Politics and image in the organizational landscape
An empirical examination among public sector employees

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Abstract *This paper reports on two separate studies (S1, n = 169; S2, n = 224) that were designed to examine the relationship between organizational image, perceptions of workplace politics, and an additional set of job related variables (i.e. job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job autonomy). The paper suggests that perceptions of politics have never been examined in relation to organizational image, despite the fact that both concepts are closely related to more general ideas of climate and atmosphere in and around the workplace. For this purpose, a structural equation modeling with LISREL 8.30 was used to compare three alternative models in each of the studies. Findings reveal that the first model, where perceptions of politics function as antecedents of satisfaction and commitment that have an impact on organizational image, fitted the data best. The article concludes that perceptions of politics may have an important initial impact on the formation of organizational image via other job attitudes. Relevant implications for future studies in this area are discussed.*

Introduction

Organizations are political entities where power and influence play a substantial role in shaping relationships and behaviors among employees and other stakeholders. Organizational politics is a general name that denotes power relations and influence tactics in and around the workplace (Mintzberg, 1983; Pfeffer, 1992). As many studies have shown, politics is actually an inherent part of every organization (Gandz and Murray, 1980; Medison *et al.*, 1980), but there are major differences among organizations in the level and intensity of politics. These differences may generate quite distinctive organizational outcomes such as variations in employees' performance appraisals (Tziner, 1999), a particular atmosphere, climate, reputation, and image in the eyes of internal or multiple stakeholders (Drory, 1993; Sussman *et al.*, 2002; Poon, 2003).

This paper hopes to extend the knowledge about the meaning of perceptions of politics by examining their potential effect on organizational image. Image is conceptualized here as perceptions towards the stability of the organization and its reputation, the quality of its outputs and outcomes, and the organization's

position as an employer or service provider in comparison with other competing organizations. Thus, image represents important aspects of the overt expression of organizational climate and atmosphere (Schneider, 1973, 1975; Sparrow and Gaston, 1996). Positive organizational climate is usually reflected by positive image and both image and climate rely on the assimilation of values and activities of multiple stakeholders in the organizational landscape.

While studies have so far considered a variety of possible reactions to workplace politics (Ferris *et al.*, 1996; Vigoda-Gadot, 2002; Zhou and Ferris, 1995), only a few have mentioned or empirically examined the possible relationship between politics and climate or image in organizations (Drory, 1993; O'Connor and Morrison, 2001). Thus, the paper first suggests that from the employees' point of view, politics in the workplace is negatively related to organizational image. If this relationship is supported, it may help identify those factors that impact the image of organizations, as well as extend the set of variables that have already been proven to be affected by organizational politics. In addition, we will try to elaborate on the causal pattern of such relationships when other job attitudes (organizational commitment, job satisfaction, job autonomy) are also considered.

To this end, we will first present a theoretical overview of the meaning of perceptions of politics as well as the current knowledge about the nature of organizational image, its similarities to and differences from other closely related concepts in organizational behavior (reputation and job satisfaction), and its internal thematic construction. Second, the study hypothesizes a negative relationship between image and politics in organizations, arguing that image may be strongly related to the level of internal power relations and influence tactics used by employees in the workplace. Moreover, the study's third objective is to examine specifically the nature of these relationships. For this purpose we have applied a path analysis with structural equation modeling (SEM) to test three different models. In each of the models employees' perceptions of politics and their other job related attitudes have been used to try to predict organizational image in a number of ways. Finally, the study is interested in the exploration of the above questions in the public sector context. We examined the meaning of organizational image and its relationship with workplace politics, as well as with other job attitudes, specifically for employees in two public sector organizations – a local municipality and a military unit. We believe that by so doing, the study may make a dual disciplinary contribution, both to the understanding of organizational image and organizational politics in general managerial affairs and to the enhancement of scholarly awareness regarding the increasing role of institutional image in the public administration realm.

Politics in the workplace

Politics in the workplace, its nature, antecedents, and impact on work outcomes have become a stimulating field of study for management scientists. Some of

the more prevalent definitions of organizational politics describe it as a social-influence process in which behavior is strategically designed to maximize short-term or long-term self-interest (Ferris *et al.*, 1989), or as the readiness of organization members to use power in their efforts to influence others and secure interests, or alternatively, to avoid negative outcomes within the organization (Bozeman *et al.*, 1996).

In the last decade studies have adopted several approaches to the understanding of this area. One method was to look for direct measures of organizational members' power and other typologies of influence tactics used by supervisors, subordinates, and co-workers (Kipnis *et al.*, 1980; Somech and Drach-Zahavy, 2002; Yukle and Tracy, 1992). Yet, most studies have focused primarily on a very specific aspect of organizational politics, namely employees' perceptions of politics (Bozeman *et al.*, 1996; Ferris and Kacmar, 1992; Vigoda-Gadot, 2000, 2002). Perceptions of politics usually reflect employees' views about the level of power and influence used by other organizational members to gain advantages and secure their interests in conflicting situations. The higher the perception of politics, the lower the sense of fairness and equal treatment, because people with more power are in a better position to satisfy their interests and needs at the expense of others who have fewer political resources and influence. Thus, during the 1990s, perceptions of politics were suggested by Ferris and Kacmar, 1992 as a good measure of the general political atmosphere in organizations. This approach implied that a measure of perceived politics has greater scientific value than other measures of actual politics for three main reasons:

(1) perceptions of politics are more easily measured than actual political behavior;

(2) they represent the reality in the eyes of key stakeholders and thus are more expressive of players' views and behavioral intentions; and

(3) they are assumed to have a greater impact on the attitudes and behaviors of employees than actual politics.

