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# **JOURNAL OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE, COMMUNICATIONS AND CONFLICT**

**Connie Rae Bateman**

**Editor**

**University of North Dakota**

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict*, the official journal of the Academy of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict. The journal is owned and published by Jordan Whitney Enterprises, Inc. The Academy is an affiliate of the Allied Academies, Inc., a non profit association of scholars whose purpose is to encourage and support the advancement and exchange of knowledge, understanding and teaching throughout the world. The editorial mission of the *Journal* is to publish empirical and theoretical manuscripts which advance knowledge in the areas of organizational culture, organizational communication, conflict and conflict resolution. We hope that the *Journal* will prove to be of value to the many organizational scholars around the world.

The *Journal* is double blind, peer reviewed. The articles contained in this volume have been double blind refereed. The acceptance rate for manuscripts in this issue, 25%, conforms to our editorial policies.

We intend to foster a supportive, mentoring effort on the part of the referees which will result in encouraging and supporting writers. We welcome different viewpoints because in differences we find learning; in differences we develop understanding; in differences we gain knowledge; and, in differences we develop the discipline into a more comprehensive, less esoteric, and dynamic metier.

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Connie Rae Bateman  
Editor  
University of North Dakota





# EMPLOYING IMPROVISATIONAL ROLE PLAY TO TRAIN THE LIMBIC SYSTEM TO ENHANCE EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT AWARENESS AND BEHAVIOR

William L. Weis, Seattle University  
David W. Arnesen, Seattle University

## ABSTRACT

*Implementing permanent changes in how we respond “in the moment” to stimuli requires training the limbic system’s “fight or flight” response mechanism. The T-Group has been an effective training model for directly working on the limbic system to enhance what we commonly refer to as emotionally intelligent awareness and behaviors. As the T-Group is, in essence, a variation on improvisational acting practices (conducting a spontaneous “in the moment” conversation with no pre-set agenda), the principles of improvisational acting inherently apply to T-Group dynamics. An alternative to the structured T-Group teaching modality is a more prompted role play exercise employing the principles of theatre improvisation – a limbic system intervention that might be coined “Prompted T-Group” practice. This article addresses the use of improvisational role play to augment the T-Group training approach to teaching and enhancing emotional intelligence.*

## INTRODUCTION

In our work teaching emotional intelligence to MBA students, we make extensive use of the 60-year-old T-Group (or “training group”) format which involves repetitive work sessions, each 8 to 10 minutes long, where participants sit in a tight circle and are coached to remain “in the present” with their colleagues. The T-Group is one of the few approaches that we know of to directly engage and train the limbic system to modify in-the-moment responses to interactive stimuli. As we have written elsewhere (Weis & Arnesen, 2007; Weis, Arnesen, & Hanson, 2009; Weis & Hanson, 2008), the T-Group is a highly frustrating process on first encounter, as participants resist the counter-cultural and often counter-instinctive mandate to address their fellow participants with their clear and authentic truths, while remaining steadfastly in the present moment. T-Group leader interventions and interruptions often spark anger, resentment, hostility and opt-out by participants who find the format more challenging than they are comfortable with. With ample time available, T-Group participants generally adapt to the format

and replace their initial resistance with acceptance and even enthusiasm, as they eventually appreciate the value of this challenging exercise. However, the key variable here is “ample time” -- and in an MBA course time is limited and too often the gestation period for the acceptance and enthusiasm phase comes at the end of our course experience. Is there a way to front-end that “buy-in” and enthusiasm with a methodology that mixes the initial frustration and challenge with fun and levity? We believe our initial experimentation with role play and improvisational theater technique offers promise for such a new and less-threatening approach to T-Group work.

### **IMPROVISATIONAL THEATER: THE BASICS**

Have you ever attended an “improv night” or “theater sports” competition? Were you surprised at how adeptly the improvisational actors spontaneously created a coherent, entertaining play, often building merely upon a word or phrase tossed to them from the audience?

Skillful improvisation teams are keenly connected to “the present” when they are at their finest, and are able to weave spontaneous wit and imagination in ways that seem almost pre-scripted. How do they do it? Obviously they develop a vibrant repartee from working closely with each other over time – and they each begin with a flair for spontaneity and imaginative extroversion. But they also adhere to a set of fundamental principles in the way they react to one another on stage. If you were to take a beginning course on improvisational acting, you would likely be introduced to some variation on the following guiding principles at your first meeting:

#### **PRINCIPLES OF IMPROVISATION**

1. Be Present
2. Listen – Really Listen!
3. Let Go of Personal Agenda
4. “Yes, anding” ..... “No butting” (or blocking)
5. Make Others Look Golden

For an improvisational performance to work, the actors must remain riveted on the present (“*Be Present*”), paying concentrated attention to what is being said, how it is being said, who is saying it, and so on. It is not easy to remain so steadfastly in the present – you are the enviable exception if you spend much of your time there. But improvisational actors must be there, all the time, in order to react and respond in a way that feels integrated and coherent to a critical audience.

By listening (“*Listen – Really Listen!*”) with every sensory tool the actor has (hearing, seeing, feeling, intuiting, etc.), he or she can best understand exactly what the other actors are

conveying (and that the audience is watching and interpreting) and can respond spontaneously and logically to the “gift” that has just been presented. We use the word *gift* because improvisational actors must accept with *gratitude* whatever has just been conveyed on the stage, and respond appropriately to that special *gift*, regardless of what one’s personal agenda might be. For example, as one of the actors you might think that the play is going to be about a trip to the beach, but if the opening actor begins with the line “Let’s all go snow skiing in the mountains,” then your response must flow coherently from that premise. If you reply with “No, I want to go to the beach,” the audience will sense the incoherence (we don’t usually choose between going to the beach and snow skiing all in one 30-second exchange) and begin to lose interest in the play. Hence letting go of personal agenda (“*Let Go of Personal Agenda*”) is fundamental to good improvisation.

One basic technique for “accepting the gift” and replying appropriately is to think about responding with the word “and” instead of “but.” Starting with “and” is a way of expressing acceptance of what has just been said, and building on that line. The word “but” is a way of blocking, of rejecting what has just been given. “But it’s so hot out. I want to go to the beach” doesn’t do much as an “acceptance” and “build on” to the expression “Let’s all go snow skiing in the mountains.” So the safer mode of responding is to begin with “yes, and” instead of “but” (“*Yes, anding*’ --- ‘*No butting*’ (or *Blocking*)”).

Finally, the first rule (at least in our rule book) of theater is to make your fellow actors look good. That is true for both improvisational and script acting. You are probably familiar with the term “upstaging,” which is the exact opposite of *making others look golden*. In theater, upstaging, in its simplest expression, is the act of standing behind another actor and making gestures that draw attention away from the person or persons that the audience attention should be focused on. The expression “to upstage” derives from a bygone theater era (early and pre-20<sup>th</sup> Century) when all stages were raked downward toward the audience to enhance visibility of all spaces on the stage, both front and back. Hence the back of the stage was always higher than the front of the stage. We still refer to the back of the stage as “up” and the front of the stage as “down,” a legacy of that era. To “upstage” was to position oneself “up” from another actor (hence behind the actor) and deflect attention, either wittingly or unwittingly, from the “downstage” performer. Good actors, under good direction, focus their attention on the actor who is supposed to be the center of the audience attention (the actor giving a line, singing a song, engaging in movement) and consciously avoid any and all gestures that might be distracting.

To *make others look golden* is the entreaty to improvisational actors to always do and say whatever it takes to make the others on stage look good. And following another actor’s “gift” of a line with another line that is plausible and connected coherently with the first line is one way of making the first actor look good. Remaining motionless and silent as your co-actors speak is another way of making them look good – and not “upstaging” them with extraneous movement or sound (“*Make Others Look Golden*”).

A word of disclaimer: the authors are business professors, not improvisational actors. We teach business, not acting. As such, we are indebted to those who have contributed so generously to our own understanding of improvisation, and whose writings have given us the basic tools to incorporate this important teaching modality in our experiential courses in emotional intelligence. In particular, we have benefited measurably from the scholarship of those included in this parenthetical citation (Claudon, 2003; Fox, 1994; Johnstone, 2007; Nachmanovitch, 1990; Salas, 1999; Spolin, 1999).

## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE OFFICE

Chances are you will soon be attending a meeting at work, or possibly a board meeting of your home owner's association or a nonprofit organization that you serve. What goes on at these meetings often violates most or all of the principles of improvisation, at the expense of a productive meeting and collegial, supportive relationships among your coworkers or fellow board members. To begin with, participants at business meetings are too often not present to their immediate surroundings and to their colleagues' needs, wants, and feelings. Often there are several contrasting agenda among the meeting's participants, and those agenda can interfere with effective listening and effective "yes, anding" behavior. When we lead activities in our MBA classes that invoke the principles of improvisational acting and then tie in those principles to the workplace, we often hear students describe their typical work meetings as food fights of blocking responses, with the most popular beginning words coming from each contributor's mouth being "but," "except," and "however" -- in essence, beginning each expression with a repudiation and devaluing of what was just heretofore said. The atmosphere is one of disrespecting and dishonoring everyone else's contributions, even though we don't consciously think of our blocking language as being that inimical. The effect on the discourse, however innocuous we may have intended it to be, is poisonous. It isn't about disagreeing -- that is a healthy and positive course that we encourage as part of the transparency we seek in business meetings (or should seek). It's about a style of exchange that fosters contentiousness, lethargy, and disconnect among group members.

Let's look at a hypothetical first few exchanges in a business meeting, label what is going on, and suggest an alternative response that follows the principles of improvisation.

Exchange 1:

Sam:           *All in all, I thought the project went quite well.*  
Harry:       *Except, of course, we didn't make the deadline.*

Note that Harry blocked Sam's opening invitation to focus initially on what went well with the project. His first word out was "except" -- a clear blocker that shows that Harry's

personal agenda are keeping him from following Sam's "gift" with a positive, coherent message that builds on Sam's opening. Following the principles of improvisation, a more effective reply from Harry might look like this:

*Harry: Yes, it did go well, despite our not making the deadline.*

Exchange 2:

*Bill: Let's see if we can strategize around possibilities for shortening our turnaround time.*

*Carol: But how can we do that with the bottleneck in Building 3?*

Again, notice how Carol blocked Bill's request with the word "but," suggesting that his request is out of place or premature. Here would be a more effective response, following our improvisational rules:

*Carol: Good idea. One place we might begin to look at is the bottleneck in Building 3.*

Exchange 3:

*Ruth: I really like the idea of moving PR to the 4<sup>th</sup> floor, closer to reprographics and telecom.*

*Joe: However, that leaves Jim without adequate space for his staff.*

Note how Joe blocked Ruth's expression of enthusiasm for a proposed change, intimating that she hadn't even considered the impact on Jim, an assumption that might be wrong – as well as dismissive, insulting and disrespectful. This would have worked better:

*Joe: Yes, that would be more convenient for our PR people. Any suggestions about where we could house Jim's operation if we move PR?*

In reading these dialogues, they might not seem all that corrosive to group dynamics. In truth, however, they take a hidden toll in collegiality, group decision making, team building, cohesion, and esprit des corps. Let's be clear, these are not emotionally intelligent replies. The difference between the first and second replies is the difference between walking out of a business meeting bored and depleted, or walking out energized and enthusiastic. From the metaphor of improvisational acting, it would be the difference between walking out of the theater yawning instead of laughing

To be sure, there are other “anti-group” and *emotionally unintelligent* behaviors that derive from ignoring the principles of improvisation, and one can always compound the damage with accentuating behaviors. For example, we can broadcast and flaunt our lack of presence, our failure to listen, and our preoccupation with personal agenda by visibly looking around the room when our colleagues are speaking, or engaging in side conversation while others are speaking. By doing this we not only violate all the rules of improvisation, emotional intelligence and good group behavior, simultaneously, but we also manage to dramatize to our colleagues just how irrelevant and tiresome they really are. Make no mistake about it, when you engage in side conversation during a meeting, or let your focus wander about the room when a colleague is talking, you are conveying to him and to everyone else in the room just how unimportant you think his message is. You are now an actor worthy of a role in a training video depicting how best to engage in anti-group, emotionally ignorant behavior – how to be a drag on group cohesion.

### **A MODEL FOR USING IMPROVISATIONAL ROLE PLAY IN TEACHING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

Before we set up a role-playing module for our MBA students, we carefully present our five “Principles of Improvisation,” making sure that everyone understands each rule – at least intellectually if not operationally. Then we warm up our budding actors with a few traditional improvisational start-up drills. For example, we might assemble the class in a circle and ask the members to send and receive phantom “gifts” to each other across the span of the circle. A pantomimed “gift” could be a heavy imaginary object that one member of the group tosses to another across the circle. In this case an effective improvisational “receipt” of the gift would honor both the shape of the invisible object tossed, as well as its weight and the impact that its thrust would have on the receiver. This might involve a little grunt and grimace as the object is being caught, as well as movement that shows that the object is heavy. In this case, imagine yourself catching a 20-pound medicine ball and how that catch would manifest in your body language.

A traditional verbal or “repartee” warm up might involve two people writing a letter to a friend, with each person offering alternative words, as in:

Person 1:	Dear
Person 2:	John,
Person 1:	How
Person 2:	have
Person 1:	you
Person 2:	been?
Person 1:	Did

---

Person 2: you  
 Person 1: see  
 Person 2: the  
 Person 1: rainbow  
 Person 2: yesterday?  
 Person 1: It  
 Person 2: was  
 Person 1: really  
 Person 2: there (CABOOM! BLOW UP!)

The challenge in this kind of improvisation warm-up is to follow each preceding word with another that flows logically and coherently onward. When a word just doesn't move the letter forward – or totally ruptures the flow – then the participants are instructed to “blow up” (as in both saying “Caboom”) the letter and start another one. In the example above, the word “there” just didn't move things forward and wasn't really additive to the flow of the letter. So it was time to blow up the letter and start another one. Of course, the participants are challenged to keep the words flowing smoothly – to be spontaneous and dynamic in their exchanges, with virtually no thinking space between words. This may seem like a silly exercise; in fact, it is a challenging improvisational drill in “being present,” “giving up agenda,” “yes, anding,” “really listening,” and “making the other look golden.”

There are several improvisational warm-up drills that we use, with the objective to get our students ready to engage in role play that engages their limbic systems and helps them move toward repartees that follow the principles of improvisation and enhance their emotionally intelligent behaviors.

Following these warm-up drills, we set an improvisational scenario for teams to work with. We usually divide our class into teams of from 4 to 6 students – more than 6 is unwieldy for improvisation and difficult for the remainder of the class to critique in a way that yields productive feedback for the participants. We assign specific observers (coaches) for each member of an improvisational team, and assemble the “audience” members in a circle or “fish bowl” to actively observe the actors with the goal of being able to provide constructive feedback between acts in the play. Following is a typical set-up and scenario, assuming a class size of 30 students. We will convey this set-up with numbered bullets to make it easier to understand for the reader.

1. The class is divided into 6 improvisational groups, each comprising 5 students.
2. Each group assigns a number from 1 to 5 to each of its members, with each group being assigned a letter from A to F.
3. Hence we have 6 improvisational groups: Groups A, B, C, D, E, and F
4. And each group is comprised of 5 members: Members 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5

5. Note we avoid using the word “team” to refer to the groups, to avoid any suggestion that the groups are somehow competing with each other. They most definitely are not. Indeed, the non-acting members of the class are serving as observer coaches, not competitors.
6. Following from item #5, we also establish five coaching groups, corresponding to the group members’ numbers 1 through 5.
7. Given this configuration, when Group A is engaging in an improvisation role play, each member of the group (members 1 through 5) is being carefully observed by members 1 through 5, respectively, from the other groups.
8. We usually establish the length of each improvisational exercise at from 8 to 10 minutes. The starting and stopping point is determined by the faculty member leading the class. As with the T-Group format, the leader can intervene and interrupt the action of the play, and can call “time out of time” if he or she wants to create an unscheduled “intermission” to make a teaching point.
9. As in T-Group work – and consistent with the Principles of Improvisation – members of the acting group are instructed to remain in the “here and now,” regardless of the prompt for the session.
10. The prompts and set-ups that we use tend to focus on business meetings – our clients, after all, are MBA students. So we typically establish that the “play” they are about to perform is set in a business meeting – perhaps a weekly team meeting.
11. We invite the audience members to offer prompts for the meeting – while reserving the right as instructors to approve each prompt so that the ensuing exchange retains some connection to reality. For example, prompts like “over budget” and “behind schedule” and “supplier delays” are always permissible because they focus the group on real business issues that they face. And prompts like “party on” or “weekend” would get the boot as not being on target for a weekly business meeting.
12. When the leader (faculty member) says “go,” the team attempts to be present and coherent for, say, 10 minutes. The faculty leader will freely interrupt the play if the conversation drifts too far to the past or the future, or if the members are dissembling or otherwise drifting from the Principles of Improvisation.
13. After 8 to 10 minutes, when the leader says “stop,” the group members go to their respective coaching colleagues (for example, the group member 1 will gather with the other 1’s from the other 5 improvisational groups), and spend up to 10 minutes receiving feedback from their coaches. In these feedback sessions the group members participate actively in the feedback exchange, asking for clarification, advice and suggestions, and for strategies for their next round on stage.
14. We usually put one group into an improvisational mode for two consecutive sessions before we introduce a new group, giving the members an immediate opportunity to make repairs and to try to be more effective based on the feedback they just received.
15. After the second 10-minute session, the group members spend another 10 minutes with their feedback coaches, after which we usually provide another 5 minutes for the new, upcoming, improvisational group (say Group B) members to articulate a goal or



goals to their coaches – something that can anchor the feedback they will receive after their first round “on stage.”

