

## The Devil Wears Prada (movie case)

wayne.smith@csun.edu

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**Course:** MGT 360

**Title:** Management and Organizational Behavior (3 units)

“Every group must know what its heroic and sinful behaviors are and must achieve consensus on what is a reward and what is a punishment.”

---Edgar Schein (1928-)

### Introduction

The purpose of this movie case is to illuminate a number of concepts related to organization behavior. The models and frameworks below are all taken from seminal work done by leading researchers in each area.

The movie “The Devil Wears Prada” is based on a book by the same name. The book was written by the former executive assistant to the editor-in-chief of the leading women’s fashion magazine. While the movie is “fiction” *per se*, the themes developed in the movie are widely illustrative of contemporary organizational life.

### Movie Précis

The movie centers on the personal and professional life of Andrea (“Andy”) Sachs. Andy is a recent college graduate looking to succeed in the world of writing, including magazine writing. She lands a position as an assistant to Miranda Priestly at Runway magazine. Runway magazine is the leading women’s fashion magazine and Miranda runs the magazine (and apparently, the industry) in a tough and often, condescending, manner. The movie is mostly a series of events and plot twists regarding how Andy interacts with Miranda on a range of issues. Other supporting characters are Nigel, a senior fashion editor at the magazine, and also Emily, the other (aspiring) assistant in the office. Andy also has to navigate a personal relationship with a live-in boyfriend and other friends.

### Culture (Schein, 1992)

“Level” of Culture	Conceptual Examples	Movie Example(s)
Artifacts	Structures & Processes	
Espoused Values	Strategies & Goals	
Underlying Assumptions	Beliefs & Values	

## Systems Thinking (Senge, 1990)

The Five Disciplines of a Learning Organization	Conceptual Examples	Movie Example(s) (pro and con)
Systems Thinking	“how components are linked together” (holism)	
Personal Mastery	“Expertise and specialization”	
Mental Models	“How we make sense of the world”	
Shared Vision	“Alignment of individual and organizational goals”	
Team Learning	“Beyond individuals, how do teams and organizations share knowledge?”	

## Types of Power (French and Raven, 1968)

### *Positional*

- Legitimate – This is power inherent in the organizational structure itself.
- Reward – This is administrative power over a range of rewards (incentives/benefits).

### *Personal*

- Coercive – This is power based on a manager’s ability to punish other employees.
- Expert – This is power that is rooted in a unique specialized skill, knowledge, or ability.

### *Mixed*

- Referent – This is power that is gained by association to another position or another person.

### *Other*

- Charisma – This is the power to influence another by force of character.
- Informational – This is power derived from possession of important information at a critical time and critical place.

## Transitions in Power States (Andy Sachs)

Type of Power	Early State	Late State
Legitimate		
Reward		

Coercive		
Expert		
Referent		
Charisma		
Informational		

### **Transitions in Power States (Miranda Priestly)**

<b>Type of Power</b>	<b>Early State</b>	<b>Late State</b>
Legitimate		
Reward		
Coercive		
Expert		
Referent		
Charisma		
Informational		