Therefore, studies also became specifically interested in exploring the impact of political perceptions on employees' performance (Kacmar *et al.*, 1999; Vigoda-Gadot, 2000), intentions of exit and other withdrawal behaviors (Bozeman *et al.*, 1996; Randall *et al.*, 1999), organizational citizenship behavior (Cropanzano *et al.*, 1997; Vigoda-Gadot, 2000), and stress related outcomes (Vigoda-Gadot, 2002).

Nonetheless, the emerging field of political perceptions paid surprisingly little attention to the relationship between politics and other facets of organizational atmosphere/climate, one of which is the image of the workplace. Several studies that followed this line of thinking have suggested that organizational politics represents certain unique domains of organizational culture and climate (Frank, 1993; Shaker, 1987) that need to be better studied.

Drory (1993, pp. 61-62) argued that "employees' perceptions of organizational politics may be regarded as a facet of the perceived organizational climate" and that the concept of organizational climate may be applied directly to workplace politics because the latter pertain to particular characteristics of organizational events and processes, largely related to the decision-making domain. Politics is thus part of the organizational climate and culture (Litwin and Stringer, 1968; Rousseau, 1988) and should be studied as one of its plausible characteristic/antecedents. Moreover, like politics, organizational image may also be seen as part of the general concept of climate and atmosphere in the workplace (Browne and Golembiewski, 1974). Like politics, the image of an organization is also built on its values, actions, and interactions with various stakeholders who form an opinion regarding the efficiency of the system's operations. Hence, organizational image seems to merit closer examination in relation to organizational politics, especially because both are specific components of the more general issue of organizational climate.

Organizational image and its meaning in modern worksites
Organizational image became a prime concern of managers, executives, and administrators in all sectors, professions, and regions across the globe during the twentieth century. In a rapidly growing market society people are flooded with information and data concerning goods and services. The improved standard of living in the developed world increases the number of choices people need to make in their daily life, from choosing a soap or a shirt to buying a house or a car, accepting a job offer or deciding on a neighborhood in which to live. As suggested by the cognitive psychological approach (Lewin, 1936) and modern decision-making theories (Janis, 1968; Simon, 1976), people tend to make decisions and business choices based on a complex set of perceptions or attitudes that frequently reflect a general "image" of the product or service rather than on the actual quality of that product or service. Most of us buy a car based on the recommendation or experience of friends, the evaluations and statements delivered to us in the media, or based on marketing campaigns that are targeted at improving our image of the product. The assumption is that if this image is positive, we will be more inclined to purchase the product instead of choosing alternative options that are also available on the market.

Thus, it is only natural to find that the origins of the study of organizational image are in the literature of public affairs and marketing (Selama and Selama, 1988). Over the years, studies have suggested numerous definitions and related, but distinctive terminologies for this phenomenon (Browne and Golembiewski, 1974; Dowling, 1994; Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Fomburn, 1996; Fombrun and Shanley, 1990; Gioia *et al.*, 2000; Riordan *et al.*, 1997; Thompson, 1967; Treadwell and Harrison, 1994). For example, Riordan *et al.* (1997) suggested that organizational image reflects individuals' perceptions of the actions, activities, and the accomplishments of the organization, and this image ranks

the organization in comparison with other organizations. Their study followed Miles (1987) and Fombrun and Shanley (1990) who used the term *reputation,* and Dutton and Dukerich (1991) and Dutton *et al.* (1994), who referred to *corporate image* as synonyms for organizational image. These studies and others advanced the notion that organizational image reflects:

- the stability of the organization and its reputation in the marketplace and society;
- the quality of the organization's outputs and outcomes as seen by clients;
- the organization's position as a manufacturer or service provider in comparison with other competing organizations; and
- the general willingness of various stakeholders to become engaged in the actions of the organization as customers, clients, or employees.

Moreover, nearly four decades ago Thompson's (1967, p. 88) argued that an organization does not present one image, but multiple images, because "each assessor is inclined to employ a different kind of yardstick". An organization may have one image as an employer, another as a service provider, and yet another as a social institution. Following this line of thought, the image of organizations should be treated as a multi-focal concept derived from various perceptions such as those of employees, customers, contractors, and suppliers. When considering the image of public sector groups, citizens also become significant stakeholders. Nonetheless, most studies have still used an internal rating strategy to determine organizational image, turning to employees and asking them about how they view the organization and its activities, and how they think others view the organization from the outside. For example, Browne and Golembiewski (1974) explained organizational image as a comparative structural frame that each employee develops to rate his or her department or organization in comparison with other departments or organizations. This intra-organizational perspective of organizational image is built on a set of constructs such as the common experiences of the employees, the common knowledge that they share, expectations from the job, and the quality of mutual interactions. As will be explained later, despite its limitations, we also have adopted an intra-organizational approach to organizational image, which seems to better cohere with our goals in this paper.

The relationship between politics and image in organizations
Three alternative models
Politics and image in the workplace may be related through the concept of organizational climate. These two areas of opinion reflect many stakeholders' general impression of the organization, but the perspective of the employees is perhaps the most significant. As studies have also shown, perceptions of politics may have a variety of effects on work outcomes, and one such outcome may be the image of the organization. For example, employees' perceptions

very accurately reflect the level of justice and fairness in the workplace (Ferris and Kacmar, 1992; Ferris *et al.*, 1996; Folger *et al.*, 1992). When members of the organization define their work environment as political in nature, they are expressing a feeling that some people, owing to their power resources and influence skills, receive preferential treatment over others who actually deserve the same benefits as everyone else, but lack similar political assets. Such views may be translated into a diminishing of the organization's image in the eyes of its employees. A recent study by O'Connor and Morrison (2001) found that perceptions of politics are in fact related to organizational climate, and therefore internal politics may be regarded as a factor in the decline of an organization's image. In other words, organizational image may be viewed as an overt expression of the organizational (political) climate. Building on this finding, we suggest that if a work environment is political, unfair, and unjust, its image in the eyes of its employees and in the eyes of other key stakeholders is likely to decline.