We understand that there is an element of “having to be there” to fully understand and visualize our format for using improvisational acting to teach emotional intelligence. And we strongly encourage the reader to look at our previous articles on using T-Groups to enhance emotional intelligence as a background for appreciating this departure from and variation on T-Group work. Since we usually staff our emotional intelligence classes with several well-trained group leaders, we typically would not have 25 audience members fish-bowling and coaching 5 improvisational actors. We would normally divide a class of 30 students into two sections, with 3 improvisation groups in each section. Hence we would have improvisational groups A, B & C in each section; and each member would receive feedback from 2 observer coaches from the other two groups. Dividing the class into two or even three subsections gives students more time to practice their emerging improvisational skills, more helpful coaching encounters, and more mindful concentration on a challenging learning modality that directly trains the limbic systems. Neural change takes time and concentration – time that is always in short supply in an MBA class.

### **CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

The principles of improvisational theater are every bit as applicable to group dynamics in business, as well as to dynamics in other group venues, as they are to conveying coherent, audience-pleasing entertainment on stage. And (not “but”) these principles are especially relevant to building teams, creating organizational cohesion, and adopting emotionally intelligence patterns for effective business communication. We encourage our readers to think about these principles when engaged in your next business meeting (without, of course, compromising your presence at these meetings). Notice how “yes, anding” keeps everyone on board, focused and moving forward as a cohesive group. And notice how “butting” blocks and stultifies communication, and divides the group. Notice the effectiveness and relevance of your own contributions when you remain fixed in the present and listen with all your senses. When you are present and listening, that grip on your personal agenda can’t help but loosen. Finally, think consciously about making the others look golden. When someone is talking, consciously convey interest, curiosity, respect, and empathy. That will make the speaker look golden. And notice how side conversations and deflected attentions around the table make the speaker look less than golden.

Improvisational actors really know how to run good meetings – and they know how to model and convey emotionally intelligent behaviors. This makes them excellent group facilitators when an organization is looking for help with focus groups or strategic planning. Their performances, and their success, depend on it. And they have a lot to teach us about team

building, consensus building, emotional intelligence, and building a spirit of shared mission and shared destiny in our work lives.

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# COMPARISON AND IMPLICATIONS OF HUMAN CAPITAL THEORY AT THE INDIVIDUAL, ORGANIZATION, AND COUNTRY LEVELS

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## ABSTRACT

*Human capital theory provides economic analysis in investment activities of education and training. This paper reviews the basic frameworks of human capital theory. Based on these theoretical frameworks, it suggests that human capital theory can be analyzed by individual (supply-side), organization (demand-side), and country (both supply and demand) perspectives. The analysis of human capital identifies considerable factors related to human capital investment, and explains how human capital theory is applicable in training and development field at the respective level. Finally, the paper suggests the directions for future research on human capital theory.*

*Keywords: education; human capital investment; human resource development; individual, organizational and country level; training*

## INTRODUCTION

According to human capital theory, education level is positively correlated with income. It specifies a particular mechanism by which education increases skills; in turn, acquired skills increase productivity, resulting in higher productivity being rewarded through higher earnings (Becker, 1993). It shows a positive correlation between age and earnings whereby older workers earn more because they have more on-the-job experience or training. Education and on-the-job training are said to make workers more productive and they are paid more because of their increased productivity. On-the-job training can provide general human capital (i.e., skills and knowledge transferable to other firm settings) or specific human capital (i.e., skills and knowledge only useful in the particular firm) (Becker 1993).

The notion of human capital theory provides us with important insight about the relationship between education and earnings and the factors related to education and earnings (e.g., age, type of training, costs, labor markets, etc.). Based on these insights, we can classify three implications of human capital theory at the individual, organization, and country levels. At the individual level, human capital theory explains basically a supply-side theory, which analyzes individual data consisting of the supply-side of the labor market. At the organization level, demand-side theory takes into account the analysis of firm related phenomena (e.g.,

productivity, investment, turnover, etc.). There is a comprehensive perspective at the country level, where both supply- and demand-side theory should be equally considered in national policy making.

With respect to individuals, understanding of human capital theory can increase their investment motivation and decrease failure in the labor market. For human resource development professionals, a more economic view of training and development is required to apply investment activities and gain benefits with a minimal investment risk. With regards to government policy makers, implementing human capital theory provides a wider scope for considering the extent to which policies, such as education reform, government training policy, equal employment opportunity legislation, affirmative action, and pay equity arrangements, can provide a more efficient and equitable use of human resources.

The purpose of this paper is to present human resource development professionals with information about significant factors related to human capital investment. It will help human resource development professionals understand what considerations they should make before investing in human capital. Based on a perspective of the individual, organization, or country, human resource development professionals may react differently in human capital investment. This paper will present the differences between three perspectives in human capital investment that are necessary to make good investment decisions. To achieve this purpose, the paper includes two challenges to human capital theory. First, it will theorize the basic frameworks of human capital to provide a theoretical foundation for further analysis in human capital investment. Secondly, it will identify considerable factors in human capital investment related to three levels of perspective – individual, organization, and country. At the same time, it will present how human capital theory can be applied in an investment decision for the three respective levels.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS OF HUMAN CAPITAL THEORY**

Becker (1962) introduced the basic notion of human capital. He states that the theory of human capital can be defined as skills acquisition, and that skills acquisition can be achieved through education and training. Education is the most important way to obtain human capital, and training is another important method to invest in human capital. For example, individuals invest in human capital by spending their money (e.g., tuition, books, supplies, etc.) and time (e.g., opportunity costs) for schooling and companies invest in human capital by providing training programs for individual workers. After investing in human capital, individuals acquire higher level of skills and are rewarded with higher wages and salaries in return for their improved productivity. The companies benefit both from the workers' improved performance and from higher productivity. Many labor economists have explored empirical data and built useful theoretical analyses to explain phenomena of human capital, which are as follows.

## Production Function Model

Jorgenson and Griliches (1967) presented the production function model that includes all contributions to output:

$$Y = f(K, L, T, Q)$$

It represents that the degree of output ( $Y$ ) is produced by the physical capital ( $K$ ), labor services ( $L$ ), technical progress ( $T$ ), and human capital (i.e., labor quality) ( $Q$ ) in addition to labor services. Individuals will seek either to maximize their present value of future earnings or to maximize the internal rate of return. Holding the technical progress ( $T$ ) factor and other factors constant, human capital (i.e., labor quality) ( $Q$ ) is another factor of production (i.e., a second type of capital). Each factor has a price based on marginal productivity, so that human capital (i.e., labor quality) ( $Q$ ) will have a price that equates the value of the marginal contribution to the cost of labor quality. The production function implies that there can be an optimal level of investment in human capital for firms and individuals, and they should optimize their accumulation of human capital to avoid any over- or under-investment.

## General Training vs. Specific Training

Becker (1993) distinguished general training from specific training with perfect labor markets: (1) *General training* increases the marginal productivity of trainees by exactly the same amount in the firms providing the training as in other firms, and (2) *Specific training* has no effect on the productivity of trainees that would be useful to other firms. The concept of training is concerned with the cost of training (i.e., training finance), and who (i.e., firms or individual workers) bears the cost of training. In terms of general training, firms will provide training only if they do not have to pay any of the training costs. Trainees receiving general training are willing to pay these costs because training will raise their future earnings. Individual workers bear the costs of general training and also receive the profit from the return. However, in the case of specific training, workers cannot transport acquired skills across firms because the acquired skills are only useful in the specific firm or workers are effectively immobile between firms for other reasons. Trainees do not have the benefit of moving between firms. Also, the firm will acquire benefit from the specific training and bear the training costs equal to the returns from training. Individual workers may also invest in specific training if it decreases the probability of layoff. Firms paying for specific training will suffer when trained workers leave, because equally trained new workers cannot be obtained without additional training costs.

However, firms within non-competitive labor markets may pay for general training. Labor market frictions and institutions shape the wage structure, so that they may have an important impact on the financing and amount of human capital investments and account for

some international differences in training practices (Acemoglu & Pischke 1999b). Moreover, specific and general training are incentive complements from the firm's point of view. Specific training not only renders the provision of general training viable for a firm, but also the reverse also holds: the higher the level of a worker's general human capital, the larger are the firm's incentives to train him in specific skills. As a consequence, firms may be willing to sponsor general training, even in competitive labor markets, where outside wages fully reflect a worker's marginal product from his general human capital (Kessler & Lülfesmann 2006).

### **Two Period Labor Market**

Becker (1975), Hashimoto (1981), Hashimoto and Yu (1980), and Azariadis (1988) provide a job training analysis based on a two-period model. Labor market entrants encounter a two-period time horizon. In the first period, workers choose between training and job search, and, in the second period, trained workers take up a skilled occupation. This two-period model assumes that there are two levels of occupations, skilled and unskilled, and that entry into the skilled occupation requires a certain level of training.

In the two-period model, the supply of trainees depends on the distribution of discount rates. For example, a lower discount rate occurs when the difference between the skilled and unskilled wage in the second period is greater than that between the unskilled and trainee wage in the first period. Each individual has different discount rates, so the training decisions among individuals vary depending on the individual's discount rate. Individuals with a low discount rate will decide to train in the first period, because these individuals know that the skilled wage, compared to the unskilled wage, is high enough to bear the lowest trainee wage. But individuals with a high discount rate will not get training and search for jobs in both periods, because there may be no significant wage difference between skilled and unskilled workers or a trainee's wage rate is too low during training; consequently, individuals are better off not to get training. In this analysis, it is clear that the individual wage will become higher after training, and that the lowest wage, lower than that of an unskilled job, will be given during the training period.

The issues about job rationing and training subsidy are related to the supply of skilled labor. Training investment may occur with unemployment issues in skilled labor, and a training subsidy increases training and may affect unemployment. It is possible for workers who are not trained to benefit, and for workers who are trained to lose, to the extent that both the skilled wages and employment probabilities of trained workers fall in the skilled labor market.

### **Transactions Cost and Contracts**

A transactions cost model explains the sharing of training costs and benefits between workers and firms. The share ratio of costs and benefits depends on the type of training provided by the firm. The transaction costs arise from renegotiating post-training benefits. Firms may

propose the fixed wage to achieve an agreed share of quasi-rent, and both firms and workers rely on observable predictors of productivity or contracts that restrict quits and dismissals (Hashimoto 1981; Hashimoto & Yu 1980).

The analysis of contracts for human capital accumulation is generally consistent with wages rising with productivity. Firms may regard the skill shortage and workers may consider the supply of their skills as adequate for the current market demand. The nature of labor contracts for wages and employment will influence training decisions (Bailey 1974; Moura & Andrade 1990). If firms and workers have an implicit contract that will lead to reduced turnover, workers will be more reluctant to leave firms (e.g., loss of seniority rights) and firms will be more reluctant to fire workers (e.g., high hiring costs and reputation effects). Both firms and workers may be more inclined to invest in training that will increase productivity within the firm.

### **Signaling, Screening, and Information**

The basic human capital model presumes that firms and individuals have perfect information. However, information differences between economic agents could be significant and lead to various outcomes for market efficiency (Akerlof 1970). Training can play a role as a signaling and screening device. Firms may encourage signals regarding a productive element of training while workers may prefer the incentive of training that provides more general benefits (e.g., general training, portability, transferability, etc), even if no actual productivity gain happens (Spence 1973; Blaug 1976). Training and education could be a combination of both signaling and a means of improving labor quality. Also, training and information are related in some sense as the specific human capital arises in the hiring process as firms acquire information from new workers. If firms could access other firms' training information, including both specific and general, that information could reduce training incentives (e.g., more certification leads to less training) (Jovanovic 1979; Katz & Ziderman 1990).

### **Labor Market and Efficiency**

The labor market can be divided into two structural features: occupational labor market (e.g., secretaries, construction workers, professional personnel, etc) and internal labor market (e.g., private firms and public sectors). There are several important aspects of the relationship between labor market structure and the incentive to train. Occupational labor market is associated with trained workers who can transfer to other firms. Internal labor market encourages the retention of workers with firm-specific skills. In both labor markets, the positive relationship between age and earnings is evidence of on-the-job learning and experience; the wage tends to rise with age because of accumulation of unobservable human capital (Marsden 1986; Marsden & Ryan 1991). The reverse, the labor market can be distinguished as the dual labor market which refers to primary and secondary labor markets. Primary labor market is characterized by high

wages, good working conditions, employment status, and job security. In comparison, the secondary labor market lacks these advantages and is characterized by low wages and poor job prospects. In this segmented market concept, younger workers might be paid less in the secondary labor market and the wage differential explained by restricted access to training and development. However, policies that are designed to increase training will incur an opportunity cost arising from secondary workers who are unable to train (Bakke 1954; Taylor & Pierson 1957; Doeringer & Piore 1971; Ashton, Maguire & Spilsbury 1990).

Efficiency wages play an important role in these labor markets and explain market clearing wage, labor turnover, wage-productivity link, wage distribution, and wage discrimination (Lazear 1981; Shapiro & Stiglitz 1984; Lazear & Moore 1984).

### **Comparison and Implication of Human Capital Theory**

Human capital theory can be analyzed by both individual (i.e., supply-side of labor market) and organizational (i.e., demand-side of labor market) perspectives, which conflict with each other in some points, and by the wider perspective – the country level. From the individual worker's perspective, the human capital theory provides the principles of individual accumulation, costs, and the returns of human capital, and the notion of earning profiles. From the organizational (firm) perspective, the human capital theory presents the ideas about productivity, the labor market, labor mobility, turnover, costs and benefits, and the risks of investment. The perspective at the country level comprehensively approaches both individual and organization and involves governmental policy-making in human resources. The following section will compare three perspectives to help HRD professionals understand how they can rationalize their decision-making regarding education and training.

#### **Individual Level**

This section analyzes individual accumulation of human capital through formal education and on-the-job training and identifies the factors related to an individual's investment activities in human capital. Individuals try explicitly or implicitly to maximize their total economic returns by acquiring productive education, training and experience on the job, under constraints of personal ability, capacities, and financial opportunities (Becker, 1993).

#### **Schooling vs. Training**

There are two important forms of human capital investment: schooling and on-the-job training (Becker 1993). Schooling provides a general purpose of knowledge by teaching conceptual tools and information, useful in a variety of occupations and industries. The general purpose of schooling both facilitates the acquisition of more specific skills and provides workers



with the flexibility necessary to realize their comparative advantage. Schooling plays a major role for increasing individual earnings. The amount of schooling sets the initial levels of wages and salaries and affects individuals' total earnings for their whole life. After schooling, the best way to increase productivity in a given profession is likely to be via on-the-job training. Training (accumulation of on-the-job training and experience in firms) contributes to an increase in wage and salary.

Another issue is the optimal mix of schooling and training. In non-competitive markets, there are important links between schooling and equilibrium training, so that the breadth of skills provided by schools and the amount of uncertainty about young workers' ability will be major determinants of firms' incentives to provide training (Acemoglu & Pischke 1999a).

### **Economic Returns**

Economic returns refer to increased earnings (e.g., wage, salary, and income) (Becker 1993). Human capital investment accompanies both an individual's productivity values and increased earnings, compared to a situation without human capital accumulation. To maximize economic returns, individuals invest in human capital via more valuable productive components (e.g., top MBA programs, training of skills in labor shortage, and occupations requiring high technologies). For instance, employer-financed trainings are associated with significantly higher wages as to the costs of the specific training of firms (Booth & Bryan 2005).

### **Non-monetary Returns**

Economic returns may be the major driving force for individuals to invest in their human capital, yet non-monetary returns or benefits also play a significant role in the investment in human capital. Non-monetary returns might be an improvement in well-being at work as a result of additional schooling and training and take the form of higher status, with more flexibility or interesting assignments or self-fulfillment or job satisfaction. The value of returns means improved working condition rather than improved salary (Lazear 1998). Workers with more education or training, tend to be less often unemployed than those without it (Becker 1993).

### **Costs: Direct Costs and Foregone Earnings**

If individuals invest in education, they have to bear cost of the lost income when they work instead of study. Individuals factor in opportunity costs where they are lower than or at least equal to the earnings after investing in human capital. Foregone earnings are the single most important cost factor to individuals in human capital investment (Becker 1993). The cost of investment late in life is higher than the cost of the same investment early in life because the income late in life is higher than that early in life. The investment late in life should give up more

opportunity costs than early in life as foregone earnings increase during a work life, even though the direct costs (e.g., tuition, fees, book expense, etc.) are relatively fixed.

### **Age, Earning, and Investment: Economic Returns Profile**

The earnings of an individual, who has invested in education and on-the-job training, will be higher than someone who has not made this investment in human capital. The earning difference between them increases up to a point towards the end of working life; after that point, it decreases. Individuals approaching retirement tend to diminish or may completely stop their human capital investment activities, because depreciation of the human capital affects an individual's productivity and earnings decrease (Michael, 1973). The total earnings decrease towards the end of a career can be explained by a net decrease of the total stock of human capital. Human capital can heavily accumulate during an individual's early working life because of the long payback period of the investment. Individuals reduce their overall investment activity as they approach retirement as the depreciation term is stronger than the accumulation term, which leads to a net reduction of the individual's total stock of human capital and earnings (Becker 1993).

### **Labor Markets and Risk in Investment**

Investment in human capital is a very risky activity due to its duration and considerable uncertainty concerning both an individual's own capacities and the extent and quality of what is accumulated. When an unfortunate choice is made, returns on investment in human capital will be below expectations, leading to a very low or negative rate of return. Because of the long investment periods of formal schooling and training, it is difficult for individuals to forecast labor market needs and they may fail to select the optimal choice of his/her own education as a result of imperfect information as to one's own abilities. Investors in human capital are more likely to misjudge and be unsuccessful in their investments than investors in physical capital (Nerdrum 1999).

