
Expert Power	<p><b>Definition:</b> Power from deep expertise or knowledge of a particular area.</p> <p><b>Ways to Practice this Power</b></p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stop and question yourself if you are over scrutinizing team members that have a level of expertise you don't have.</li> <li>• Spend time training/sharing expertise by mentoring team members and question yourself on why you offer support to some team members over others as well as how you can offer support more broadly.</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact to Black Community Members</b></p> <p>Oftentimes expertise is obtained through a form of degree or certification. There are many systemic financial constraints and barriers that have historically limited Black and other marginalized community members from having the same level of access to quality education.</p> <p>On the other hand, Black individuals that obtain higher level qualification are often more challenged and dismissed than peers at the same level, meaning that they often need additional qualifications to receive the same level of credibility as peers.</p> <p><b>Questions to Ask Yourself</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whose expertise do you find yourself challenging more and why?</li> <li>• How can you mentor and train others more who don't have your level of expertise?</li> <li>• Who are you choosing to mentor and train more over others?</li> </ul> <p><b>Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Black People More Penalized for Self-Promotion</a></li> </ul>

<p>Legitimate Power</p>	<p><b>Definition:</b> Power from an office role, title, position or group.</p> <p><b>Ways to Practice this Power:</b></p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure you are taking the steps to create an environment of psychological safety.</li> <li>• Regularly seek feedback from team members and others on your management.</li> <li>• Create ways to grow and develop individuals outside of their role duties (i.e. Put them forward for opportunities, establish clear paths related to promotion goals.)</li> <li>• Ensure that Black and other marginalized team members with legitimate power are given the right support, resources, tools and financing to be successful.</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact to Black Community Members</b></p> <p>Historically and currently Black employees are seen in significantly smaller quantities as you look at higher levels in organizations. These individuals collectively hold less power from being in managerial and leadership roles and face more challenges when trying to move into these roles.</p> <p><b>Questions to Ask Yourself:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there certain leaders the organization provides more funding to than other others and if so, why? How does this hinder less funded leaders from being successful in their roles?</li> <li>• As a manager how am I ensuring that all my team members are provided with opportunities to grow and that those opportunities are distributed fairly and timely?</li> <li>• How often as a manager do I check on team member growth and ensure they have the right resources to progress?</li> <li>• How often do I seek feedback from team members and ensure that I've created a psychologically safe environment and how do I hold myself accountable?</li> </ul> <p><b>Resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Supporting &amp; Sponsoring Black Employees</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">How to Sponsor Black Employees More</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Further Breaking Down Power Dynamics as a Manager</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Empower Black Women Leaders</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Black Women Ambitious but Less Supported</a></li> </ul>
<p>Informational Power</p>	<p><b>Definition:</b> Power from a network or from having access to valuable information.</p> <p><b>Ways to Practice this Power:</b></p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you mentor someone find ways to expand your mentorship to beyond yourself.</li> <li>• Ensure you are creating space for all team members to be included at events and socials.</li> <li>• Create opportunities for team members to be exposed to other individuals beyond their team.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Impact to Black Community Members</b></p> <p>Historically, Black employees have not had access to the same level of networks as peers. Network access could be based on a variety of in-group and out group characteristics (i.e. education-based alumni groups, social and professional groups etc.). In Canada, this is amplified by the fact that many Black individuals belong to immigrant communities and therefore did not initially cultivate the same level of relevant Canada based networks.</p> <p><b>Questions to Ask Yourself:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you use the networks you have to better support individuals that may not have access to that same network?</li> <li>• How do you train managers and individuals to think beyond themselves when supporting employee growth and development?</li> <li>• How do you provide equal opportunities for all employees to expand and grow their network?</li> </ul> <p><b>Resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Remote Networking Challenges for People of Colour</a></li> </ul>
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## STRUCTURAL POWER CONSIDERATIONS

### Patricia Bradshaw’s Model of the Four Concept of Power

Patricia Bradshaw’s model of power divides power at the organizational level into four components of two forms of power at a systems level and two forms of power at an individual level. Ultimately these forms often support and tie into one other.