Nonetheless, this basic negative relationship between politics and image may turn out to be more complex than it first seems. For example, when other job attitudes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job autonomy are considered, is the negative relationship between politics and image a direct one, or is it perhaps an indirect one? Studies about organizational image, organizational politics, and job attitudes have previously raised this question, but have not provided convincing answers (Oswald, 1996; Drory, 1993). Similarly, although job autonomy is usually treated as an antecedent to workplace politics, there is a great deal of ambiguity about the role of job satisfaction and organizational commitment in models of workplace politics (Ferris and Kacmar, 1992; Vigoda-Gadot and Cohen, 2002). Moreover, if an indirect relationship is a more fitting explanation for the interplay between perceptions of politics in the workplace and organizational image, what is the exact role of the former? Do they play a mediating or preconditioning role in this context?

The above questions have led us to propose several alternative models for the relationship among perceptions of politics, organizational image, and other job related attitudes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job autonomy. These models are presented in Figure 1. All of these models need to be evaluated before firmer conclusions about the nature of the relationships can be made.

Model 1. The first model suggests that perceptions of organizational politics serve as a precondition for the development of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which then have an independent, direct effect on organizational image. The theoretical foundations of this model are based on the classical model for the study of perceptions of organizational politics as first presented by Ferris *et al.* (1989) and later developed and extended in a number of studies (Bozeman *et al.*, 1996; Cropanzano *et al.*, 1997; Kacmar *et al.*,

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Figure 1.
The research models –
model 1, job attitudes
mediate the relationship
between perceptions of
politics and
organizational image
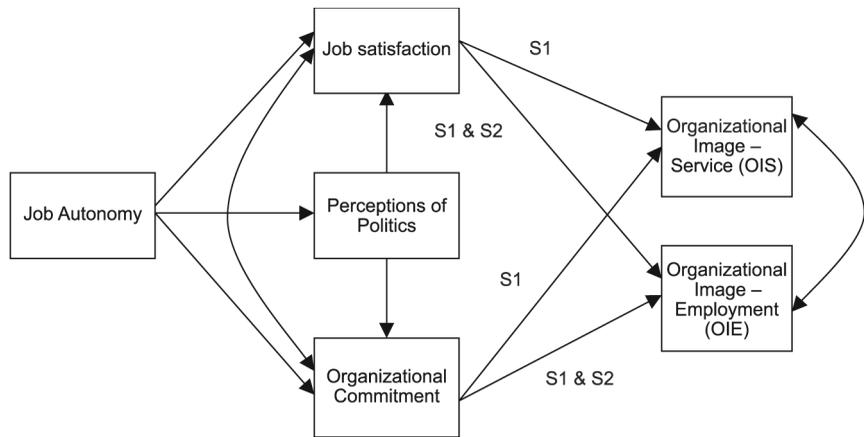
1999). According to this line of thinking, the internal organizational political atmosphere is crucial for shaping other work attitudes or behaviors such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job anxiety, absenteeism, and turnover (Vigoda-Gadot, 2002). Political organizations do little to satisfy employees equally and create fair compensation systems. For example, Tziner (1999) has shown how such inequity is reflected in performance appraisals of employees. Thus, many times, organization leaders give advantages to powerful individuals who have influential connections and resources. As a result, political behavior in organizations is interpreted as negative, unprofessional, and inappropriate (Gandz and Murray, 1980). In response to an environment rife with such activity, employees may react by reducing their job commitment and may experience a decline in job satisfaction. Thus, job satisfaction and organizational commitment are indicators of the political dynamics in a worksite (Drory, 1993). Based on the organizational image literature a similar link can be drawn between job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and image. For example, Riordan *et al.* (1997) found that job satisfaction is positively related to organizational image while Dutton *et al.* (1994) as well as Gioia *et al.* (2000) found a positive relationship among patterns of organizational identity, identification, commitment, and organizational image. Based on this understanding, the first model expected to find that perceptions of workplace politics would negatively affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and these attitudes would be positively related to organizational image.

Model 2. In this model we propose a first alternative to model 1 where employees' perceptions of politics mediate the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment on one hand and organizational image on the other. The model suggests that perceptions of politics are a result of various job attitudes and that they have a direct, negative effect on organizational image. The rationale for this model is based on the assumption

that organizational image is directly affected by a political atmosphere in the workplace in the same way that other work outcomes (i.e. negligent behaviors, absenteeism, turnover intentions and other withdrawal behaviors) are affected (Ferris *et al*., 1989; Ferris and Kacmar, 1992). Based on Schneider's (1973, 1975) definition of organizational climate, this model assumes that politics in organization is the direct cause to organizational image. The third model thus tries to challenge the basic assertion by Ferris and Kacmar (1992) that commitment and satisfaction are basically results of organizational politics. Instead, it follows the study of Vigoda-Gadot and Cohen (2002) that suggests both variables as additional antecedents of political perceptions, along with other variables such as job autonomy and advancement opportunities. In addition, a previous study by Vigoda-Gadot (2000) has found that perceptions of politics mediate the relationship between job attitudes and several other work outcomes such as organizational citizenship behavior and formal performance. These findings substantiate the validity of the second model's approach where perceptions of politics play a core mediating role between various work attitudes and organizational image (Figure 2).

Model 3. Finally, the third model portrays a direct relationship where all job attitudes as well as perceptions of politics have a simultaneous, direct effect on organizational image. This model is tested as an alternative to the previous models. It does not favor either the theory of Ferris *et al*. (1989) or that of Vigoda-Gadot and Cohen (2002) in terms of causality between job satisfaction and organizational commitment on the one hand, and perceptions of politics on the other. In fact this model suggests that the role of perceptions of politics is similar to the role of other job attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment and that all of them share comparable predictive power regarding organizational image. This model thus implies that perceptions of politics do not serve either as a precondition of job satisfaction and organizational commitment (as was suggested in model 1) or

Figure 2.
The research models – model 2, perceptions of politics mediate the relationship between job attitudes and organizational image

as a mediator between these job attitudes and organizational image (as was suggested in model 2). Instead, perceptions of politics is regarded as one of a number of factors that together directly impact organizational image.