The risks in human capital investment can be classified by two types: structural risk and non-structural risk (Nerdrum 1999). The structural risk arises from structural changes in the economy, while the non-structural risk mainly results from incomplete information from both sides of the labor market. This structural risk is unavoidable due to structural change; however, the non-structural risk can be removed through spending money on extremely high removal costs to gain information. These risks are higher in human capital investment than in physical capital investment; consequently, rates of return for human capital are higher than physical capital (Nerdrum 1999). With the risks of human capital, an individual must understand that accumulated human capital will not yield the expected returns as it is not engaged in the labor

market due to unemployment under a labor surplus or low performance in an occupation where the accumulated human capital does not have its full productive effect (Nerdrum 1999).

## **Organization Level**

Based on the firm's perspective, this section explores how firms can rationalize their training investment decision by identifying the principles of investment in human capital. As firms seek more benefits from an investment in training, while keeping their costs as low as possible, theories of investment in human capital show the variables related to a firm's training decision are in such areas as productivity, costs and benefits, turnover consideration, external and internal labor markets, and investment risks.

### **Productivity: Financial Returns**

Firms have two main reasons for investing in human capital – productivity increase and some form of financial returns. Training has been shown to have an impact on employee productivity. Researchers show a positive link between training and productivity in specific companies (Lyau & Pucel 1995). Bartel (1994) stated training is a preferred and effective strategy for firms to address differences in productivity between themselves and their competitors. In all of these cases, training is one of the few factors shown to influence productivity.

Still, many studies have presented the evidence of increased productivity in human capital through training. At the level of individual workers, training produced measurably more productive workers in a laboratory setting. Reviewing management estimates of the productivity of individuals, training increases management estimates of productivity (i.e., financial returns). For most types of training, these productivity gains are greater than the wage increases received by trained workers (Bishop 1994; Barron *et al.* 1989). International comparisons produce some of the most compelling evidence that training can increase productivity. Hashimoto (1994) and Berg (1994) compare the US with Japan and Germany, respectively, in the automotive industry, finding that the inferior performance of US plants is attributable to a lack of training activity.

### **General vs. Specific Training, Training Costs, and Benefits**

On-the-job training in firms can be considered as two types of training: specific and general training. Firm-specific training increases the worker's productivity in the firm where workers work but not in other firms. General training increases the worker's productivity in a general way in both the worker's employer firm and other firms. Specific training includes training in firm procedures and work practices, and in the operation of equipment which is used only by a specific firm, or only by one firm in a geographical area. The firms spend money on

training costs, but they also enjoy the increase in productivity. Alternately, the provision of general training can increase productivity in a number of firms. Completely general training (e.g., literacy, analytical skill, etc.) is useful in all firms and would also include training in a process which is used by a number of firms operating in the same industry. A firm provides the general training only if it is financed by the workers (trainees), not by the firm (Becker 1962, 1975, 1993).

The superior information of the current firm regarding its workers' abilities relative to other firms creates ex post monopsony power, and encourages the firm to provide and pay for training, even if these skills are general. In one equilibrium, quits are endogenously high, and, as a result, firms have limited monopsony power and provide little training, while in another equilibrium, quits are low and training is high (Acemoglu & Pischke 1998).

Firms may have no reason to pay for general training as they can recruit workers with general skills from other firms, without having to pay training costs. If they hire generally trained workers, the firms need to pay them a high wage, equal to the value they can produce, to avoid poaching. General training tends to benefit only the employees, who receive higher wages, and not the firms. Employers may need the skills of generally trained workers, but they receive no financial benefits, as they need to pay a wage equal to the worker's value to attract and retain these workers. Firms then have an incentive to invest in specific training as there is no concern that other firms will poach employees with specific skills and do not need to pay these workers high wages to avoid poaching. The benefits of any increase in productivity will go to them. In reality, most trainings mix the two types and workers receive a combination of general and specific skills (Becker 1975). Therefore, it was noted that the costs of training should be shared by the percentages of general and specific training, as both employers and employees benefit (Lynch 1992).

## **Employee Turnover**

Firms prefer to invest more in firm-specific human capital than general human capital. On-the-job training tends to decrease turnover in a firm. Well-educated and trained employees have less incentive to quit their jobs or move into another job than untrained workers (Mincer 1993). On-the-job trained workers tend to be laid off less often than untrained workers due to more human capital and less unemployed and jobless for shorter time periods (Becker, 1993).

Human capital theory assumes that, with general skills, it is easy both for workers to change jobs and for employers to recruit workers. However, turnover will become an important matter when the costs imposed on workers and firms are considered as there are substantial costs (i.e., job searching, hiring and training costs, etc.) and uncertainties for both sides as an employee leaves one job and finds another. Firms will pay the costs of specific training by compensating trained workers slightly more than they could earn at other firms (Hashimoto 1981), and will retain these workers rather than recruiting new ones to avoid the costs. Firms

might be better off due to savings in recruiting costs through investing relatively less in the training cost, and then invest in specific human capital to avoid employee turnover.

### **Labor Market: External and Internal**

Human capital theory basically explains workers' outcomes from a supply-side, individual viewpoint. However, it also can be explained from the demand-side (firm's viewpoint). External labor market can be analyzed by the framework of general or specific training. General skills transfer across numerous employment situations, industries, or labor market segments. Demand for general skills should be higher than that for firm-specific skills as demand is not limited to a single buyer. Firm-specific skills are useful only in specific production processes, usually controlled by particular firms (Wynn & Mueller 1998). Firms can consider the training decision regarding labor markets, whether general or specific skills are needed; if so, their analysis in demand and supply requires training or hiring new workers in the labor market.

In the case of the internal labor market, generally trained workers are more likely to remain with a firm if that firm has a strong internal market (Soskice 1994) where a firm is inclined to fill vacancies from within its existing workforce whenever possible. In this situation, the path to a well-paid position in a firm is to enter the firm at a lower level and then rise through the ranks. Even if workers undertake general training, they have an incentive to stay with a firm with the employers subsidizing general training with the firms being reasonably confident of retaining trained workers.

### **Risk in Investment**

Firms know that human capital investment includes risks, like any other physical capital investment. Firms may not obtain outcomes or returns from training investment. For example, trained skills may be obsolete or useless, trained workers may suffer from turnover as firms cannot use them, or a national economy may slow down creating laid off trained workers.

The cause of risks in investment in human capital can be classified as structural and non-structural risk (Nerdrum 1999) such as individual perspectives. Structural risk arises from structural changes in the economy, which firms cannot control, and appears, with structural changes, unavoidable in a changing economy. Non-structural risk results from imperfect information on both the supply and demand sides of the labor market. Due to the depressing effect of these risks on investment behavior in human capital, they cause an under-investment in human capital with intervention aimed at reducing them seeming to be socially worthwhile.

## **Changes in Work Practices**

Firms may invest in human capital to support workplace changes which have become increasingly important to the competitive strategies of firms. Investment in training is used to support the implementation of practices, such as teamwork and quality assurance, rather specific human capital. A commitment to quality, flexibility, and service by training is a strategy that puts great pressure on the workforce to produce quality goods and adapt quickly to changes in production requirements. Training can improve various forms of work practices, for example, excellent customer service as a result of training is a competitive advantage in the financial industry (Noble et al, 1996). Training investment is a key feature of companies which have adopted new work practices (Osterman 1994). If the future business environment is characterized by increased competition, there is likely to be an increased demand for training.

## **Advances in New Technology**

When workers are unlikely to be able to handle any equipment to its full capacity, firms may decide to invest in some formal or informal training. There is a logical link between the introduction of new technology and human capital investment, for example, industries undergoing rapid technological change provided more training across a number of US surveys (Lillard & Tan 1986). The studies show the importance of training provided by equipment and product manufacturers. Training provided by manufacturers is especially important to small businesses that are less able to provide formal training with their own costs. However, in larger businesses, it is likely that some of the training is provided internally (Catts 1996; Noble et al. 1996). Most of this training is firm-specific, lasts for a relatively short period, and provides benefits as long as the technology is in use. Employers prefer this training, even though human capital could be portable between firms that use the same or similar technology, but it is only effective in achieving its limited purposes on specific technology. Firms may face the need for more generally adaptable skills to cope with uncertain future changes and produce sustained improvements in performance with unfamiliar technology (Catts 1996; Noble et al. 1996).

## **Country Level**

Human capital theory provides a meaningful analysis for government policy-making in education and training. At the country level, governments' basic concerns focus on education and training as a means of developing their labor force's basic skills due to a necessity for entry into the job market. However, it is critical that a government's perspective includes both individual and organization interests and attends to both the supply side (individual) and the demand side (organization) in the labor market. Governments play a key role in supporting both

individual and organization approaches to minimize market failure and in building national strategy to accomplish a competitive advantage in human resources in the global economy.

### **Costs: Subsidy and Loans**

At the country level, human capital theory provides analysis in education and training costs—how government subsidizes training or education, or provides loans for individuals or organizations. When a labor market is affected by a labor shortage (e.g., firms in high technology need more skilled labor force), a government needs to facilitate investment activities in education and training. Despite the need for this investment, however, the investment activities may not happen because of divergent individual and organizational perspectives. From the individual perspective, individuals may not have enough funds to invest in their education and training, even though education and training will promise a higher level of income. From the organization's perspective, firms may not invest sufficiently in training because trained workers may leave, or be poached by other firms. Some firms try to free ride on the efforts of others, rather than invest in training themselves. Such a problem occurs when differences between individual and firm perspectives cause under-investment in human capital (Stevens 1999). Governments may intervene in this problem by using a national level of human capital perspective. They might provide for a part of the training costs, a subsidy for education or training, or a low-interest loan for individuals to increase the supply of skilled labor force in the market. According to an OECD report (Blöndal *et al.* 2001), across the OECD countries, there is a broad consensus that some degree of government involvement is necessary in the provision of educational services. In addition, concerns about a chronic lack of supply of enterprise training have prompted governments to intervene in training. These views confirm the assumptions of the authors.

### **Benefits for All Individuals and Employers**

At the country level, benefits in education and training accrue both to the trained individuals and to the employers. Government policy may emphasize that employers ought to invest in skills training. Governments require individuals to bear the responsibility for their own learning and training but they may pay for some of the education and training costs for individuals and firms.

The benefits of human capital investment from governments are shared by both individuals and employers. Education and training sponsored by a government will raise the wage above the level that the trainees would have earned. At the same time, with the increased supply of skilled labor, firms have a positive benefit from the training. One benefit is the positive probability of employing the worker at a wage lower than his marginal product. Moreover, where all benefits from human capital investment may not be internalized (e.g., human capital

investment in basic science may not produce full benefits for individuals and firms), a government can then subsidize the specific human capital that is beneficial, not for a specific individual or a firm, but for the general public.

### **General and Specific Skills in Labor Market**

Becker's original thought of human capital refers to general and specific skills (Becker 1993). His analysis also gives an idea of what type of skills government should develop for both individuals and organizations. Firms may be reluctant to develop an employee's general skills, because they are concerned about the skilled employee's turnover after training. While some firms are not fully able to take advantage of general skills training due to turnover, individuals will be paid off being trained with general skills. In this case, governments should encourage firms to invest in general skills training by subsidizing the training costs to prevent a labor shortage in the market.

Specific human capital is also important to firms as these skills have no value in the external labor market and employers are not concerned about turnover or higher wage paid after training. Becker (1993) argued that the wage would lie below the marginal product and above the external market wage; so that the worker and the firm would share the benefits of specific training whereby governments may not need to involve the development of firm-specific skills.

At the country level, individuals know that general skills will provide more flexibility than specific skills; however, firms notice that general skills are more vulnerable than specific skills. Governments have a role in reconciling the gap between an individual's and an organization's perspective, and provide a training policy that will benefit both sides.

### **Market Failure: Under-investment or Over-investment**

Based on an analysis of general and specific human capital, firms prefer to invest in specific skills rather than general skills. This may lead to over-investment and under-investment (Stevens 1994). Firms and individuals may respond by over-investing in specific human capital, which decreases employee turnover and increases a firm's productivity. Individuals must pay all of the costs for general human capital, but the problem is that they often cannot actually bear those costs. In this case, under-investment may happen in general human capital.

Governments have experienced problems in human capital investment and labor market as they are continually analyzing labor statistics, with the conclusion that some of the skilled labor markets may have significant labor shortages and are under-invested in. Governments may then provide treatments to cure the problem through subsidies, loans, tax exemption for trainings, regulation, etc. Also, the demand of skills, whether specific or general, is fluctuating. This could mean that many workers' skills may be obsolete and need to be redeveloped. For example, the computer industry developed the COBOL program in the 1970s but the emerging personal



computers in the 1980s rendered their skills obsolete and the programmers were no longer required in the labor market (Stevens 1999). Governments should consider market failure according to the fluctuation of demand of skills and provide a proper solution for workers' reemployment such as financial support, regulation of training expenditure of firms, etc.

### **Race, Gender, and Earnings Differentials in Human Capital**

One of the national considerations in human capital comes from the relationship between human capital accumulation and substantial earnings differentials by race and gender in the U.S. workforce (Strober 1990). Human capital theory argues that race and gender differentials are explained by differences in the supply side of the labor market. There are differences in worker productivity and particularly differences in education and experience. However, the challengers to the human capital theory argue that the differentials are due to the demand side of the labor market – particularly discrimination, to interactions among ideology, demand and supply, and to political movements. Human capital theory holds that individual human capital accumulation is varied by race and socio-economic background. Ultimately, even at the same level of human capital, employers hold the power to set wages and to determine the gender and racial designations of occupations. This view of human capital supports a government's role of building policy initiatives, such as education and vocational training reform, regulation for training investment, equal opportunity and employment legislation, affirmative action, pay equity and other related legislations. In addition, this perspective can support the rationale that many countries consider those policy initiatives for protecting minority members of their society.

<b>Table 1. Comparison of human capital by each level of analysis</b>					
Level	Investment Decision	Considerations			HRD Role
	Type of HC	Costs	Returns	Risks	Perspectives
Country	Schooling ↔ Training	Subsidy, Loans	Economic Development (GDP etc.)	Under- or Over-investment	Policy Coordination, Equality(EEO, AA etc.)
Organization	General ↔ Specific Training	Training Costs	Org'l Productivity, Financial Returns etc.	Turnover	Performance, Profit Maximization
Individual	Schooling ↔ Training	Direct Costs, Opportunity Costs	Pay Increase, Employability, Job Satisfaction etc.	Unemployment	Self-development, Self-actualization

### **CONCLUSION**

In general, the goal of human capital investment in individuals is clearly to take the benefits from investing in their human capital, regardless of whether it is general or specific skills. However, individuals cannot predict the demand-side of the labor market in a perfect

manner, due to lack of information and their limited ability. This could mean that individuals may fail to enter the job market after education and training.

Human resource development professionals in organizations can succeed in making good decisions in training and development through utilizing the human capital theory. In other words, human capital theory can help human resource development professionals to understand how workers' type of skills and their interests affect training decision, how trained workers increase their productivity, and how skilled work force is related to turnover and retaining issue.

Governments should be concerned with the labor shortage in the market, since individuals and firms are not always able to lead to the optimal level of investment in education and training. Human capital theory implies that government can implement subsidies, loans, tax exemptions, and some regulation for investment in education and training. Governments should play a more important role in creating an environment which encourages a high level of investment in training and produces maximum social benefits. It can explain many phenomena in education and training at the individual, organization, and country levels, including factors such as economic returns, productivity, general and specific training, labor markets, risks in investment, etc. However, human capital theory explains those variables in a supply-side labor market rather than a demand-side or both sides, making it difficult for human resource development professionals to apply human capital theory at the organization and country levels. This may be caused in part by the difficult for economists to obtain a firm's human capital data. Due to the lack of human capital analysis in the demand-side of the labor market, a firm's training budget is still vulnerable to cuts in difficult economic times. Therefore, more research and empirical data analyses in human capital at the organization level are needed for the future.

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# A STUDY OF THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY BUSINESS COLLEGE STUDENTS

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## ABSTRACT

*The use of social media such as Twitter and Facebook as well as news gathering practices of 126 business students was investigated through student completion of a survey. There was no statistically significant difference in international news seeking practices between genders. Almost three quarters of the students had never used Twitter. Men used Twitter more frequently than women ( $p < .05$ ), while women used Facebook slightly more frequently than did men ( $p < .10$ ). Students younger than 26 were more likely to use Twitter than those 26 and older; however, the younger set did use Twitter more frequently than the older set ( $p = .002$ ). While both women and men reported interest in seeking international, business and science news, and news about US politics, women sought entertainment/arts news more frequently than men. Given the explosive increase in usage of social media and their integration with popular tools like web search engines and mobile devices, our subjects will most likely become more heavy users of social media soon. They need to be educated about the potential value of social media as sources of breaking news, valuable analysis, and discussion, as well as tools to create and maintain social and professional relationships. We should be teaching them about the risks of social media, how to judge the credibility and authority of the information that they can provide, and how to use these new tools to become better students, better professionals, and better citizens.*

## INTRODUCTION

This paper reports the results of a study designed to determine the behavior of students enrolled in a Western university during the Spring 2011 term with respect to use and perception of social media (specifically, Facebook and Twitter).

Social media are not new. We wrote about the creation of virtual communities and their impact on the communication of science 17 years ago (Perez-Carballo, 1994). What is new is the fact that these days the potential users of social media are counted in the hundreds of millions. Social media users include people of all ages, walks of life, and levels of technological literacy. When we began to observe virtual communities, the technologies used (such as BBS, Listservs, and Usenet) were restricted to savvy computer users. These days anybody with a mobile device may be tweeting to a virtual community of users.