Type of Power	Definition & Resource
Surface Personal Power	<p><b>Definition:</b> Power from legitimate roles, ability to provide reward or punishment, relevant expertise, influence through association or information.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> French &amp; Raven’s Individual Leadership Power Model (i.e. Managerial roles etc.)</p>
Deep Personal Power	<p><b>Definition:</b> Power from being able to contribute to an organization in an authentic manner and have an original voice, self-awareness, and self-agency.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> Power stemming from establishing psychologically safe environments and equitable opportunities.</p>
Surface Structural Power	<p><b>Definition:</b> Power from positions of high visibility, tasks and roles that have high importance, internal support groups, roles with autonomy.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> Revenue generating roles, finance or resource controlling roles etc.</p>
Deep Cultural Power	<p><b>Definition:</b> Power from organizational beliefs, values, goals, processes, communication approaches and psychological safety.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> Inclusive organizational value alignment with business goals and processes.</p>

## Key Considerations to Structural Power

Considerations	Questions to Ask
Finances	<p><b>Explanation:</b> Money and power are often connected. Roles that are more closely connected to revenue generation often have more power and opportunities. People who are paid more are often granted more power. People or roles that control the organizational finances are often in more power.</p> <p><b>Questions to Ask:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does revenue generation shape who in the organization has access to opportunities (i.e. training, growth)?</li> <li>• Which leaders are supported more with financial resources in comparison to peers and what is the impact?</li> <li>• Who or what controls the distribution of finance in the organization and how is the process made equitable?</li> </ul>
Location	<p><b>Explanation:</b> Often location can determine opportunities for growth, development and exposure. The closer you are to HQ the more job opportunities and more exposure to leadership team members you may have to help grow your network.</p> <p><b>Questions to Ask:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where are your most marginalized team members located and how does this impact their development?</li> <li>• Who has the most exposure to leadership and who doesn't? Why is this and how can you create more equitable opportunities for these folks?</li> <li>• Where do you place your most valued positions and which demographics are most impacted by this placement?</li> </ul>
Resource Distribution	<p><b>Explanation:</b> Teams with more access to development opportunities, mentorship and skilled hires have more power. Roles that control and distribute these resources have the most power.</p> <p><b>Questions to Ask:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you set up team members and leaders for success to ensure they are able to deliver on their job expectations?</li> <li>• Do you ensure all team members have access to mentorship opportunities?</li> <li>• Do you ensure managers are provided with enough resources on their team to drive forward company objectives sustainably?</li> </ul>
Decision Making Autonomy	<p><b>Explanation:</b> Power stems from who makes the end decision and the processes that have been established to enforce this.</p> <p><b>Questions to Ask:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you empower others to be autonomous in their roles?</li> <li>• How do you reduce bureaucratic structures and decentralize decision making to ensure clarity and transparency in processes?</li> <li>• How do you establish trust and ownership in your teams?</li> </ul>
Policies	<p><b>Explanation:</b> Power that is built into the organizational DNA and is sometimes seen as a separate and fixed entity.</p> <p><b>Questions to Ask:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can you ensure the right perspectives are brought into policy discussions to ensure a broader set of voices is included in their creation?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How can you empower yourself and others to step up and advocate for changes to inequitable policies?</li><li>• How can you shift your mindset of thinking that policies are an unchangeable entity to something that is everyone's responsibility to ensure that they meet the values of the organization?</li></ul>
Ownership & Goal Alignment	<p><b>Explanation:</b> Power that stems from the key priorities a business has and the focus the organization puts on reaching these goals.</p> <p><b>Questions to Ask:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How can we better hold ourselves and others accountable for creating inclusive spaces?</li><li>• What is your responsibility as a leader when supporting and developing more marginalized team members (including your role as a senior leader two or more levels away from your most marginalized team members)?</li><li>• How do you ensure that your business goals and your inclusion related organizational goals are always in alignment even in times of turmoil?</li></ul>