In addition, one should also note that all three models include two other types of linkage. First, job autonomy is suggested as a key predictor of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and perceptions of politics. We have decided to add this variable because of previous studies that have found significant relationships between job autonomy and other job characteristics, and all of the other variables in the models. For example, among nurses, job autonomy was found to have a positive relationship with job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Lynch, 1994; Muller and McCloskey, 1990). In the general population it appeared to have a negative relationship with perceptions of organizational politics as well (Ferris *et al.*, 1989; Ferris and Kacmar, 1992). Furthermore, as an indicator of the general work structure or "job characteristic" index (Hackman and Oldham, 1976) it was only logical to designate job autonomy as an exogenic-independent variable for all of the alternative models examined here. Such a designation was also suggested by Ferris *et al.* (1989) in their original model for measuring perceptions of politics. Second, we made a link between job satisfaction with organizational commitment. Measuring the connection between these two variables is in keeping with the accepted knowledge in management literature regarding the high correlation between these variables in various worksites (Jeongkoo and Shane, 2002). Of particular relevance for our study was the inter-relationship between these two variables that has been found in the public sector (Yuan, 1997).

Method
Samples and procedure
Two samples were used to test the models. Sample 1 (S1) was based on two separate sub-groups of local governance employees. The largest sub-group consisted of 127 employees from a local authority in the central region of Israel. The second and smaller sub-group consisted of 42 employees from other local authorities in Israel who, at the time when the research was conducted, were studying in a graduate level university course. All together, sample 1 consisted of 169 participants (response rate of 57.9 per cent) who were asked to voluntarily take part in the study and complete a short questionnaire. Of the participants 55 per cent were male, 75.7 per cent were married, the average age was 40.5 (s.d. = 9.1), and tenure in their job was 10.7 years (s.d. = 7.4). A breakdown by education shows 36.1 per cent with a high school education, an additional 52.7 per cent with a B.A., and an additional 11.2 per cent with an M.A. degree or higher.

Sample 2 (S2) consisted of a group of 224 members of a special unit of the Israeli Navy. Participants were career seamen who held a variety of jobs such

as technicians, mechanics, professional sailors and navy fighters, and other staff employees. A similar questionnaire, with minor adjustments to fit the organization, was used. We applied a direct return method based on arranged meetings with groups of servicemen. This strategy resulted in a 91 per cent response rate. All participants were men (recently women were also made eligible to join this unit, but none has as yet volunteered for this option). The average age was 25.8 years (s.d. = 5.9), the average time in military service was 7.1 years (s.d. = 5.7), and the average time in the unit was 4.9 years (s.d. = 3.9). Of the respondents, 95 per cent had completed high school, and 37.2 per cent held a higher academic or quasi-academic degree; 32.6 per cent were married, 64 per cent came from cities (36 per cent from other rural settlements), and 29.4 per cent were officers of various ranks.

Measures
Organizational image. According to Riordan *et al.* (1997) and Dutton and Dukerich (1991, p. 520) organizational image is defined, from the perspective of organizational employees, as the way they and others see the organization. Oswald (1996, p. 289) emphasized the self-rating of employees and their personal view of the organization as a good employer. Moreover, a previous study by Fombrun and Shanley (1990) has also conceptualized image as the quality of the organizational outputs and outcomes as seen by clients or citizens.

Based on these definitions and on items that were previously used in the above studies, we first produced a 14-item scale that integrated all three aspects of the variable (image as an employer, image in terms of how employees believe others see the organization, and image in the eyes of employees as service receivers). Using an exploratory factor analysis as well as CFA with Lisrel 8.3 we have further distinguished among the items to create a clearer breakdown of the scale for study 1. This method resulted in two clear factors:

(1) Organizational image – service (OIS), which reflected perspectives on the organization as a *service* provider and included eight items.

(2) Organizational image – employment (OIE), which reflected perspectives on the organization as a good *employer* and included six items[1].

OIE accounted for 36.10 per cent while OIS accounted for 30.18 per cent of the entire organizational image scale, which implies an impressive overall explained variance of 66.28 per cent. Note that in study 2 we have used only the OIE factor. This was done in accordance with the characteristics of the sample and the organization under examination (a naval unit) that did not allow a meaningful use of the OIS factor.

Sample items for OIS are:

(1) "I think (name of local authority) provides quality services to its residents";

(2) "I think that (name of local authority) is actively involved in the community"; and

(3) "I think that living in the area of (name of local authority) has a good image in the eyes of other people".

Based on Riordan *et al.* (1997) sample items for OIE are:

(1) "Generally, I think (name of organization/unit) is known as a good place to work";

(2) "I would recommend to friends and family members to seek a job in (name of organization/unit)", and

(3) "Generally, I think (name of organization/unit) has a good reputation in the eyes of its members".

Both in sample 1 and 2 respondents reported to what degree they agreed or disagreed with the items on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A higher score meant a higher level of positive organizational image. The resultant reliability for OIS and OIE was 0.90 and 0.92 respectively for study 1 and 0.75 for OIE in study 2.

Perceptions of politics. Ferris *et al.* (1989) defined perceptions of organizational politics as the degree to which individuals view their work environment as political, and therefore unjust and unfair. A similar scale of eight items, based on broader versions of perceptions of organizational politics scale (POPS) as suggested by Ferris and Kacmar (1992) and Kacmar and Carlson (1994), was used in both study 1 and 2. Sample items are:

(1) "Favoritism rather than merit determines who gets ahead around here";

(2) "Rewards come only to those who work hard in this organization/unit" (reverse item),

(3) "There is a group of people in my department/unit who always get things their way because no one wants to challenge them"; and

(4) "People in this organization/unit attempt to build themselves up by tearing others down".