Given the increasing popularity of social media and their integration into many of the information systems people use, it becomes interesting to study how business students perceive and use them. Social media can be a valuable source of topical news, information, and a tool to build virtual social and professional communities.

Despite a recent Pew survey (Smith, 2011) that reports increasing use of social media among young people, specifically minorities, before we ran the study reported here, we had (somewhat surprising) anecdotal evidence that only a very small percentage of our students used social media. In the past several years very few of our students would admit publicly that they used Facebook or Twitter. This anonymous survey study is an attempt to gather and analyze more formal data about social media usage among a student population in a Western university.

The two instances of social media that we chose to study were Twitter and Facebook. Both are computer supported systems that facilitate the creation and inter-communication of virtual communities.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Twitter (created in 2006) is a micro-blogging service. In July 2009 it had 41 million users (Kwak, Lee, Park, & Moon, 2010); by March 2011 it had 200 million users from all over the world (Shiels, 2011). Twitter allows users to post and exchange 140 character long messages, which are also known as "tweets." A user's tweet is seen by all the "followers" of that user. Individual messages can also be found by searching all tweets. About 46% of active Twitter users are mobile users (Castillo, Mendoza, & Poblete, 2011). The Library of Congress (LOC) keeps a digital archive of all public tweets since 2006. According to the LOC page, Twitter processes more than 50 million tweets per day from people around the world (*Tweets at LOC*, n.d.).

The enormous amounts of data available on real-time networks like Twitter have been used to create systems that alert people about "topical news" (Phelan, McCarthy, Bennett, & Smyth, 2011). A Twitter user was unknowingly reporting real-time on the U.S. special forces mission to capture or kill Osama bin Laden (McCullagh, 2011).

During crisis situations Twitter is used by millions of people to get up-to-the-minute information. For example, during the crisis caused by hurricane Irene in August of 2011, it was possible to get constant updates from the Office of the Mayor of New York City. Here is an example of one such tweet: "MTA & airports shutting down. Ferries have stopped or will soon. Time is running out. If you're in an evacuation area, leave now." (NYC Mayor's Office, Aug 27 2011).

In times of crisis cell phone service may fail, but access to social media may still be possible. Indeed, in August 2011, FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) tweeted: "During/after #Irene, voice data networks may be busy. Send a text or e-mail to friends/family & let them know your status."

It is possible to find all kinds of information using Twitter. For example, at least one of the authors of this paper follows the tweets of *Nature* (Nature magazine), the NSF (National Science Foundation), nytimescience and nytimesbits from the *New York Times*, NASAJPL (Jet Propulsion Laboratory), and EQTW (earthquake and tsunami warnings), among others.

Facebook is a social networking service and website launched in February 2004. It describes itself as "a social utility that helps people communicate more efficiently with their friends, family and coworkers." Facebook claims (*Facebook*, n.d.) more than 750 million worldwide active users in August 2011. About 70% of Facebook users are outside the United States (op cit). Facebook users create and post content (text and multimedia) that can be seen by several layers of other people (from friends to strangers) depending on the (famously changing and controversial) privacy settings determined by the user. According to Facebook, the "Average user is connected to 80 community pages, groups and events. Average user creates 90 pieces of content each month" (op. cit.). Both Barack and Michelle Obama have a Facebook site. A total of 22,530,285 people have clicked a button to express that they "like" the President's site, while 6,089,785 like Michelle Obama's site (as of August 2011). Politicians and organizations can use Facebook to apprise followers of activities and raise funds. For example, in August 2011 there were 5 pages and 1 group devoted to help earthquake victims in Haiti. Windows, Microsoft, Apple, and Google all have official Facebook pages.

While Twitter may be useful to detect "trending topics" and to stay informed of "breaking news", 140 characters is probably not enough to allow Twitter posters to provide any kind of meaningful analysis. Facebook, on the other hand, allows for a more slow and thoughtful discussion and conversation between and among users.

The information devices we use (computers, laptops, and smart phones) are beginning to integrate both Twitter and Facebook in their operating systems. Bing, Microsoft's web search engine, integrates Facebook in its search mechanism. When a user searches the web using Bing he/she can benefit from what Facebook friends have searched and found before. This information provides an instant form of recommendation from a virtual community of Facebook friends. Mac OS Lion, the Apple operating system released in the Summer of 2011, integrates Twitter in such a way that it is possible to tweet from almost any application. This feature also exists in iOS5, the mobile Apple operating system (used by iPhones, iPad, and iPods), to be released in the Fall of 2011.

While social media may have enormous potential to keep virtual communities informed about international, national, and community news, they are also used for more trivial (but not less popular) communications. Teenagers may use social media to inform each other of their "relationship status" or to harass and bully others. Politicians have used social media to inadvertently broadcast inappropriate pictures of themselves that have ended their careers.

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The use of social media is increasing among all populations. According to Chiu et al. (Chiu, Leeb & Cheunga, 2011) more than a billion individuals around the world use computer-supported social networks. In the US, social network usage seems to be increasing specifically among young people and minorities. In a recent Pew survey almost half of adults reported having a social networking site (SNS), almost twice the number who reported using a SNS in 2008 (Smith, 2011). In addition, 31% of Facebook users and 20% of Twitter users access those sites several times a day, while 21% of Facebook users and 13% of Twitter users access those sites around once a day. In terms of being current with the news, 63% of those under age 30 are aware that Facebook was founded by Mark Zuckerberg, while less than half of those under age 30 are aware that the Wisconsin protests (one of the most reported national news of the beginning of 2011) centered on public employee union rights (Staff, 2011).

There are several examples of reputable organizations using social media to reach their audiences and conduct important business. The London School of Business and Finance (LSBF) announced in November 2010 that it would post the content of its Global MBA program on Facebook. LSBF expects more than 500,000 Facebook users to access the courses during the first year (Anonymous, 2011).

Social media such as Facebook can be especially important for students to manage social networks, especially as they adopt mobile technologies that can access online social networks (Barkhuus & Tashiro, 2010). A 2010 poll of pre-service teachers (Brunsell & Horejsi, 2010) reports that 95% of them use Facebook or Twitter. According to that poll, social media have become part of the lives of millions of high school students. A growing number of people over 30 are using social media to create and maintain social networks. The National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) uses Facebook and Twitter to facilitate communication between its members (op. cit.).

K-12 educators are integrating Facebook and Twitter into their own social and professional lives as well as that of the communities they serve. Davis (2010) tells the story of a principal for whom Twitter has become a “mainstay for professional development as well as school promotion” (p. 16). According to Davis, in some schools social networking has changed the way educators teach and students learn.

Castillo, Mendoza, and Poblete (Castillo, 2011), discuss the information credibility of news propagated through social media. They report on research that shows that most of the messages posted on Twitter are truthful but remind readers that “the service is also used to spread misinformation and false rumors, often unintentionally” (p. 675). Their work focuses on automatic methods for assessing the credibility of a given set of tweets.

Ferebee and Davis (2009) studied whether there are any behavioral determinants of new members’ continued participation in Facebook. They found that females continued participation at a higher percentage than males. No comparison was made with Twitter or other social media.



Fodeman and Monroe (2009) discuss the risks that children face when they use social media. There are issues related to privacy, marketing, scams, and risky social interactions that are particularly serious when the users are minors.

Foltz (2010) encourages recruiters to use social media to reach “generation Y” job candidates. She says that Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Second Life enable recruiters to post announcements, send messages to large groups of people, or hold virtual recruiting events. This suggests that young college students could find social media useful in their professional lives.

Faculty may see the use of social media with skepticism (Green & Bailey, 2010). But not so long ago some of them viewed the Web with equal distrust. Both students and faculty have to be educated about the use of social media for academic purposes. For example, Green and Baily (op. cit.) tell of a teacher who asked the students to create a different profile, instead of their normal one, in order to join the Facebook page of his course. He did not want to have any access to the students’ personal Facebook pages. The issue of safety and risks is also pointed out by Hancock (Hancock, 2010) when he discusses the educational opportunities offered by social media. As both students and faculty start using social media for academic purposes, we must understand what is private, what is not, what is appropriate, and, in general, what behaviors are risky when using these new technologies. See for example (Schwartz, 2010) for a discussion of some of these issues.

Roblyer and others study how likely higher education faculty are to use Facebook for either personal or educational purposes. They find that students are much more likely than faculty to use Facebook and are significantly more open to the possibility of using Facebook and similar technologies to support classroom work. Faculty members are more likely to use more “traditional” technologies such as email (Roblyer, McDaniel, Webb, Herman, & Witty, 2010).

Kwak et al. (Kwak et al., 2010), present what may be the first quantitative study on the entire Twittersphere. They study, in particular, the way in which information propagates through “retweets”. They find that more than half the time CNN was ahead of Twitter in reporting current events. However, some news broke out on Twitter before CNN (e.g., sports matches and accidents). Indeed Twitter has been used to design news recommender systems that mine trending topics in order to recommend news stories to users (Phelan, McCarthy, & Smyth, 2009). Sankaranarayanan, Samet, Teitler, Lieberman, and Sperling describe methods to identify breaking news from Twitter and to eliminate the noise (tweets that are not relevant to the news) inherent in the system (Sankaranarayanan et al, 2009).

Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechter, and Espinoza (2008) found that social media users often use it to connect and reconnect with friends and family members. They studied the differences between users' online and offline networks.

Teclehaimanot and Hickman (2011) report that students find passive behaviors more appropriate than active behaviors with no difference depending on whether students or teachers perform the behaviors. Additionally, men find student-teacher interactions on Facebook more

appropriate than women. Engaging with another user (like sending a message) is an example of “active behavior”. Looking at what another user has posted is an example of “passive behavior”. Harris and Rea (2009) discuss the potential uses of social media and other Web 2.0 technologies in the teaching of information systems. The case of teaching information systems is particularly interesting since in this case social media is not only the medium for teaching but also the object of study. Harris and Rea (2009) say that “social networks are quickly becoming the norm and must be addressed and utilized in IS education (op. cit., p. 140).”

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

For the purpose of the study, five research questions were identified:

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <i>Research question 1:</i> | <i>Which sources are used for international news gathering by undergraduate business majors?</i>  |
| <i>Research question 2:</i> | <i>Are there any statistically significant differences in news gathering approaches between Computer Information Systems (CIS) majors and non-CIS majors?</i> |
| <i>Research question 3:</i> | <i>Which types of news are more frequently followed by undergraduate business majors?</i>   |
| <i>Research question 4:</i> | <i>Do undergraduate business majors devote more time to social media or to other news outlets?</i>  |
| <i>Research question 5:</i> | <i>Are there any statistically significant differences in news gathering approaches between male and female students?</i>                                     |

### METHODS OF RESEARCH

A survey was developed to address major issues in the use of social media specifically with respect to news gathering approaches during the Spring 2011 term. The participants were students enrolled in six sections of business courses, including two business communications course sections. A total of 126 students completed the survey. Students were informed that the survey was anonymous and voluntary. The names of students were not gathered in either the hard copy or web administrations of the survey.

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## DEMOGRAPHICS

Please note that in some instances percentages may exceed 100% due to rounding. Of the 126 students who completed the survey, 83 (66%) are male and 43 (34%) are female; 55 (44%) report English as a first language, 71 (57%) report another language; 20 (16%) are 31 or older, while 106 (84%) are 30 or younger; 49 (39%) identify as Asian, 43 (34%) as Hispanic/Latino, 12 (9.5%) as Caucasian, 7 (5.5%) as African-American, and 3 (2.4%) Native American.

### Results

The results are organized by research question.

*Research question 1: Which sources are used for international news gathering by undergraduate business majors?*

We asked our subjects “Which sources do you use in order to follow news about events that occur in other countries?” In the responses the subjects confused the medium or technology (such as internet) with the source of the content (such as BBC). We think it is still interesting to look at the list of media, both technology and content, they reported for this question. Here is the list with the frequency with which each item was mentioned: internet (36), yahoo.com (26), CNN (15), *Wall Street Journal* (15), BBC (12), *Los Angeles Times* (7), tv (7), Al Jazeera (6), AP (6), NPR (6), *New York Times* (6), google (5), Reuters (5), *The Economist* (5), cnn.com (4), radio (4), FOX (3), MSNBC (3), newspapers (3), ABC (2), MSN (2), and Twitter (2).

*Research question 2: Are there any statistically significant differences in news gathering approaches between Computer Information Systems (CIS) majors and non-CIS majors?*

There was no statistically significant difference for Twitter or Internet use between CIS/Computer Science (CS) majors (40) and subjects with other majors (86). CIS/CS majors seem to use Facebook more often than other majors but not with a high statistical significance: 1.7 vs. 1.5, with  $p = 0.25$ .

*Research question 3: Which types of news are more frequently followed by undergraduate business majors?*

The subjects were asked to rate how important different kinds of news were to them using a scale from 0 to 3, where 0 meant “not important at all” and 3 meant “very important.”

The subjects rated the different kinds of news offered to them, ranked in descending order by the average score: business/economy (2.5), science/technology (2.3), international news (2.3), US politics (2.1), weather (2.1), local politics (2.0), community/neighborhood (2.0), entertainment (1.8), arts (1.7), sports (1.7), and celebrity gossip (0.8). It seems a bit surprising that students consider “more important to them” business/economy and science/technology news than sports. It is likely that subjects (despite the fact that they knew the survey was anonymous) might tend to answer what they think the researchers wanted to hear, or even what they think might make them look better rather than the truth. Some evidence of this comes from the subjects’ answers when they were asked to mention a specific event in the news they have been following. A total of 36.5% international events (we counted the death of Bin Laden, which was then in the news, as an international event), 24.6% entered “none”, “n/a”, or vague generalities (e.g. “headlines”), 14.3% cited trivia (sports, extreme weather in other cities, or entertainment), 11.1% mentioned economic issues, 7.1% mentioned politics, and 5.6% mentioned technology.

*Research question 4: Do undergraduate business majors devote more time to social media or to other news outlets?*

The average frequency use of Twitter in the full sample (126) was 0.36 (measured on a scale of 0 to 3, where 0 is “never”, 1 is “2-3 times a week”, 2 is “2-3 times a day”, and 3 is more than “2-3 times a day”). About 72% of the total population report never using Twitter. There was a significant difference in Twitter usage between men (83 subjects) and women (43 subjects): 0.42 vs. 0.23 respectively, with  $p = 0.05$ . Around 67.5% of men report never using Twitter, while 81.4% of women report never using Twitter. Facebook usage in the full sample was 1.56 (on the same scale used for Twitter). Of the total study participants, 27.0% report never using Facebook, 32.5% of men report never using Facebook, and 16.3% of women report never using Facebook. Women use Facebook more than men (1.7 vs. 1.5) with  $p = 0.1$ .

Internet usage for news gathering was rated at 2.8 (on a scale from 0 to 3). This result is consistent with 78% of the full population reporting that they obtain their news from Internet “all the time”. When we asked our subjects to mention specific sources they use to get news, they mentioned actual news sources (such as BBC) as well as delivery mechanisms or technologies (such as Internet and Twitter). In that response Internet was mentioned 36 times (28.6%), the highest number of references to any source. Google was mentioned 5 times (4.0%), and Twitter was mentioned only 2 times (1.6%). Facebook was never mentioned as a source of news.

We measured frequency of use of Twitter and Facebook using a scale from 0 to 3 (where 0 is “never”, 1 is “2-3 times a week”, 2 is “2-3 times a day”, and 3 is more than “2-3 times a day”). The average usage for the whole population studied ( $n = 126$ ) was 0.36 for Twitter and 1.56 for Facebook. We split the population into two sets by age in order to determine whether there is a difference in usage depending on age. The young set included all subjects 25 and younger; the old set included all subjects 26 and older. With these definitions, there was no

significant difference in usage of Twitter among the young, the old and the full set. It looks like not even our young students are using Twitter very frequently. Actually, 72% of the full population of 126 reported “never” using Twitter. On the other hand, the young used Facebook with a frequency of 1.8, while the frequency for the old was only 1.1 ( $p = .002$ ). Only 25% of the full set (126) reported never using Facebook.

*Research question 5: Are there any statistically significant differences in news gathering approaches between male and female students?*

As mentioned above, the average usage for the whole population studied (126) was 0.36 for Twitter and 1.56 for Facebook on a scale from 0 to 3. Women seem to use Facebook more frequently than men (1.74 vs. 1.45) with  $p = 0.10$ . On the other hand, men use Twitter more often than women (0.42 vs. 0.23) with  $p = 0.05$ . There is no significant difference in the use of Internet between genders.

We measured interest in celebrity, entertainment and arts news in a scale from 0 to 9. Women (43) were significantly more likely to be interested in this type of news than men (83) (5.3 vs 4.2) with  $p = .0007$ .

We could not find a statistically significant difference in interest in business and science news between males and females.

Interest in sports news was measured in a scale from 0 to 3. Men were significantly more interested in sports than women (1.8 vs. 1.4) with  $p = 0.04$ . Interest in US politics news was measured from 0 to 3. We could not find a statistically significant difference between males and females with a score of 2.1. Interest in international news was measured in a scale from 0 to 3. We could not find a statistically significant difference between the genders at a score of 2.2.

## CONCLUSIONS

Our results match results from a Pew Research report from 2009 (Pew, 2009) that found evidence that people were beginning to use the Internet more often than newspapers to gather news. Another Pew Research poll (Smith, 2011) reports that “13% of online adults use Twitter” (n.p.). That article also reports that Twitter adoption is particularly high among non-whites; more among blacks than among Hispanics (no other ethnicity is mentioned). Indeed we found that despite a significant majority of our subjects preferring internet (78%) as a news source a surprisingly large portion of the subjects had never used Twitter (72.2%).

In previous years, we had already gathered anecdotal evidence about a relatively low Twitter usage by our students. In this more formal study we have found statistically significant evidence that shows that indeed our students are not very heavy Twitter users yet. It could have been suspected that when asked in class students would be reticent to admit using Twitter, but the survey used in this study was guaranteed to be anonymous. Some of the explanations we

obtained for their lack of interest in social media were that, with their work in school, their jobs, and families, they do not have time for “idle pursuits” such as Twitter. They seem to think, incorrectly, as we have argued above, that social media are only appropriate for trivial chat or scandalous revelations from celebrities and politicians but not a good source of valuable, credible, and timely information. In most cases this belief seems to be based on a priori judgments, not on actual evidence or experience.

Search engines, such as Bing, are already closely integrated with Facebook, making it possible to use the knowledge of one’s community of friends when searching the Internet. The new Apple operating system, Lion (released in Summer 2011), will be closely integrated with Twitter. With the increasing integration of social media with some of the devices and software we use, the frequency of use of Twitter and Facebook that we saw in this study will likely increase very fast in the near future. As faculty become more informed about social media, it is likely that the subjects of our study will participate in virtual academic communities supported by social media.

The population we studied does seem to use Facebook with significant frequency, and the fact that the younger ones use it more allows us to conclude that in the near future more will be using Facebook. We did find an interesting difference in the use of social media between genders. Even though there does not seem to be a difference in frequency of use of Internet by gender, men use Twitter significantly more often than women, while women use Facebook more often than men. It is tempting to interpret these results as meaning that men prefer more terse communications (Twitter is limited to 140 characters per tweet) while women prefer a richer communication experience (as in Facebook) that allows establishing and maintaining relationships.

In the near future young adults may be veteran users of social media but in the case of our study we found that social media were still novel to many of the young adult subjects in our population. This suggests that these college students still need to be educated about the possibilities and risks of social media.

All sources of information and news, even the traditional print-based ones, need to be evaluated carefully by users for authority and credibility. Social media are a relatively new source of information and perhaps the methods to evaluate credibility must be significantly different from other media. We found that our subjects considered the new social media unreliable and unworthy of their time. They did not seem to think that they could find valuable information as a result of using Twitter and Facebook.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Given the explosive increase in usage of social media and their integration with familiar tools like web search engines and mobile devices, our subjects will most likely become more heavy users of social media soon. They need to be educated about their potential value as

sources of breaking news, valuable analysis, and discussion, as well as tools to create and maintain social and professional relationships. We should be teaching them about the risks of social media, how to judge the credibility and authority of the information that they can provide, and how to use these new tools to become better students, better professionals, and better citizens.

It would be interesting to continue a longitudinal study of social media usage by business students in order to gauge how such use changes over time. It would be a good learning experience for both students and faculty to include social media in courses in the same way that we now include books, email, and web resources. In these exercises it is important to keep in mind the risks and what constitutes appropriate behavior when using social media.

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# **PERSON-ORGANIZATION FIT: USING NORMATIVE BEHAVIORS TO PREDICT WORKPLACE SATISFACTION, STRESS AND INTENTIONS TO STAY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of the present study is to build upon the existing fit literature by applying a new approach to the operationalization and measurement of the P-O fit construct. In particular the fit between employees' perceptions of actual and preferred workplace behavioral norm expectations was used to predict individual job satisfaction, workplace stress, and intention to remain with the organization over and above the predictive ability of organizational culture itself. Data were obtained from a single multinational organization headquartered in the US. Congruence between ideal and actual organizational cultures predicted satisfaction and intent to remain over and above organizational culture alone.*

Key words: Person-organization fit, organizational culture, job satisfaction, work stress, turnover intentions

## **INTRODUCTION**

With the increasing use of technology keeping employees in closer contact with the office and blurring the lines between work and personal time, the need to understand how and why employees thrive in certain organizational settings becomes a real concern for organizational researchers and practitioners. Person-organization (P-O) fit is one approach that has attracted a great deal of attention in recent years as a method of determining whether an employee might succeed and enjoy being in a given work environment, or fall short and ultimately choose to leave the organization or be let go. There is clear indication in the literature that P-O fit is related to organizational commitment, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and employee stress (Chapman, Uggersleve, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003; Kristoff, 1996).

While P-O fit research has received a surge of interest in recent years, its precise conceptualization, measurement and use is of some debate. For example, the literature on P-O fit

suggests that academic researchers and practitioners disagree not only on the measurement of the P-O fit construct, but if and when it should be used in applied settings (Schneider, Smith & Goldstein, 2000). Specifically, the academic literature suggests that P-O fit research has failed to demonstrate extensive evidence of its utility, especially when applied as a predictor of various occupational outcomes such as employees' job satisfaction or psychological and physical well-being (Hesketh & Myers, 1997; Tinsley, 1999). On the other hand, from a practitioner's perspective, it seems somewhat intuitive that the use of such a construct (i.e. the "fit" between an individual and his/her organization) *would* assist organizational researchers and managers in understanding the relation between employee and organization. It is these contrasting views that have sparked a debate between organizational researchers and practitioners.

The purpose of the present study is to build upon the existing fit literature by applying an approach to the operationalization and measurement of the P-O fit construct that focuses more on expectations of how employees should behave rather than on the formal and tacit values of the workplace. In particular, the present study will use the fit between perceived actual and ideal workplace behavioral norm expectations to predict individual employee workplace stress and intention to stay. To date, P-O fit research using preferred and actual organizational culture as a fit dimension has focused on a values-based approach, and has therefore operationalized fit as the correspondence between the values of the employee and those of the organization (Piasentin & Chapman, 2006; Billsberry, Ambrosini, Moss-Jones and Marsh, 2005; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman & Johnson, 2005; Kristof, 1996). This approach has been criticized on the basis that an organization's values may be implicit and therefore unknown to the employee and, as a result, difficult to articulate (Billsberry et al., 2005, Kristof-Brown, et al., 2005). By using overt workplace behavioral norms that are at the superficial level of the organization's culture, we hope to address this criticism and improve the predictive validity of P-O fit when using actual and ideal organizational culture as a fit dimension.

Since organizational culture itself is predictive of a number of individual-level outcomes, it is important to determine the extent to which P-O fit can explain workplace outcomes above and beyond organizational culture alone. This type of analysis will assist in determining the degree of unique variance in job satisfaction, intention to stay and stress that is explained by the P-O fit construct as operationalized by behavioral norm expectations. Such an analysis has not yet been explored, and would address specific criticisms related to the predictive ability and meaningful application of the P-O fit construct beyond the direct main effect of the work environment.

## **PERSON-ORGANIZATION FIT: AN OVERVIEW**

While P-O fit can be broadly defined as the compatibility between individuals and organizations, some of the conceptual confusion associated with fit research has resulted from the fact that P-O fit can be defined in different ways. For example, there are two distinct

subtypes of fit utilized in organizational research: supplementary fit and complementary fit (Cable & Edwards, 2004). Supplementary fit occurs when a person and an organization *possess similar or matching fundamental characteristics*. For example, supplementary fit would be high if both the individual employee and the organization possessed and endorsed the same values, such as autonomy or creativity. Complementary fit, on the other hand, exists when one entity *possesses characteristics that the other wants or needs*. Complementary fit would be high if the individual employee possessed skills that the organization required to get a particular job done or if the organization provided rewards or compensation that the individual employee might need or want (Cable and Edwards, 2004; Kristof, 1996).

In addition to the complementary and supplementary approaches to fit, it should also be noted that some researchers also make a distinction between demands-abilities fit and needs-supplies fit (Edwards, 1996; Kristof, 1996). Using the demands-abilities approach, fit occurs when *an individual has the abilities required to meet the demands of the organization*. In this case, abilities can include any skills, knowledge, time and energy the employee possesses to meet environmental demands and challenges (e.g. role expectations associated with a particular job, project completion speed, etc.; Edwards, 1996). On the other hand, needs-supplies fit is defined as *the correspondence between the needs, desires and preferences of the individual employee and the organizational supplies available to fulfill those needs* (Edwards, 1996; Kristof, 1996). Using the needs-supplies conceptualization, fit might be characterized as the match between a person's values (e.g. autonomy) and the capability of the organization to fulfill those values (e.g. to provide the employee with an autonomous work experience).

While the demands-abilities and needs-supplies aspects of fit are considered a second perspective to the complementary and supplementary fit approaches, it is difficult to compare and compartmentalize these different fit conceptualizations. The potential for conceptual confusion has been noted by P-O fit researchers (e.g. Cable and Edwards, 2004) and it has been suggested that the overlap within the various fit traditions has stemmed from the fact that the different approaches to P-O fit have evolved separately and independently from one another. The potential use of the fit construct within vocational counseling, industrial-organizational and management psychology may be quite valuable in that it can enhance the ability to match people with organizations for mutually beneficial organizational and individual outcomes. Organizational researchers are quickly realizing that an accurate yet integrated understanding of the construct is essential in order to apply it in a meaningful way (e.g. Cable and Edwards, 2004; Edwards, 1996; Hesketh and Myers, 1997; Kristof, 1996).

Kristof (1996) compiled much of the pre-1996 P-O fit literature in an attempt to make sense of this elusive construct. Based on the literature review, Kristof (1996) proposed an integrated definition of fit that encompasses both complementary/supplementary and demands-abilities/need-supplies fit theories to create a more comprehensive conceptualization of P-O fit. According to Kristof (1996: 4-5), "P-O fit is defined as the compatibility between people and

organizations that occurs when (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both.”

Kristof’s definition is unquestionably a necessary first step to fully understanding the relation, or fit, between the organization and its employees. This comprehensive conceptualization is important because P-O fit is used extensively to explain a variety of workplace attitudes and behaviors including organizational commitment, satisfaction, workplace stress and turnover intentions. However, while P-O fit has become a popular avenue for explaining workplace attitudes and behavior, it is often criticized for failing to acknowledge the direct impact of the individual and or the environment. For example, Hesketh and Myers (1997) assert that fit theories fail to acknowledge that individuals who have specific dispositions or who endorse certain values may experience positive work-related outcomes regardless of which organization for which they work. Similarly, certain environments can be fundamentally stressful regardless of whom an organization might employ. This viewpoint does not reject the notion that the interaction between the individual and the environment could influence work-related attitudes and behaviors, however it does question the predictive ability of the P-O fit construct over and above its main effects. Therefore, in order to gain a better understanding of unique influence of P-O fit on job satisfaction, intention to stay and stress, it is of value to examine its impact after controlling for the direct main effect of the organization’s culture.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND P-O FIT**

Organizational culture has been defined in a number of different ways, but they all fundamentally refer to a shared understanding of “the way things work” in an organization. Williams, Dobson, and Walters (1993), for example, define organizational culture as reflecting relatively stable beliefs, attitudes, and values that organizational members hold in common. Similarly, Cooke and Szumal (1993; 2000) characterize organizational culture as shared normative beliefs and shared behavioral expectations. Organizational culture is not only responsible for maintaining the social structure within the organization (Schein, 1990) but it can also impact organizational effectiveness and performance (Kopelman, Brief, & Guzzo, 1990 & Ostroff, Kinicki & Tamkins, 2003). Schein (2004) notes that organizational culture itself is complex, and different levels of analysis are possible for understanding it. He suggests that these levels include “(1) visible artifacts, (2) espoused beliefs, values, rules, and behavioral norms, and (3) tacit, taken-for-granted, basic underlying assumptions” (p. 59). It is these latter two levels that have received the most research attention when examining the relationship between organizational culture and P-O fit – but especially the latter, as tacit assumptions are often interpreted as referring to assumptions regarding values.

According to Alvesson (1993) culture is created during the organization’s formative years, by the founder’s own beliefs and values. Given that the founder is usually in a position of power and authority, this person can directly influence the employees of the workforce by

exerting personal values and beliefs. These values are then modeled and maintained through the socialization process of new employees. The culture, and its underlying value system, then becomes reflected in the social norms, rituals and routines an organization adopts and endorses (Schein, 1990). Since a particular culture and value system is passed on and maintained through socialization processes, organizational cultures are somewhat resistant to change. This lends itself to the perspective that, since both individual and organizational values are stable, value congruence may be a good way to determine whether an individual is suited for a particular environment.

The use of value congruence as a predictor of occupational outcomes has been studied extensively in the organizational literature. A meta-analysis conducted by Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) examined the results from over one hundred studies involving value-based P-O fit and occupational outcomes. Their analysis revealed that P-O fit had relatively strong correlations with job satisfaction ( $r=.44$ ) and organizational commitment ( $r=.51$ ) and was moderately related to intent to quit ( $r=-.35$ ). These results demonstrate that although there is some degree of variability in its predictive ability, value congruence fit is appropriate as a means of explaining workplace attitudes and behavior.

### **CRITICISMS OF VALUES-RELATED PERSON-ORGANIZATION FIT**

One of the major criticisms cautioning against the use of individual and organizational values to conceptualize fit is the opinion that values represent an organization's underlying culture and organizational culture cannot be assessed by quantitative means. In particular Schein (1990, p. 112) asserts that although organizational culture is represented at a number of different levels, its origins are rooted in the deep underlying assumptions, values and beliefs that ultimately "determine perceptions, thought processes, feelings, and behavior" in the workplace. What is more, because these "taken for granted" assumptions about the organization are unconscious, they are difficult to tap – especially when using a questionnaire to assess an organization's culture content. This criticism has also been raised by others who question the *accuracy* of values-related fit measures (Billsberry et. al, 2005; Kristof-Brown et al, 2005). The principle position of this criticism is that employees may not be aware of their organization's underlying value system. For example, the values that are displayed in organization's mission statement and endorsed by organizational founders and senior managers may not actually reflect the values enacted on by employees.

Values can be divided into two sub-categories: espoused values and enacted values (Ostroff, et al., 2003). Espoused values are those that are explicitly endorsed by the leaders of the organization. On the other hand, enacted values are those that are actually converted into employee behavior (Ostroff et al., 2003). According to Ostroff et al., (2003, p. 568) "the difference between espoused and enacted values is important because the gap is related to employee attitudes and behavior." Although management may believe they are endorsing a

particular value system, only enacted values are exhibited on the surface through workplace norms and behavior, thus making it difficult to use employees' assessment of organizational values to accurately infer an organization's underlying culture.

On a more superficial level, Schein (1990; 2004) suggests that organizational culture can also be represented by observable artifacts and symbols that make up the sensory experience of the organization (Ostroff et al., 2003) or by the actual behavioral norms in an organization (Cooke & Szumal, 1993, 2000). Artifacts can be described as representations or manifestations of the underlying organizational culture. Artifacts and symbols include the physical setting of an organization and the objects within that setting. Artifacts can also include "the clothing, manners of address, emotional displays, myths, and stories told about the organizations, observable rituals and ceremonies" (Ostroff et al., 2003, p. 568). Behavioral norms also focus on more observable aspects of organizational culture, such as whether it is appropriate to first knock at a co-worker's door versus just walk into her/his office without knocking. It is at this more concrete and salient level that organizational culture fit researchers may be able to assess the implications of the person-organization interaction.

### **USING NORMATIVE BEHAVIORS TO PREDICT OCCUPATIONAL OUTCOMES**

The use of normative behaviors as a means of describing organizational culture is not a novel concept. According to Szumal (2003, p.3) "identifying norms that guide members' behavior can help us to understand the differences that underlie effective versus ineffective organizations." Therefore, the model of organizational culture proposed by Cooke and Lafferty (1989) focuses on behavioral norms. These behavioral norms specify the ways in which members of an organization are expected to approach their work and interact with one another (Cooke & Szumal, 2000), and are defined by two underlying dimensions, the first of which distinguishes between a *concern for people* and a *concern for task*. The second dimension distinguishes between expectations for behaviors directed toward fulfilling higher-order *satisfaction* needs and those directed toward protecting and maintaining lower-order *security* needs. Behavioral norms then form the basis for three clusters of organizational culture types: Constructive cultures (emphasizing Achievement, Self-Actualization, Humanistic-Encouraging, and Affiliative norms), Passive/Defensive cultures (representing Approval, Conventional, Dependent, and Avoidance norms), and Aggressive/Defensive cultures (representing Oppositional, Power, Competitive and Perfectionistic norms). Using behavioral norms as indicators of organizational culture content, it is possible to assess whether a given organization promotes a Constructive, Passive/Defensive, or Aggressive/Defensive culture system.

The Constructive cluster reflects organizational cultural characteristics that encourage members to "interact with others and approach tasks in ways that will help them meet their higher-order *satisfaction* needs" (Cooke & Szumal, 1993, p.1302) and includes the Achievement, Self-Actualization, Humanistic-Encouraging, and Affiliative styles. The Achievement style

reflects an organizational culture where doing things well is valued, and employees are encouraged to set and accomplish their own goals. The Self-Actualizing style reflects an emphasis on creativity and quality over quantity. Similar to the Achievement style, both individual growth and task accomplishment are emphasized. The Humanistic-Encouraging style characterizes a culture that is managed in a person centered way and involves employee participation in decision-making. The Affiliative style indicates a culture that places a high priority on open and positive relationships among employees. This cluster of organizational culture styles has been shown to result in both high satisfaction and high productivity in the workplace (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Cooke & Szumal, 2000; Klein, Masi & Weidener, 1995; Rousseau, 1990).