Respondents were asked to report the degree to which they agreed with the items on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A higher score meant a higher perception of organizational politics. Reliability of the scale was 0.78 in study 1 and 0.65 in study 2. These values were close to those found in other studies (e.g. 0.74 in Ferris and Kacmar, 1992; 0.68 -0.77 in Vigoda-Gadot, 2002).

Job satisfaction. A six-item scale was applied based on the study of Schriesheim and Tsui (1980). Respondents were asked to indicate how satisfied they were with their current job, co-workers, supervisors, current salary, opportunities for promotion, and work in general. The scale for these questions

ranged from 1 (very unsatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). Reliability in study 1 and 2 was 0.78 and 0.61 respectively.

Organizational commitment. Porter *et al.* (1974) defined organizational commitment as the desire to retain membership in the organization, belief in and acceptance of the values and goals of the organization, and willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization. Based on the organizational commitment questionnaire (OCQ) by Porter and Smith (1970) a six-item scale was used. Sample items for this measure include:

(1) "I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization/unit";

(2) "I really care about the fate of this organization/unit";

(3) "I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for the organization/unit"; and

(4) "For me, this is the best of all possible organizations to work for".

The scale for this measure ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree); reliability was 0.68 in study 1 and 0.78 in study 2.

Job autonomy. This variable was defined by Hackman and Oldham (1976) as the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the employee in scheduling his/her work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out. Based on the study of Beehr (1976) a four-item scale was used as follows:

(1) "I have a lot of say over what happens in my job";

(2) "I have enough authority to do my best in the job";

(3) "My job allows me to make a lot of decisions on my own";

(4) " I have enough freedom as to how I do my work".

The scale for this measure ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree); reliability was 0.89 in study 1 and 0.82 in study 2.

Statistical strategy. A structural equation modeling (SEM) with LISREL 8.3 was applied for the assessment of the research model and the additional two alternative models. Two different covariance matrix sets served as inputs for the path analyses. They were built separately for each study on six variables as mentioned above. In the path analysis, the error terms for the latent variables was set to the square of the alphas and nine indices were used to assess the fit of the models. The first was the chi-square test, which is the most basic, and essential for the nested model comparison. A low and non-significant value of chi-square represents a good fit to the data. Second was the ratio of the model chi-square to degrees of freedom. A ratio up to two was considered a satisfactory value. In addition, four other fit indices were considered which are less sensitive to sample size differences and to the number of indicators per latent variable increase (Medsker *et al.*, 1994); The relative fit index (RFI), the comparative fit index (CFI), the normed fit index (NFI), and the goodness of fit

index (GFI). The RFI and the CFI were developed to facilitate the choice of the best fit among competing models that may differ in degree of parameterization and specification of relations among latent variables (Bentler, 1990; Bollen, 1989). They are recommended as the best approximation of the population value for a single model. The closer their value to one, the better the fit. NFI was proposed in earlier studies and is additive for the nested-model comparison (Bentler and Bonett, 1980). Its value should be close to one to indicate a good fit. The GFI measures how much better the model fits than no model at all. Both these measures should be between 0 and 1, and a value higher than 0.90 is considered very good. Finally, we also assessed the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) and the expected (single sample) cross-validation index (ECVI). AGFI should be higher than 0.90, and ECVI, which is a measure of the discrepancy between the fitted covariance matrix in the analyzed sample and the expected covariance matrix that would be obtained in another sample of the same size, should be as small as possible (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1994).

Moreover, to determine whether the research model has an advantage over the alternative models, path coefficients were also examined. Path coefficients indicate the quality of the chosen alternative as a "correct causal model". Joreskog and Sorbom (1994) defined this as the "plausibility criterion". This criterion means that the path coefficients in the plausible better-fit model adhere well to the general theoretical conception and to the hypotheses. This adherence should hold in terms of magnitude as well as in the expected directions. Accordingly, a model that fits the data well, but many of whose theoretical paths do not support the theoretical arguments, cannot be defined as correct. Some balance must be made between the fit indices and the theoretical predictions or hypotheses regarding the relationships among research variables. Therefore, the accuracy of the theoretical predictions can be tested by the path coefficients in each of the models, as was done in this study.

In addition to fit indices and path coefficients the percentage of explained variance for each dependent variable was also calculated in all three models and for both studies. A low percentage of explained variance in a certain model indicates that this model is not correct (Saris and Stronkhorst, 1984). Various reasons are mentioned for a low level of explained variance. Among them, measurement errors, omission of important variables from the model, or inaccurate definitions of the interrelationships of the variables in the model are the most prevalent ones. Thus, we have evaluated the explained variable as an indicator of the correctness of our models.

Findings
Descriptive statistics and correlations
Table I separately presents descriptive statistics and inter-correlations among the variables of studies 1 and 2. Means, standard deviations, and Cronbach alpha levels were within reasonable limits. Cronbach alphas ranged between

Variable	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Organizational image									
1. OIS (S1)	3.72	0.84	(0.90)						
2. OIE (S1)	2.88	0.88	0.52***	(0.92)					
3. OIE (S2)	2.69	0.65	–	–	(0.75)				
4. Perceptions of politics (POPS)									
S1	3.25	0.71	−0.19*	−0.32***	–	(0.78)			
S2	2.76	0.58	–	–	−0.13*	(0.65)			
5. Job satisfaction (JS)									
S1	3.33	0.71	0.40***	0.56***	–	−0.33***	(0.78)		
S2	3.50	0.55	–	–	0.44***	−0.37***	(0.61)		
6. Organizational commitment (OC)									
S1	3.53	0.65	0.30***	0.37***	–	−0.22**	0.46***	(0.68)	
S2	3.83	0.65	–	–	0.45***	−0.13*	0.50***	(0.78)	
7. Job autonomy (JA)									
S1	3.85	0.81	0.11	0.21**	–	0.01	0.40***	0.35***	0.89)
S2	3.39	0.91	–	–	0.39***	−0.12	0.50***	0.48***	(0.82)