The second cluster of styles in this conceptualization is the Passive/Defensive cluster. Individuals in cultures where this cluster predominates "believe that they must interact with *people* in a way that will not threaten their own *security*" (Cooke & Szumal, 1993, p. 1302). The organizational cultural styles represented in this cluster are Approval, Conventional, Dependent, and Avoidance. An organizational culture typified by the Approval style is a culture where individuals strive to keep interpersonal relationships pleasant, at least on the surface, by gaining the approval of and being liked by others. The Conventional style of organizational culture characterizes organizations that have strong bureaucratic control, and emphasize conservatism and traditionalism, resulting in conformity at the expense of effectiveness. An organization that is hierarchically controlled and discourages input from employees typifies the Dependent style of organizational culture, leading to reduced initiative, flexibility and decision-making. Behaviors such as shifting responsibilities to others and avoiding any chance of being blamed for mistakes exemplify the Avoidance cultural style, prominent in organizations where mistakes are punished and success is not rewarded.

The third cluster of organizational cultural styles is the Aggressive/Defensive cluster. This cluster represents cultures "in which members are expected to approach *tasks* in forceful ways to protect their status and *security*" (Cooke & Szumal, 1993, p.1302). The Oppositional, Power, Competitive, and Perfectionistic styles comprise this cluster. The Oppositional style reflects patterns of behavior where negativity and confrontation in interactions occur frequently and are expected, resulting in unnecessary conflict and poor problem-solving. An organization where the Power style predominates, such as non-participative or position-centric organizations, results in employees working to build up their power base by controlling subordinates and acceding to the demands of supervisors. When an organization constructs a win/lose situation for employees, employees compete against each other and operate on the belief that to do well they must win at another's expense. This typifies the Competitive organizational culture style. When an organization emphasizes the Perfectionistic style, employees know that mistakes will not be tolerated, that attention to detail, and hard work toward very narrowly defined objectives are expected (see Table 1 for more details on each organizational culture style).

In addition to assessing an organization's actual culture, behavioral norms can be used to ask organizational members to describe their ideal organizational culture, defined as the culture in which they feel they would be most effective. Once employees describe their actual and ideal organizational culture systems, researchers can then use these indices to calculate how well the employee is matched to his/her environment (i.e. how well does the employee fit with the organization), and this measure of P-O fit can then be used to predict certain occupational outcomes such as workplace stress and intention to remain with the organization. Given that this type of fit index assesses workplace behavioral norms – a more concrete level of organizational culture that may be easier to articulate than an organization's deeper level of culture, this type of culture fit measurement addresses the criticisms related to the use of quantitative methods to assess an organization's underlying value system.

## HYPOTHESES

Although an organizational culture that supports the norms associated with Constructive behaviors rather than Passive/Defensive or Aggressive/Defensive is probably more likely to experience desirable organizational outcomes such as increased effectiveness and teamwork, the balance between the desires of the employee and the actual culture for *all* aspects of organization's culture should impact occupational outcomes for the individual employee. For example, some aspects of an Aggressive/Defensive cultural style such as Perfectionistic or Competitive may be best suited for sub-cultures created by different professionals or job clusters within an organization. As a result, the fit or match between the employees' ideal level of a cultural norm and the actual level of the norm should impact an employee's perceived stress or other workplace attitudes and behaviors. The present study is designed to explore and tap into the balance between all aspects of the organization's culture and employees' preferences for different culture systems. Therefore, the first step is to establish that occupational outcomes such as stress and job satisfaction are directly affected by organizational culture, conceptualized and measured as behavioral norms.

*H1A: Job stress will be negatively related to organizational norms that promote individual growth and creativity and positively related to organizational norms that cause employees to behave in protectionistic rather than productive ways.*

*H1B: Intention to stay and job satisfaction will be positively related to organizational norms that promote individual growth and creativity and negatively related to organizational norms that cause employees to behave in protectionistic rather than productive ways.*



Using employees' actual and ideal behavioral norms as a fit dimension, this study explored the relation between P-O fit and three work-related outcomes: job satisfaction, workplace stress and turnover intentions. In addition to the overall hypothesis that P-O fit would be related to the cultural outcomes of interest, it is also hypothesized that the direction of the P-O fit gap would predict specific outcomes. For example, when considering the supplies-demands concept of P-O fit, it has been suggested that excess supplies (quality of environmental attributes that fulfill the employee's values or demands) may actually reduce work strain (Edwards, 1996). Similarly, when considering the demands-abilities concept of fit, excess employee abilities can make environmental demands more manageable, thus alleviating strain (Edwards, 1996) and possibly stress and job satisfaction. Other research, however, suggests that overqualification in a job leads to greater dissatisfaction and stress (Johnson & Johnson, 1996). This has led to the criticism that P-O fit research using a composite fit index (represented by the absolute difference or squared difference between P and O variables) loses valuable information about the direction of the mismatch (Edwards, 1993; Edwards & Parry, 1993). By applying this premise to the current study, it is plausible to expect that a positive gap on the Constructive cultural styles, for example the work environment promotes Self-Actualizing cultural norms above ideal expectations, would be associated with higher levels of employee satisfaction, stress and intentions to stay. In addition, when considering the Defensive cultural styles, a positive P-O fit gap whereby actual cultural norms outweigh ideal levels should be associated with poorer outcomes such as lower levels of job satisfaction and intentions to stay as well as higher levels of stress.

*H2A: A positive gap (actual higher than ideal) of the organizational culture norms that promote individual growth and creativity will positively predict satisfaction and intent to stay while a negative gap will negatively predict these outcomes.*

*H2B: A positive gap (actual higher than ideal) of the organizational culture norms that cause employees to be protective of their job will negatively predict satisfaction and intention to stay while a negative gap (actual lower than ideal) will positively predict satisfaction and intention to stay.*

If organizational culture as measured by behavioral norms is related to these outcomes, this study will further examine if perceived fit can explain more variance in job satisfaction, stress and turnover intentions than organizational culture alone.

*H3A: After organizational culture is taken into account, a smaller P-O fit gap between ideal and actual organizational norms that promote individual growth and creativity the higher the levels of job satisfaction.*

*H3B: After organizational culture is taken into account, the larger the P-O fit gap in the organizational norms that cause individuals to interact with other employees in ways intended to protect their job, the higher the levels of stress.*

*H3C: After organizational culture is taken into account, the larger the P-O fit gap in organizational norms that cause employees to engage with their tasks in ways intended to protect their job, the lower the intentions to stay.*

## METHOD

### Participants

Respondents came from a single multinational organization headquartered in the United States. Data from the 442 participants came from an archive of the publisher of the instruments used in the survey. The modal age category of the sample was between 40 and 49 years of age (18%) followed by 30 – 39 (16.7%) and 20 – 29 (12.9%). Most of the respondents were female (73.6%). The modal response for ethnic background was White/Caucasian (50.8%), with 12.2% indicating a Black or African American ethnicity, and 20% opting not to respond to this question. Almost a quarter of the respondents did not respond to a question regarding organizational level, but of those that did, most (64%) were non-management employees with the remainder of the employees in some type of management position. Most of the sample was comprised of employees who had been with the organization for 4 – 10 years (36%).

## INSTRUMENTS

### Organizational Culture

The *Organizational Culture Inventory*® (OCI, Cooke & Lafferty, 1989)<sup>1</sup> was used to measure actual organizational culture, and was administered to all organizational members in English. The OCI is an assessment of an organization's operating, or current, culture in terms of the behaviors that members understand are required to adapt and "meet expectations" within their organization – in other words, employees' understandings of the behavioral norms of an organization. Twelve styles of organizational culture are assessed with ten questions each (see Table 1 for a description of the styles and sample items). Additionally, descriptions of participants' ideal organizational culture were assessed using the *Organizational Culture Inventory-Ideal* (OCI-I, Cooke & Lafferty, 1989) a parallel instrument that asks respondents the extent to which the same behavioral norms should exist in the organization in order to ideally maximize motivation and organizational performance. To obtain the actual culture norms, respondents were asked to indicate on a 5-point Likert scale the extent to which the statements

related to the norms and behaviors in their workplace are expected or encouraged. The same 5-point Likert scale and phrases were used to measure the ideal culture, however respondents were asked the extent to which each statement *should be* expected in their organization to increase effectiveness. Validity evidence includes support from research that examined its construct validity (through principle-components analysis) (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Rousseau, 1990; Cooke & Szumal, 1993), and criterion validity (Cooke & Szumal, 2000).

The outcome variables were assessed through the use of selected items from an auxiliary instrument that assesses both organizational and individual level outcomes (*Organizational Effectiveness Inventory*<sup>TM</sup>, Cooke, 1997)<sup>2</sup>, using a 5-point Likert scale. Three variables were selected for analysis (see Szumal, 2001, for complete descriptions of the scales). *Job Satisfaction* was reflected by assessing the extent to which participants feel positively about their work situation. The *Intention to Stay* scale was based on responses assessing the extent to which participants plan to remain with their current organization, while the *Stress* scale asked participants to assess the extent to which they feel they are pushed beyond their normal range of comfort by organizational demands, pressures, or conflicts.

<b>Table 1: Descriptions of the Twelve Cultural Styles Measured by the Organizational Culture Inventory<sup>®</sup> (and Sample Items)</b>	
<b>Constructive Norms</b>	
[Cultural Styles Promoting Satisfaction Behaviors]	
<b>Achievement</b>	
An Achievement culture characterizes organizations that do things well and value members who set and accomplish their own goals. Members are expected to set challenging but realistic goals, establish plans to reach these goals, and pursue them with enthusiasm. ( <i>Pursue a standard of excellence; Openly show enthusiasm</i> )	
<b>Self-Actualizing</b>	
A Self-Actualizing culture characterizes organizations that value creativity, quality over quantity, and both task accomplishment and individual growth. Members are encouraged to gain enjoyment from their work, develop themselves, and take on new and interesting activities. ( <i>Think in unique and independent ways; Do even simple tasks well</i> )	
<b>Humanistic/Encouraging</b>	
A Humanistic-Encouraging culture characterizes organizations that are managed in a participative and person-centered way. Members are expected to be supportive, constructive, and open to influence in their dealings with one another. ( <i>Help others to grow and develop; Take time with people</i> )	
<b>Affiliative</b>	
An Affiliative culture characterizes organizations that place a high priority on constructive interpersonal relationships. Members are expected to be friendly, open, and sensitive to the satisfaction of their work group. ( <i>Deal with others in a friendly, pleasant way; share feelings and thoughts</i> )	
<b>Passive/Defensive Norms</b>	
[Cultural Styles Promoting People/Security Behaviors]	
<b>Approval</b>	

<b>Table 1: Descriptions of the Twelve Cultural Styles Measured by the Organizational Culture Inventory® (and Sample Items)</b>	
	An Approval culture describes organizations in which conflicts are avoided and interpersonal relationships are pleasant--at least superficially. Members feel that they should agree with, gain the approval of, and be liked by others. ( <i>"Go along" with others; Be liked by everyone</i> )
<b>Conventional</b>	
	A Conventional culture is descriptive of organizations that are conservative, traditional, and bureaucratically controlled. Members are expected to conform, follow the rules, and make a good impression. ( <i>Always follow policies and practices; Fit into the "mold"</i> )
<b>Dependent</b>	
	A Dependent culture is descriptive of organizations that are hierarchically controlled and do not empower their members. Centralized decision making in such organizations leads members to do only what they are told and to clear all decisions with superiors. ( <i>Please those in positions of authority; Do what is expected</i> )
<b>Avoidance</b>	
	An Avoidance culture characterizes organizations that fail to reward success but nevertheless punish mistakes. This negative reward system leads members to shift responsibilities to others and avoid any possibility of being blamed for a mistake. ( <i>Wait for others to act first; Take few chances</i> )
<b>Aggressive/Defensive Norms</b>	
	[Cultural Styles Promoting Task/Security Behaviors]
<b>Oppositional</b>	
	An Oppositional culture describes organizations in which confrontation and negativism are rewarded. Members gain status and influence by being critical and thus are reinforced to oppose the ideas of others. ( <i>Point out flaws; Be hard to impress</i> )
<b>Power</b>	
	A Power culture is descriptive of nonparticipative organizations structured on the basis of the authority inherent in members' positions. Members believe they will be rewarded for taking charge, controlling subordinates and, at the same time, being responsive to the demands of superiors. ( <i>Build up one's power base; Demand loyalty</i> )
<b>Competitive</b>	
	A Competitive culture is one in which winning is valued and members are rewarded for outperforming one another. Members operate in a "win-lose" framework and believe they must work against (rather than with) their peers to be noticed. ( <i>Turn the job into a contest; Never appear to lose</i> )
<b>Perfectionistic</b>	
	A Perfectionistic culture characterizes organizations in which perfectionism, persistence, and hard work are valued. Members feel they must avoid any mistakes, keep track of everything, and work long hours to attain narrowly defined objectives. ( <i>Do things perfectly; Keep on top of everything</i> )
Note: Research and Development by: Robert A. Cooke, Ph.D. Style names, descriptions and items are copyrighted © and used by permission. From Organizational Culture Inventory by Robert A. Cooke and J. Clayton Lafferty, 1987, Plymouth, MI: Human Synergistics International. Copyright © 1987, 1989 by Human Synergistics, Inc. Reproduced by permission. The OCI style descriptions and items may not be reproduced without the express and written permission of Human Synergistics.	

## DATA ANALYSIS

### Latent Congruence Modeling

Latent Congruence Modeling (LCM) was conducted as an initial omnibus test to assess whether the difference between actual and ideal culture can predict workplace outcomes (specifically, job stress, job satisfaction, and intention to stay). LCM is a technique in which has the ability to partial out measurement error, in which first order latent factors are modeled (with error associated with indicators) and then second order factors model the level (mean) and congruence (difference) of these latent factors (Cheung, 2009). In addition to controlling for measurement error, LCM also allows for the examination of the potential antecedents and consequences of the level and congruence of two components (actual and ideal) concurrently (Cheung, 2009).

### Hierarchical Regressions

In order to examine the predictive ability of P-O fit over and above organizational culture, separate hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted using job satisfaction, intention to stay, and stress as dependant variables. For the regression analyses, fit was determined by using a difference score. The *OCI* and *OCI-I* are matched in that respondents are asked to describe their organization as it is in the *OCI* and the way they feel it should be to maximize effectiveness in the *OCI-I*. Participants' ratings of their ideal organizational culture were subtracted from their ratings of the current organizational culture (actual minus ideal) on an item basis. These differences were then aggregated for each style scale, providing a mean difference score for each of the behavioral norms assessed.

For each of the three regression analyses, mean scores representing the twelve cultural styles were entered into step one, followed by their respective P-O fit values in step two. To reduce problems of multicollinearity between the first order terms and the higher order terms, each organizational cultural style variable was centered – converted to a deviation term by subtracting the sample mean from participants' scores producing a modified sample mean of zero (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

## RESULTS

Means and standard deviations may be found in Table 3. The LCM confirmatory factor analysis (LCM-CFA) models within the current study have type of culture (Constructive, Aggressive/Defensive, Passive/Defensive) as first-order factors (two factors: actual and ideal), and P-O fit as second order factors. These second order factors include: level (mean) and congruence (difference between actual and ideal culture). More specifically, actual culture was

subtracted from ideal culture to get a congruence score, such that a positive congruence score would indicate that ideal was greater than actual, while a negative score would indicate that actual was greater than ideal.

**Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviations for all Variables**

Scale	Alpha	Mean	SD
Humanistic-Encouraging	.90	38.48	8.9
Affiliative	.92	39.90	8.4
Approval	.85	26.25	6.7
Conventional	.82	27.67	6.2
Dependent	.78	28.58	5.5
Avoidance	.84	20.40	7.2
Oppositional	.80	24.47	6.3
Power	.83	25.38	7.2
Competitive	.86	23.35	7.3
Perfectionistic	.81	29.68	6.4
Achievement	.89	38.10	6.4
Self-Actualizing	.83	35.98	6.1
Humanistic-Encouraging - Ideal		37.04	7.8
Affiliative- Ideal		40.27	7.4
Approval - Ideal		28.50	7.3
Conventional - Ideal		31.28	6.8
Dependent - Ideal		31.12	6.3
Avoidance - Ideal		21.32	6.9
Oppositional - Ideal		24.12	6.2
Power - Ideal		25.02	7.1
Competitive - Ideal		23.22	7.4
Perfectionistic - Ideal		31.64	6.8
Achievement - Ideal		36.72	7.0
Self-Actualizing - Ideal		34.33	6.7
Job Satisfaction*		3.87	0.9
Intention to Stay*		3.87	1.2
Stress*		2.63	1.0

## Measurement Equivalence

Three measurement equivalence conditions are required for comparison of the two factors (i.e., actual and ideal) (Cheung, 2009). These measurement equivalences include: configural equivalence, metric equivalence, and scalar equivalence (Cheung, 2009). The results of the measurement equivalence tests for the LCM-CFA model for each type of culture can be shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Measurement Equivalence Tests**

	$\chi^2$	$df$	$\Delta\chi^2$	$\Delta df$	RMSEA	CFI
Constructive						
Configural equivalence	108.64	19			.103	.951
Metric equivalence	128.81	22	20.17*	3	.105	.942
Partial Metric equivalence	109.31	20	0.67	1	.103	.949
Scalar equivalence	145.46	24	36.15*	4	.107	.934
Partial scalar equivalence	109.31	21	0	1	.098	.952
Aggressive/Defensive						
Configural equivalence	106.69	19			.102	.920
Metric equivalence	108.16	22	1.47	3	.094	.921
Scalar equivalence	125.40	26	17.24*	4	.093	.909
Partial scalar equivalence	109.60	25	1.44	3	.088	.923
Passive/Defensive						
Configural equivalence	144.09	19			.122	.891
Metric equivalence	146.61	22	2.52	3	.113	.891
Scalar equivalence	204.53	26	57.92*	4	.125	.844
Partial scalar equivalence	149.03	23	2.42	1	.111	.890

## LCM Results

The estimated means for actual and ideal culture (across all types of culture), in addition to the level and congruence are reported in Table 5. The positive mean for congruence of the Constructive culture indicates that ideal ratings are consistently higher than actual ratings (although this mean was not significant). The negative means for congruence for the Aggressive/Defensive and Passive/Defensive cultures indicates that ideal ratings are consistently lower than actual ratings (although only the mean difference for Aggressive/Defensive was significant;  $p < .01$ ). The relationship between level and congruence are small for all factors (and non-significant). The variance for congruence in Constructive cultures is the largest (7.58), followed by Aggressive/Defensive (5.52), with Passive/Defensive having the smallest variance (3.59).