Notes: S1 = study 1; $n = 169$; S2 = study 2; $n = 224$.
$*p < 0.001$; $**p < 0.01$; $***p < 0.001$

Table I.
Descriptive statistics
and inter-correlations
for the studies variables
(reliabilities in
parentheses; S1 above
diagonal, S2 below
diagonal)

0.61 for job satisfaction in study 2 and 0.92 for OIE in study 1. However, most
values hovered around the high 70s and 80s. The inter-correlations among
variables were also reasonable and provided additional affirmation for the
construct validity of our measures. In all but two cases Pearson's r was lower or
equal to 0.50 but still far from the 0.60 level, which may indicate a problem of
multicollinearity.

Goodness of fit
Table II summarizes the goodness of fit indices for the three models across the
two studies. As mentioned earlier, nine such indices were evaluated: ξ^2, ξ^2/df,
RFI, NFI, NNFI, CFI, GFI, AGFI, ECVI. However, we confirmed that these
measures were in line with other indicators proposed by the LISREL package
that are not presented here. As clearly shown in Table II, model 1, which is the
original research model, best fits the data in both independent samples. Its
chi-square value was not significant, and the chi square to df ratio was lower
than 2. RFI, NFI, NNFI, CFI, GFI, and AGFI were relatively high and ranged
between 0.93-1.00. ECVI was the lowest among all other models and again
pointed to the better fit of model 1. All of these values indicate that the model
fits the data better than models 2 and 3. Both models 2 and 3 had a significantly
lower fit with the data and had to be rejected. Their chi-square test produced
significant values in both studies, indicating that the models did not cohere
with the data; chi-square to df ratio was close to nine and 20 (model 2) and six
and ten (model 3) for studies 1 and 2 respectively. All of these values exceed the

Model/description	df	X^2	$P*$	X^2/df	RFI	NFI	NNFI	CFI	GFI	AGFI	ECVI
Model 1											
S1	4	4.19	0.38	1.05	0.93	0.98	1.00	1.00	0.99	0.96	0.23
S2	2	1.63	0.44	0.82	0.97	0.99	1.01	1.00	1.00	0.98	0.13
Model 2											
S1	6	54.58*	0.00	9.10	0.38	0.75	0.41	0.76	0.91	0.69	0.47
S2	3	60.05*	0.00	20.02	0.21	0.76	0.22	0.77	0.91	0.55	0.36
Model 3											
S1	4	24.82*	0.00	6.21	0.58	0.89	0.62	0.90	0.96	0.77	0.34
S2	3	29.92*	0.00	9.97	0.61	0.88	0.63	0.89	0.95	0.76	0.24

Notes: S1 = study 1; n = 169. S2 = study 2; n = 224; *p = significance

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Table II.
Goodness of fit
summary for the
research models

recommended value of two. RFI, NFI, NNFI, CFI, GFI, and AGFI were all significantly lower than in model 1. However, one should also note that the quality of fit indices in model 3 was somewhat better than those for model 2, which should thus be ranked as the poorest model among the three (Figure 3).

Path coefficients and explained variance
Table III presents path coefficients and explained variance for the three models across the two studies. With the exception of paths related to POPS, all other path coefficients were in the expected positive direction. These include the paths among JA, JS, OC, OIS, and OIE (S1 and S2). Paths related to POPS were in the expected negative direction. A closer examination of model 1 as the best fitting model provides important additional data about the correctness of this
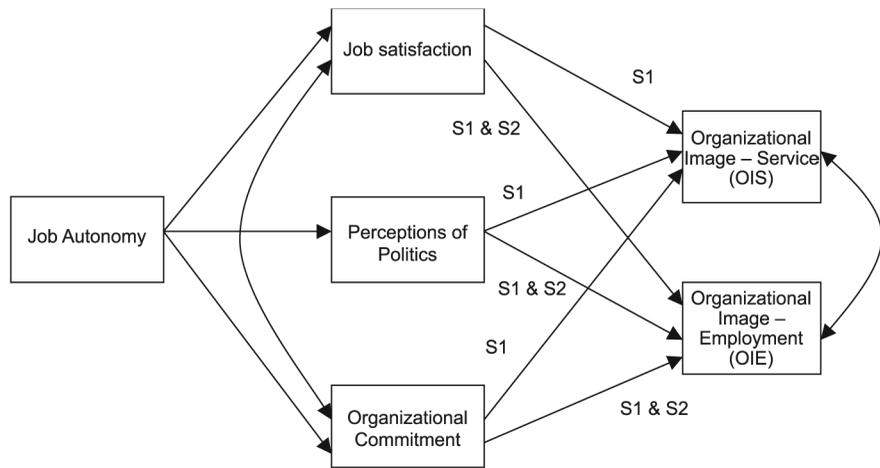

Figure 3.
The research models –
model 3, a simultaneous
effect relationship among
job satisfaction,
organizational
commitment and
perceptions of politics,
and organizational image