**Table 5: Factor Means of Actual and Ideal Culture Ratings, and Congruence Measures**

	Actual		Ideal		Level		Congruence		$COV_{L-C}$
	$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$	
Constructive	40.21	6.76	40.22	6.51	40.21	5.45	0.012	7.58	-1.66
Aggressive/Defensive	31.18	6.33	29.49	6.13	30.33	5.59	-1.688	5.52	-1.20
Passive/Defensive	21.43	3.85	20.54	3.61	20.98	3.27	-0.887	3.59	-0.88

Note:  $COV_{L-C}$  is the Covariance between level and congruence.

These variances indicate that the differences between actual and ideal cultures vary across participants. The correlations between level and congruence for Constructive ( $-.04$ ;  $p > .05$ ), Aggressive/Defensive ( $-.04$ ;  $p > .05$ ), and Passive/Aggressive ( $-.08$ ;  $p > .05$ ) imply that these two latent factors are unrelated.

Level and congruence for P-O fit were used to predict three outcome variables (i.e., stress, job satisfaction, and intention to stay). The Constructive model demonstrated adequate to good fit ( $\chi^2 (43) = 186.09$ ; RMSEA = .09; CFI = .94), while the Aggressive/Defensive and Passive/Defensive models demonstrated poor fit ( $\chi^2 (43) = 332.38$ ; RMSEA = .12; CFI = .82;  $\chi^2 (43) = 244.66$ ; RMSEA = .10; CFI = .88, respectively). See Table 6 for all relevant path coefficients.

<b>Table 6: Results of Latent Congruence Models with Congruence of Culture as Antecedents on Workplace Outcomes of Job Stress, Job Satisfaction, and Intention to Stay.</b>				
		Job Satisfaction	Job Stress	Intention to Stay
Constructive	Level	.086***	-.066***	.104***
	Congruence	-.018**	.007	-.003
Aggressive/Defensive	Level	-.024*	.026*	-.026*
	Congruence	.020	.005	.022
Passive/Defensive	Level	.003	.011	.023
	Congruence	.066***	-.014	.085***
Note: Entries are the unstandardized regression coefficients of Constructive, Aggressive/ Defensive, and Passive/Defensive cultures (actual versus ideal) on job stress, job satisfaction and intention to stay. * $p < .05$ . ** $p < .01$ . *** $p < .001$ .				

Specifically, levels of Constructive cultures and Aggressive/Defensive cultures have significant effects on job stress, job satisfaction, and intention to stay, which imply that a Constructive culture will lead to lower the levels of job stress and higher levels of job satisfaction and intention to stay. Conversely, an Aggressive/Defensive culture is more likely to lead to higher levels of job stress and lower levels of job satisfaction and intention to stay. Further, congruence in Constructive and Passive/Aggressive cultures had a significant effect on job satisfaction, and both job satisfaction and intention to stay (respectively). Concerning Constructive cultures, where the ideal is consistently greater than the actual (i.e., mean congruence is a positive number), as congruence gets lower (and moves from a positive number towards zero, indicating complete congruence between the actual culture rating and the ideal culture rating) job satisfaction increases. Concerning Passive/Defensive cultures, where the ideal is consistently lower than the actual (i.e., mean congruence is a negative number), as congruence gets higher (and moves from a negative number towards zero, indicating complete congruence between the actual culture rating and the ideal culture rating) job satisfaction and intention to stay also increase.

In summary, employees consistently want a more Constructive culture than they do have, and the difference between their actual and ideal Constructive culture is related to job



satisfaction. More specifically, participants who have lower congruence scores (that is scores where actual equals ideal), are more likely to have higher job satisfaction scores. Furthermore, employees consistently want a less Passive/Defensive culture than they do have, and the difference between their actual and ideal Passive/Defensive culture is related to job satisfaction and intention to stay. More specifically, participants who have higher congruence scores, (that is scores where actual equals ideal), are more likely to have higher job satisfaction and intention to stay.

### Using Behavioral Norms to Predict Job Satisfaction, Stress and Intentions to Stay

Hypothesis One suggested that organizational culture norms would be able to predict each of the three outcomes. The results support this hypothesis, as the regression analysis shows that the combination of all organizational culture variables predicts job satisfaction ( $R^2 = .41$ ,  $\text{Adj } R^2 = .37$ ,  $F(12, 149) = 9.34$ ,  $p < .01$ ), stress ( $R^2 = .19$ ,  $\text{Adj } R^2 = .12$ ,  $F(12, 141) = 2.72$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and intentions to stay ( $R^2 = .28$ ,  $\text{Adj } R^2 = .22$ ,  $F(12, 159) = 5.12$ ,  $p < .001$ ). While no single predictor emerged as a significant predictor in the equations, the pattern predicted by the hypotheses was found. The Constructive styles of organizational culture emerged as positive predictors of job satisfaction and intention to stay, and, with one exception, as negative predictors of stress. Five of the eight Defensive styles negatively predicted job satisfaction and intentions to stay, while six of the eight positively predicted stress (see Table 7 for details).

<b>Table 7: Summary of Regression Analysis for Culture Variables Predicting Job Satisfaction, Stress, and Intention to Stay</b>									
	Job Satisfaction			Job Stress			Intention to Stay		
Culture Variables	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$
(Constant)	3.88	0.06		2.56	0.08		3.90	0.08	
<b>Constructive</b>									
Achievement	0.02	0.02	0.13	-0.04	0.02	-0.24	0.04	0.02	0.27
Self-Actualizing	0.03	0.02	0.20	-0.02	0.02	-0.10	0.02	0.02	0.11
Humanistic	0.03	0.02	0.22	0.01	0.02	0.11	0.00	0.02	0.03
Affiliative	0.00	0.02	0.00	-0.01	0.02	-0.08	0.01	0.02	0.04
<b>Passive/Defensive</b>									
Approval	-0.01	0.01	-0.11	0.00	0.02	0.03	-0.01	0.02	-0.05
Conventional	-0.03	0.02	-0.20	0.02	0.02	0.13	-0.01	0.02	-0.07
Dependent	0.04	0.02	0.25	-0.04	0.02	-0.24	0.04*	0.02	0.20
Avoidance	-0.02	0.02	-0.19	0.01	0.02	0.08	-0.03	0.02	-0.15
<b>Aggressive/Defensive</b>									
Oppositional	-0.02	0.02	-0.11	0.02	0.02	0.12	-0.03	0.02	-0.16
Power	0.00	0.01	-0.01	0.01	0.02	0.10	0.01	0.02	0.04
Competitive	0.02	0.01	0.19	-0.02	0.02	-0.13	0.02	0.02	0.10
Perfectionistic	-0.02	0.02	-0.13	0.02	0.02	0.14	-0.03	0.02	-0.18
* $p < .05$									

### Using Behavioral Norm P-O Fit to Predict Job Satisfaction, Stress and Intention to Stay

Hypothesis Two posited that the gap between actual and ideal organizational cultures would predict outcomes. This was found to be the case for predicting both job satisfaction ( $R^2 = .23$ , Adj  $R^2 = .17$ ,  $F(12, 159) = 3.85$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and intention to stay with the organization ( $R^2 = .16$ , Adj  $R^2 = .09$ ,  $F(12, 159) = 2.48$ ,  $p < .01$ ), but not for stress ( $R^2 = .10$ , Adj  $R^2 = .02$ ,  $F(12, 141) = 1.32$ ,  $p = ns$ ), as the equation with all organizational culture fit variables did not significantly predict the outcome. Specifically, in each case having a higher actual Self-Actualizing culture than what was predicted as ideal provided significantly to the explanatory power of the equation (See Table 8).

<b>Table 8: Summary of Regression Analysis for P-O Fit Variables Predicting Job Satisfaction, Stress, and Intention to Stay</b>									
	Job Satisfaction			Job Stress			Intention to Stay		
Culture Variables	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$
(Constant)									
Constructive Fit									
Achievement	0.02	0.017	0.17	-0.02	0.022	-0.17	0.02	0.023	0.12
Self-Actualizing	0.04	0.015	0.31*	-0.03	0.019	-0.22	0.04	0.020	0.30*
Humanistic	-0.01	0.012	0.01	0.01	0.015	0.12	0.03	0.016	0.22
Affiliative	-0.03	0.015	-0.30	0.03	0.020	0.23	0.03	0.020	0.21
Passive/Defensive Fit									
Approval	-0.03	0.015	-0.17	0.02	0.019	0.11	0.03	0.019	0.13
Conventional	-0.02	0.014	-0.12	0.02	0.017	0.13	0.01	0.018	0.04
Dependent	0.02	0.014	0.14	-0.03	0.018	0.19	0.01	0.018	0.03
Avoidance	-0.03	0.015	-0.28*	0.02	0.020	0.17	0.03	0.019	0.19
Aggressive/Defensive Fit									
Oppositional	0.02	0.015	0.13	-0.01	0.018	0.07	0.02	0.019	0.12
Power	0.01	0.013	0.10	-0.02	0.017	-0.18	0.01	0.016	0.05
Competitive	0.01	0.012	0.09	0.00	0.015	0.00	0.01	0.016	0.05
Perfectionistic	-0.02	0.014	-0.17	0.01	0.017	0.09	0.03	0.018	0.20

An examination of the specific styles within each cluster provided some equivocal results, however, specifically for predicting job satisfaction. Of the four Constructive styles, an actual organizational culture that was higher than the ideal for the Humanistic-Encouraging and Affiliative styles resulted in lower job satisfaction, while a higher than ideal level of Achievement and Self-Actualizing resulted in greater job satisfaction. Of the Defensive styles, a higher actual than ideal rating on the Dependent, Oppositional, Power, and Competitive styles correlated with greater job satisfaction, as did a lower level than ideal on the Approval,

Conventional, Avoidance, and Perfectionistic styles. This same pattern was found for employees' intentions to stay with the organization.

### Using P-O Fit to Predict Outcomes above Culture Alone

Hypothesis Three stated the expectation that fit variables would predict the outcomes in this study over and above organizational culture alone. Organizational culture variables were therefore entered into the regression equation first and the gap between actual and ideal organizational cultures on the second step (see Table 9). This hypothesis was supported in the case of job satisfaction ( $R^2 = .51$ ,  $\text{Adj } R^2 = .44$ ,  $F(24, 147) = 6.57$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .10$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and intention to stay ( $R^2 = .41$ ,  $\text{Adj } R^2 = .32$ ,  $F(24, 147) = 4.29$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .13$ ,  $p < .001$ ). For stress, the equation including both organizational culture and organizational culture fit as predictors resulted in significant equations, but adding the fit variables did not increase the explanatory power of the equation ( $R^2 = .29$ ,  $\text{Adj } R^2 = .16$ ,  $F(24, 129) = 2.22$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .10$ ,  $p = ns$ ).

<b>Table 9: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Culture and P-O Fit Variables Predicting Job Satisfaction, Stress, and Intention to Stay</b>									
	Job Satisfaction			Job Stress			Intention to Stay		
Culture Variables	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$
Step One									
(Constant)	3.88	0.06		2.56	0.08		3.90	0.08	
Constructive									
Achievement	0.02	0.02	0.13	-0.04	0.02	-0.24	0.04	0.02	0.27
Self-Actualizing	0.03	0.02	0.20	-0.02	0.02	-0.10	0.02	0.02	0.11
Humanistic	0.03	0.02	0.22	0.01	0.02	0.11	0.00	0.02	0.03
Affiliative	0.00	0.02	0.00	-0.01	0.02	-0.08	0.01	0.02	0.04
Passive/Defensive									
Approval	-0.01	0.01	-0.11	0.00	0.02	0.03	-0.01	0.02	-0.05
Conventional	-0.03	0.02	-0.20	0.02	0.02	0.13	-0.01	0.02	-0.07
Dependent	0.04*	0.02	0.25	-0.04	0.02	-0.24	0.04*	0.02	0.20
Avoidance	-0.02	0.02	-0.19	0.01	0.02	0.08	-0.03	0.02	-0.15
Aggressive/Defensive									
Oppositional	-0.02	0.02	-0.11	0.02	0.02	0.12	-0.03	0.02	-0.16
Power	0.00	0.01	-0.01	0.01	0.02	0.10	0.01	0.02	0.04
Competitive	0.02	0.01	0.19	-0.02	0.02	-0.13	0.02	0.02	0.10
Perfectionistic	-0.02	0.02	-0.13	0.02	0.02	0.14	-0.03	0.02	-0.18
Step Two									
(Constant)	3.85	0.06		2.57	0.08		3.86	0.08	
Constructive									
Achievement	0.02	0.02	0.18	-0.05	0.03	-0.34	0.07*	0.03	0.43
Self-Actualizing	0.02	0.02	0.14	-0.02	0.03	-0.12	-0.01	0.03	-0.08

<b>Table 9: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Culture and P-O Fit Variables Predicting Job Satisfaction, Stress, and Intention to Stay</b>									
	Job Satisfaction			Job Stress			Intention to Stay		
Culture Variables	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$
Humanistic	0.04*	0.02	0.32	0.02	0.03	0.12	0.02	0.03	0.16
Affiliative	0.00	0.02	-0.01	-0.01	0.03	-0.05	0.00	0.03	0.03
Passive/Defensive									
Approval	0.01	0.02	0.08	-0.01	0.02	-0.06	0.02	0.02	0.11
Conventional	-0.01	0.02	-0.06	0.00	0.03	0.01	0.00	0.03	0.02
Dependent	0.01	0.02	0.04	-0.01	0.03	-0.04	0.02	0.03	0.09
Avoidance	0.00	0.02	-0.02	0.01	0.03	0.06	0.00	0.03	0.02
Aggressive/Defensive									
Oppositional	-0.03	0.02	-0.16	0.02	0.03	0.11	-0.04	0.03	-0.20
Power	-0.02	0.02	-0.17	0.06*	0.03	0.38	-0.01	0.02	-0.09
Competitive	0.01	0.02	0.11	-0.03	0.03	-0.18	0.00	0.03	-0.01
Perfectionistic	-0.01	0.02	-0.04	0.02	0.03	0.11	-0.01	0.03	-0.07
Constructive P-O Fit									
Achievement	-0.02	0.02	-0.13	0.03	0.03	0.19	-0.04	0.03	-0.29
Self-Actualizing	0.02	0.02	0.14	-0.01	0.03	-0.10	0.04	0.03	0.27
Humanistic	-0.01	0.01	-0.10	-0.01	0.02	-0.09	-0.01	0.02	-0.12
Affiliative	-0.02	0.02	-0.15	0.01	0.03	0.11	-0.02	0.02	-0.13
Passive/Defensive P-O Fit									
Approval	-0.04*	0.02	-0.24	0.03	0.02	0.15	-0.04	0.02	-0.21
Conventional	-0.01	0.02	-0.06	0.01	0.02	0.10	0.00	0.02	-0.02
Dependent	0.02	0.02	0.11	-0.03	0.03	-0.16	-0.01	0.02	-0.05
Avoidance	-0.02	0.02	-0.22	0.01	0.03	0.07	-0.02	0.03	-0.17
Aggressive/Defensive P-O Fit									
Oppositional	0.03	0.02	0.18	-0.01	0.03	-0.04	0.03	0.02	0.18
Power	0.02	0.01	0.20	-0.06	0.02	-0.43	0.01	0.02	0.10
Competitive	0.00	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.02	0.09	0.01	0.02	0.06
Perfectionistic	-0.02	0.02	-0.12	0.01	0.02	0.07	-0.02	0.02	-0.15
* $p < .05$									

It was further hypothesized that, over and above organizational culture alone, a smaller P-O fit gap in the styles of the Constructive cluster would predict greater job satisfaction. Although none of these styles made a significant contribution to the regression equation as a whole, three of the four (Humanistic-Encouraging, Affiliative, and Achievement) did show the expected relationship. The results show that greater gaps between actual and ideal norms embodied in the Self-Actualizing style of organizational culture predicted job satisfaction in this sample.

The hypothesis that a large P-O fit gap in the Aggressive/Defensive cluster of norms would negatively predict intentions to stay even after organizational culture itself was taken into account was largely supported. The Opposition, Power, and Competitive styles had a positive

relationship between size of fit gap and intentions to stay, while the Perfectionistic style had a negative relationship.

## DISCUSSION

Results from the present study revealed not only that behavioral norms were directly related to job satisfaction, stress, and intentions to stay but also that P-O fit based on behavioral norm expectations were a valid means of predicting these occupational outcomes. These findings are consistent with previous research using behavioral norm expectations to predict occupational attitudes and well being. These results provide evidence that P-O fit based on behavioral norm expectations is a valid means of predicting satisfaction, stress and intention to stay. This type of fit conceptualization is therefore a meaningful alternative to the more value-based approach to fit that may be difficult to assess – especially if an organization's espoused cultural values are not the same as its enacted values. This relatively new approach to P-O fit addresses past criticisms that fit research may be lacking because an organization's culture is difficult to measure through quantitative means (Billsberry et al., 2005; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Schein, 1990). Also, because behavioral norms are at the superficial level of the everyday workplace experience, this type of fit or misfit may be more salient to the employee and therefore may have greater implications for occupational attitudes and behavior compared to fit based on cultural values.