S1 = Study 1

S2 = Study 2

Model/description	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	S1	S2	S1	S2	S1	S2
JA → JS	0.39*	0.38*	0.39*	0.43*	0.38*	0.44*
JA → OC	0.37*	0.43*	0.37*	0.43*	0.37*	0.44*
JA → POPS	0.03	− 0.11	− 0.24*	0.08	0.01	− 0.14*
JS → OIS	0.48*	–	–	–	0.45*	–
JS → OIE (S1)	0.72*	–	–	–	0.65*	–
JS → OIE (S2)	–	0.30*	–	–	–	0.31*
JS → POPS	–	–	− 0.50*	− 0.59*	–	–
OC → OIS	0.16	–	–	–	0.16	–
OC → OIE (S1)	0.09	–	–	–	0.10	–
OC → OIE (S2)	–	0.40*	–	–	–	0.40*
OC → POPS	–	–	− 0.14	0.06	–	–
POPS → OIS	–	–	− 0.34*	–	− 0.10	–
POPS → OIE (S1)	–	–	− 0.50*	–	− 0.20*	–
POPS → OIE (S2)	–	–	–	− 0.36*	–	0.02
POPS → JS	− 0.43*	− 0.46*	–	–	–	–
POPS → OC	− 0.27*	− 0.10	–	–	–	–
$R^{2\ \#}$						
OIS	*0.26*	–	0.09	–	0.25	–
OIE (S1)	*0.42*	–	0.17	–	0.39	–
OIE (S2)	–	0.40	–	0.10	–	*0.41*

Notes: * $p < 0.05$. Highest value of explained variance in rows is in italics

Table III.
Path coefficients and explained variance (R^2) for the models

model. First, the number of significant paths for this model in both study 1 and 2 was 11, which is higher than the number of significant paths in both models 2 and 3 (ten in each one of them). Second, in several cases the level correlation was higher in model 1 than in the other models (e.g. JA(OIS and JS(OIE in model 1/ S1 and model 3/ S1). More specifically, we found that job autonomy was positively related to job satisfaction in study 1 and 2 (0.39 and 0.38 respectively) and to organizational commitment (0.37 and 0.43 respectively) and that job satisfaction was positively related to OIS and to OIE in study 1 (0.48 and 0.72 respectively). In addition, job satisfaction was positively related to OIE in study 2 (0.30) and organizational commitment was positively related to OIE in study 2 (0.40). Finally, and most importantly, perceptions of organizational politics were negatively related to job satisfaction in studies 1 and 2 (− 0.43 and − 0.46 respectively) and to organizational commitment in study 1 (− 0.27).

Furthermore, the analysis of the explained variance is very much in line with the other findings. As Table III proves, model 1 provided the highest levels of explained variance for OIS and for OIE in study 1 ($R^2 = 0.26$ and $R^2 = 0.42$). These values were higher than the 0.09, 0.17, 0.25, and 0.39 levels that were obtained in the other models. Only model 3 provided a slightly higher explained variance than model 1 ($R^2 = 0.41$ vs $R^2 = 0.40$) for OIE in study 2. However, the proximity of these values does not necessarily mean that model 3

has any advantage over model 1. When all other parameters (i.e. fit indices and path coefficients) are considered, we had to conclude that model 1 was still superior to model 3 and definitely to model 2. Therefore, despite some weaknesses in model 1, we concluded that this was the best model among all those examined here. This model, which demonstrates the preliminary effect of perceptions of organizational politics on job satisfaction and on organizational commitment and only via these variables, on organizational image, was better than the other two models. It proved a very good fit with the data, providing a strong magnitude of path coefficients in the expected directions, a reasonable level of explained variance, and sound theoretical adaptability to our conceptual framework.

Discussion and summary

This paper suggests that organizational image is a reflector of organizational climate and atmosphere, both of which are affected in turn by the political perceptions of employees. Based on two independent studies from the Israeli public sector, we have put several questions to empirical examination.

First, we have examined more closely the nature of organizational image in public domains and the theoretical justification for relating it to workplace politics. An exploratory factor analysis based on the data of study 1 revealed at least two sub-factors of organizational image:

(1) Image from the perspective of individuals as citizens or customers of the organization, which in this case was a local authority (OIS).

(2) Image from the perspective of individuals as employees of the local authority (OIE).

The second sub scale was further validated and examined among navy servicemen in study 2.

Second was the attempt to explore a general link between perceptions of politics and the constructs of organizational image in our two studies. This effort resulted in encouraging findings that affirmed a reliable and significant negative relationship across the two studies. All of the inter-correlations among organizational image sub-scales and politics perceptions were negative. The most salient finding was the correlation between OIE and perceptions of organizational politics ($r = -0.32$; $p < 0.001$). However, the same correlation was lower in study 2 ($r = 0.13$; $p < 0.05$). These findings may indicate a general pattern of linkage between organizational image and politics perceptions, but also show how these relationships may vary across organizations and samples.

Third, and most importantly, was a comparison of three models that were targeted at learning the exact nature of the relationship relative to other job attitudes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job autonomy. Using this strategy, we have supported model 1 where perceptions

of politics affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment. These variables have a direct effect on one or two particular facets of organizational image, namely OIS and OIE. In fact, this finding is in line with the original model of perceptions of organizational politics as suggested by Ferris *et al.* (1989).

What are the implications of these findings and how do they contribute to our knowledge in the field of organizational image and organizational politics? The fact that the first model was found to fit better with the data implies that perceptions of politics are crucial in creating satisfaction in the workplace as well as commitment to the organization. While this finding supports previous studies in the field (Drory, 1993; Witt *et al.*, 2001, 2002), its importance lies in how it may lead to changes in the image of the organization in the eyes of various stakeholders. According to model 1, politics serves as an indirect precondition for the formation of organizational image. When employees see the organizational atmosphere as unjust and unfair, their first reaction is dissatisfaction with the job and diminished organizational commitment that, in the long run, may also affect the general image of the organization as perceived by those employees. Therefore, when workplace politics are dominant, they may damage the image of the organization far beyond the degree that has been noted in previous studies (Cropanzano *et al.*, 1997; Vigoda-Gadot, 2002; Zhou and Ferris, 1995). For public organizations such as those tested here, damage to organizational image may also result in damage to political institutions and to the stability of governance, as will be elaborated on in the next section. We noted above that model 1 is theoretically in line with the original model of workplace politics as first proffered by Ferris *et al.* (1989) and re-examined by Kacmar *et al.* (1999). However, our model extends Ferris' by noting that image is another outcome that may be significantly affected by workplace politics. By comparing this model to the other alternative models, we substantiated the idea that politics in itself has no direct effect on organizational image, reputation, and the general view of the organization in the eyes of various stakeholders. Its impact is thus better described as imminent but indirect.

As this research was aimed at two public sector organizations, we also feel that some conclusions regarding implications for this arena should be drawn as well. The image of public organizations is frequently a matter of discussion in the media, academia, and in various other venues. Citizens of modern societies tend to criticize governments and bureaucracies for not doing enough in order to provide reliable, quality services to the people. Public sector employees are viewed as less motivated to work for reasons related to the size of the administrative system, its compensation strategy, and the general organizational culture in state-led institutions. Moreover, it has been suggested elsewhere (i.e.Vigoda-Gadot, 2000) that the public service system is overloaded with internal politics, possibly owing to its proximity to the national political system and the mixture of political considerations with

administrative decisions (the administrative-politics conflict). Thus, in public organizations the relationship between image and politics may have an even greater importance than in other organizations. The findings presented here can potentially shed light on the reasons for the relatively poor image of state bureaucracies and public sector bodies in the eyes of stakeholders. They point to organizational politics as an indirect influence on the image of the two public organizations and imply that to improve the public administration's image, internal politics should also be reduced to a minimal level. Beyond conventional rhetoric about the illnesses of governmental institutions, the findings of this study may indicate that organizational politics should be taken more seriously as a core antecedent of negative job attitudes that result in the creation of a negative image of the entire administrative system. Today, when public organizations face problems and challenges that are very similar to those of private business firms (Nye *et al.*, 1997; Osborne and Gaebler, 1992) organizational image becomes a more significant indicator of performance and efficiency and merits the attention of public officials and state leaders in order to strengthen the foundations of our democracies. The public sector of our day is much more open to the adoption of the managerial strategies and methods that are rooted in private sector ideologies. Hence, it should also be aware of the implications of its own image, an asset many of the private sector firms have long realized and valued.

As with other studies in the field of organizational behavior and administrative sciences, this study has its limitations. First, the data in both studies were based on a single tool that was distributed among employees and thus are exposed to common-method and common-source error. To overcome this problem we made sure that the items in the questionnaires were well distributed and introduced to the respondents on a randomly bases. In addition, following Taggar (2002) and Harman's single-factor procedure (Harris and Mossholder, 1996) an analysis of common-method bias was conducted. According to these studies if a method variance is largely responsible for co-variation then a factor analysis should yield a single factor. Lisrel 8.3 was used to conduct CFA with both single factor and 6-factor models. The 6-factor model proved superior to the 1-factor model. Thus, we concluded that the study was not biased by a common-method error.

Second, the samples were taken from two public sector domains (local authorities and the Navy) that are quite unique in their job characteristics and work orientations. It may be argued that these samples obscured the findings or at least limited their external validity. Indeed, the samples do not necessarily reflect the overall profile of the public service sector in Israel or elsewhere, and thus the results should be treated with caution. However, both the military and the local government agencies are among the most influential public institutions in Israel and are representative of many of the employees in the public domain. Hence, they are worthy environments for such research.

Another limitation of this study may be the fact that our samples were taken from the Israeli arena and may represent a unique Israeli context that is different from other European or North American studies in the fields of organizational image or politics. Nonetheless, this limitation may prove an advantage after all because our findings are now comparable with other studies that may be undertaken in these countries. In addition, our research design was not longitudinal, and thus, causal implications about the longer-term impact of organizational politics on image are impossible to determine. Despite the fact that path analysis and the technique of SEM usually allow causal conclusions, we suggest that they be made with caution here. Model 1 indeed proved better than the other alternative models, but it is in no way the only "correct" model, and future studies should replicate our theory and methodology to assure that the findings hold beyond the local Israeli context. These studies may also benefit from a more ambitious strategy of extensive control over other job attitudes to arrive at more definite answers about the nature of the relationship between organizational politics and organizational image. The theoretical framework could also benefit from a longitudinal design to test similar hypotheses about the development of organizational image over time as a result of organizational politics. Finally, both studies were based on cross-sectional and self-report data, incurring the possibility of social desirability effect. However, other studies that tested concepts similar to this were also based on self-report data (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991, 1994; Riordan *et al.*, 1997). Nevertheless, this study reported fair to good psychometric properties in terms of reliabilities and variances of all research variables, which firmly support the validity of the data and the findings.

Summary
In recent years both organizational politics and organizational image has enjoyed some attention in the organizational behavior literature, but neither subject has been covered exhaustively. In a free-market society marked by mass communications that deliver information and knowledge worldwide, it may be argued that the image of organizations and their political climate should be topics of prime interest for every organization and managerial level. As suggested by Weigelt and Camerer (1988), organizational reputation and image comprises a response to unforeseen contingencies in the workplace, in which politics may play a leading role. According to this view, unwritten rules and regulations form the "corporate culture", while an organization's response to "unforeseen contingencies" and its fair treatment of employees contribute toward its reputation and image (Oswald, 1996). For the public sector of Western nations, which suffers from a perennially poor image in the eyes of many citizens (Nye *et al.*, 1997), a new understanding of the causes and antecedents of such a negative image is vital. This understanding impacts organizational outcomes and performance, but in the wider context it is

influential in terms of political stability and legitimacy. Put another way, western democracies cannot allow this negative image of the public sector to continue, because it will lead to a legitimacy crisis, possibly resulting in instability in what we define as modern liberal society. The fact that these systems are rife with organizational politics and no sufficient measures have been taken so far to improve this problematic climate may have dangerous implications, not only for the intra-organizational realm, but also for the broader communal, national, and international arenas.

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