The managerial implications of these findings is important, as these findings suggest that employees view their fit with an organization and their fit at work as based in behavioral expectations. Previous work has shown that values affect perceptions of P-O fit, but as values operate at a deep level, they are not easy to access or to change. On the other hand, behavioral expectations are much more malleable, and organizational leaders can more readily craft environments that are conducive to employee satisfaction and productivity by focusing on the behaviors associated with organizational cultures.

The purpose of the present study was also to take P-O fit research one step further by examining the predictive ability of P-O fit variables above and beyond organizational culture alone. Results revealed that P-O fit using behavioral norm expectations did, to some extent, explain a unique amount of variance in the dependant variable. However, contribution of unique variance depended on which outcome variable was being predicted. When considering job satisfaction, P-O fit variables predicted an additional 10.4% of the variance after controlling for culture alone. For intentions to stay, the addition of P-O fit variables to organizational culture perceptions also significantly added to the predictive ability of the regression model and uniquely explained an additional 13.3% of the variance. Although the overall regression model for stress was significant, P-O fit using behavioral norm expectations did not add significantly to the predictive ability of the culture measure alone.

These findings are important because they partially address the criticism that fit research fails to take into account the main effect of the individual and the environment (Edwards, 1993;

Hesketh & Myers, 1997). In the present study, fit proved to be predictive of job satisfaction and intentions to stay over and above the main effect of the environment. These results show that the interaction between the individual and the environment is a distinct predictor of certain occupational outcomes and a valid means of explaining employee attitudes and behavior. These results reveal that a mismatch between ideal and actual behavioral norms do impact employee attitudes and demonstrate to employers that determining how employees' fit with their environment can be a practical means for improving job satisfaction and intentions to stay.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Although P-O fit using behavioral norms did uniquely predict job satisfaction and intentions to stay, it failed to predict stress over and above culture alone. The lack of a consistent finding across the dependent variables is difficult to explain due to the archival nature of the present study. If more information was known about any unique characteristics of the organization under investigation, it might be possible to explain why P-O fit using behavioral norms did not predict stress over and above for this environment. The use of a single organization is also a potential limitation as the generalizability of these findings is unclear. Further, the data was collecting using shared methods of measurement, and therefore, common method variance (CMV) may influence the relationships observed within the study (Spector & Brannick, 2010). Although the extent to which CMV is a serious problem within research studies is subject to debate (as researchers have argued that the influence of CMV is often exaggerated), what is certain is that there are several potential biases that may have influenced the data and the relationships therein (Spector, 2006). Although a degree of certainty can be gained from the multiple analyses that were conducted within the current study (i.e., latent congruence modeling which accounts for measurement error, in addition to hierarchical linear regressions), future studies should adopt multiple methods of data collection. For example, behavioural measures of intention to stay could be gathered using retention data or absenteeism data for employees. Examining these relationships within a monomethod study is just the first step to beginning to understand the potential complex relationships that exist within the constructs of interest. Further studies should seek to test for or eliminate the sources of these potential biases through multimethod and even potentially longitudinal studies (Spector, 2006).

Nonetheless, despite these limitations, the present study is a first step in determining the degree to which the person-environment interaction can explain workplace attitudes and behaviors above the main effects of its components. Specifically, the present study examined the predictive ability of fit over and above culture, or the O component of P-O fit. Future research should also examine the predictive ability of P-O fit while controlling for the individual, or the P element of P-O fit. Given the limitations of the present archival study, it was not possible to determine the extent to which P-O fit predicted satisfaction, stress and intentions to remain above the main effects of both the individual and the environment. Future research should employ such

measures and examine the extent to which the P-O fit interaction uniquely explains occupational outcomes controlling for the main effects of both the environment and the individual.

Future studies can also extend this area of research by examining the extent to which behavioral norm P-O fit predicts other work-related variables such as absenteeism, commitment, or organizational citizenship behaviors. Moreover, given the variability in cultural norm sub-types afforded by the OCI and the fact that this instrument can be applied to any occupational group within or across organizations, specific hypotheses can be explored regarding which culture sub-type “misfits” may impact work-related dependent variables for specific groups of employees. For example, it may be the case that competitive behavioral norm fit may impact employees involved in the business development aspects of an organization but not necessarily influence those who may deliver service within it. Therefore a more precise line of questioning can be developed and explored to determine how the match between employees and their environment can influence their occupational attitudes and behavior.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *The Organizational Culture Inventory®* and all OCI® style names and descriptions: Research and Development by Robert A. Cooke, Ph.D. and J. Clayton Lafferty, Ph.D. Trademarked and Copyrighted © 1973-2012 by Human Synergistics International. Adapted by permission. All rights reserved.
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# THE INNER CIRCLE: HOW POLITICS AFFECTS THE ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE

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## ABSTRACT

*What is the relationship between organizational politics and the climate of a firm? The main objective of this paper is to identify the kinds of organizational politics that affect the organizational climate in the shoe manufacturing companies of Jalisco, Mexico most importantly. We designed an empirical study and applied a survey to 134 companies in this industrial sector. Our focus was on the personal relationships established by the firms, all of them members of the Chamber of Shoe Manufacturers in Jalisco State.*

*The results of our empirical research indicate that the study of the perception of organizational politics is a topic of major importance and most of the time an issue overlooked in organizational culture and in conflict management models.*

**Keywords:** Organizational politics; organizational climate; power in organizations.

**Purpose:** The aim of this paper is to identify the influence of organizational politics on the organizational climate in the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) of the shoe making industry of the state of Jalisco, Mexico.

**Design/methodology/approach:** We designed an empirical study and developed a questionnaire with two scales to implement in a representative sample of 134 companies. Our methodology also includes a case study and interviews. We applied the regression analysis technique. We used the Perception of Politic Scale (POPS) which has been used widely in The United States and Canada but not in Mexico.

**Findings:** Our research indicated an interesting relationship between organizational politics and some climate factors, but not in a negative way. In contrast to what many authors (and a lot of practitioners) expect, a certain level of organizational politics could be useful in helping to achieve a better organizational climate.

**Research limitations/implications:** The results will help to reinforce the view that some features of organizational politics could be dangerous for the organizational climate, but, conversely, that some of the tactics may also be beneficial for a company.

**Practical implications:** This study provides interesting implications for managers on how to take advantage of a common behavior (the self-organization of employees) in order to obtain results beneficial for managers and/or the organization. Workplace politics should not be seen as a dysfunctional or aberrant behavior.

**Originality/value:** Researchers commonly view organizational politics as a barrier to the effective performance of employees within a firm. The underlying idea is that people only become involved in politics through self-interest; in this paper the authors showed that, conversely employees involve themselves in politics and simultaneously maintain a good organizational climate at the same time. Organizational politics could be considered as the "missing link" in organizational studies.

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## INTRODUCTION

While power has clearly been a central construct in sociology and political science since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the emergence of the concept as an object of study in administrative literature is most recent in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Almost at the same time, organizational climate studies began. This could be as a result of the study of the field of administration, whose early authors, mainly Anglo-Saxons attached to a conservative power, adopted a view from Weber and assumed that companies were places where decision-making was exclusively rational. Authors such as Fayol and Taylor wanted to explain the conduct of the individuals and the psychological climate in an organization using economic and mathematical models, so that power was seen as an irrelevant construct.

The paradigm of "scientific management" or the classical school was not questioned until the 1960s by the Carnegie Group. They developed the concept of an "administrative man" who takes into account the cognitive and contextual limitations of the individual in decision-making. Authors such as March and Simon (1961) suggested that the decision-making process is a political process resulting from the conflict of interests which is a characteristic of enterprises whose areas are usually competing for limited resources. However, the Carnegie Group was too focused on the psychological factors of decision-making and left out the structural mechanisms of the company and the formation of coalitions (Ibid.).

Butcher and Clarke (2003) argued that the study of political behavior should be promoted because they consider it the "missing link" in organizational studies; politics should not be seen as dysfunctional or aberrant behavior which very few support in practice, but something which is a necessary skill in managers.

The other variable present as a result of political activities is organizational climate. According to Schneider and Bowen (1985) the organizational climate perceived by employees is influenced by the organizational climate perceived by supervisors. They even claim that the kind of leadership that the supervisor is using with subordinates, and the relationship maintained between these subordinates will directly affect the performance of the organization. This means that it is essential to know the way in which the senior members of an organization perceive the work environment: this will give us an idea of the way in which subordinates are living their own working environment through the perceptions of their superiors.

Organizational climate, in general, refers to the working atmosphere which consists of forms and methods of organizational operation assumed by the members of the organization. Schneider et al. (1996) defined the concept of organizational climate as the perceptions of employees of events, practices, and procedures as well as their perceptions of behaviors that are rewarded, supported, and expected. One of the most important behaviors perceived by employees are political tactics; this therefore necessitates the study of organizational politics to better understand organizational climate.

Organizational climate has also been defined as individual perceptions of the characteristics of the work environment (Burke, Borucki and Kaufman, 2002). We can say that the organizational environment has been seen as a descriptive construct reflecting agreement between the members of the organization as well as key elements such as systems, practices and leadership style (Moran and Volkwein, 1992: 20). Schneider et al., (1996) defined the four dimensions of the organizational climate: the nature of interpersonal relationships, the nature of the hierarchy, the nature of the job and the approach to support and rewards. These dimensions can also be considered internal conditions for the generation of power in organizations because the nature of relationships, the hierarchy and the nature of the work relate to managing problems and uncertainty effectively. These activities are not easily replaced and have a central role in all areas of the organization. Of course constant innovation in the resolution of problems can quickly render the knowledge of the subunits obsolete, this explains the nature of constant change in the flow of power.

The main objective of this article is to identify the influence of organizational politics in the organizational climate measured in SME's of the shoe making industry of the state of Jalisco, Mexico.

The paper has been structured as follows: first, we examine both organizational politics and organizational climate as essential components of managerial practices; secondly we propose the hypothesis and the methodology of our empirical study. Thereafter we discuss the results,

conduct an analysis and draw conclusions from our findings. Finally we present directions for future research.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Theoretical contributions on organizational politics.

For the purposes of this document, we understand politics *as the accumulation and the exercise of power to reconcile different interests*; that is why we believe that a company, no matter its size, is involved in politics every day.

Astley and Sachdeva (1984) define power as the capacity of social actors, (such as members of an organization) to achieve objectives. Power has also been characterized as a social construct that is perceptual in nature (Fiol, O'Connor and Aguinis, 2001). In this same vein, Madison et al. (1980) defined politics in the company as the process or administration of influence, while power has been characterized as a reserve of potential influence. Power is not the same as formal authority, since this the preserve of owner of the company. Power is derived from possession of resources: of these the most important are information and knowledge, both to acquire other resources and to solve problems.

Organizational power is a function of the structure and is inherent to the position of the individual in such a structure; power provides access to people, information and financial resources, among other things. For this reason, those who have power currently will seek to retain it, reinforcing the existing structure of the organization (Astley and Sachdeva, 1984). That is why some individuals within the company feel that it's worth the effort to get involved with organizational politics to preserve or to acquire power.

An individual or a subunit of the organization will increase its power to the extent where it is capable of dealing with a problem of high uncertainty. The knowledge of how to solve a problem translates into power. But this happens under certain circumstances; the individual or the subunit must have some kind of monopoly on the information required to solve problems and not be easily replaceable. In this way power is distributed unevenly among the members of the company; the control of the organization lies within the subunit responsible for addressing the most problematic areas.

Political activities in a company should be delimited so we can talk about the organizational politics that we will discuss in the empirical study. In respect of this, within a company, what kind of activities can be considered as politics? In the definition that we propose, built from the contributions of different authors (Butcher and Clarke, 2003; Connor and Morrison, 2001; Drory, 1993; Kacmar and Carlson, 1997), the term *organizational politics* is used to refer to the *conscious behavior that individuals, with the strategic intentionality of obtaining or improving positions of privilege within the group, use to reconcile different and even conflicting interests and objectives*.

Organizational politics has two fundamental characteristics: strategic decisions (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988) which affect the entire group and the exercise of power by those who have the capacity to win it, hold it, or resist it (Poon, 2003); political behavior is used to bargain or perpetuate certain interests, therefore some managers view this behavior as ethical and necessary. Nevertheless, political action as an inappropriate distribution of organizational outcomes leads to jealousy and resentment among employees, so employees use political action to resist outside interference in their work (Indartono and Chen, 2011).

Alberto Zanzi and Regina O'Neill (2001) have characterized organizational politics as sanctioned or non-sanctioned. Banned or sanctioned tactics are those that deviate from organizational standards and include behaviors that individuals want to keep secret because if they become known those responsible could lose their jobs: individuals who use such tactics are very discrete as these practices are considered to be unacceptable, undesirable and negative. For example, if an individual achieves a promotion via organizational politics widely considered to be unethical eg. bribes, blackmail, intimidation, etc.- and this is made public, it will cause anxiety, lack of satisfaction, apathy and even resignations amongst coworkers.

In contrast, permitted organizational politics are those which people deem acceptable because they form part of the organizational rules. Permitted organizational politics are typically tolerated, expected and even promoted by the individuals executing them according to what they want their peers to learn about. These might be for example, political skills such as building coalitions, negotiating with trade unions, mediating between different areas of the company, or with external audiences, etc.

Organizational politics in the company encompasses behaviors that occur informally within an organization and include intentional acts of influence designed to protect the career of the individual when there are different conflicting courses of action in the enterprise (Connor and Morrison, 2001; Drory, 1993). Organizational politics have also been related to social influence addressed to those who can provide rewards that help to promote or protect the personal interests of the individual (Kacmar and Carlson, 1997).

The perception of organizational politics, as defined above, occurs in any organization, since, as we have said, they can be understood as a political entity. The perception of organizational politics does not depend on the type of organizational structure or organizational system because it represents both a rational bureaucratic system and an authoritarian centralized scheme. The perception of organizational politics will differ and will have different significance depending on the type of organization. However it will appear eventually, particularly in the decision-making process, as has been demonstrated (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988).

If organizational politics are not explicit or their existence is not accepted, how can we study them in a company? The solution to this problem is resolved if, as in the survey presented later, we ask about organizational politics related to "others". In this way we collect information because individuals are willing to talk about what they perceive in the conduct of their peers.

Another difficulty implicit in the study of the perception of politics is that the same conduct can be considered as political by one observer and not political by another observer due to the differing experiences and frames of reference of each observer. However, since the questions of the data collection instrument were designed to take into account organizational politics related to concrete and specific behaviors that respondents could identify in their colleagues or superiors, it was possible to reach valid conclusions

Previous studies about politics in firms have focused on variables such as: organizational results, anxiety at work, commitment of employees to the company and satisfaction with work and personal factors (Randall et al., 1999); performance in context and personality (Witt et al., 2002); the way in which employees treat each other to impress their bosses (Zivnuska, et al., 2004); and the size of the enterprise and perceived independence (Conner, 2006), among many other elements. However, to date there appear to have been no studies carried out examining the relationship between organizational climate and politics.

According to Kacmar and Ferris (1991) the perception of organizational politics is the perception of the individual of the political activities of others, not him/herself; this is a delimitation that allows the individuals to answer with greater certainty. What political activities were measured with this model? Kacmar and Carlson (1997) proposed three dimensions into which the perception of organizational politics can be divided: general political behavior; go along to get ahead and payment and promotion policies. Since we subscribe to the position of these authors, these are the categories that were used in our survey.

In addition, this model also predicts the level of control or understanding of the individual of the organizational processes. The model is called the Perception of politic scale (POPS) and it has been widely used in the United States and Canada (Kacmar, Bozeman, Carlson and Anthony, 1999), but not in Mexico. We used an updated and adapted version of the POPS in the research presented here (Fields, 2002; Kacmar and Carlson, 1997). After reviewing the available specialized literature in Spanish on electronic databases, we can say that this is the first translation and adaptation of POPS in Spanish.

### **Theoretical contributions on the organizational climate.**

There are several ways through which the construct of organizational climate can be defined; one of the most cited, perhaps for being one of the first, was developed by Litwin and Stringer (1968) who established that the organizational climate is "a set of measurable properties of the working environment, perceived directly or indirectly by the people that live and work in that environment, which it is assumed influence the motivation and the behavior of these people".

Following on from this, one of the most cited definitions in the study of organizational climate is by Joyce and Slocum (1979) who gave more attention to the individual based on four principles:

1. First, all climates are subject to the perception and the psychology of the individual by nature, it doesn't matter whether we are talking about a group, a division, or a subgroup within the organization. Given the above, the individual, group, or organizational climate represents insights obtained and shared by members of social units.
2. Second, all climates are abstract. People typically use information about others and respect the actions of the organization to build perceptions about climate. Individuals talk about their own climate, add up all the experiences and all perceptions of the experiences of others and then form a cognitive map of the organization.
3. Third, as the climate is considered perceptual and also abstract, it is subjected to the same principles of perception as other psychological concepts. When these principles are used in the perception of working issues, they become multidimensional descriptions.
4. Fourth, climates are considered predominantly descriptive rather than evaluative by nature. This means that many organizational climate researchers ask individuals about the perception of their work environment rather than asking them if the organizational climate is good or bad.

Organizational climate as a concept has been described from various approaches, however, from the 1960's it has been studied most frequently from four perspectives: the structuralist approach, the perceptual approach, interactive approach and the cultural approach. We will try to summarize these approaches as well as the contributions of the most representative authors.

First we find the **structuralist approach** which essentially describes the climate as a characteristic or attribute belonging to an organization. These attributes are seen as part of the organization and exist independently of the perceptions of the members working in the same company. The structuralist approach is analogous to what Schneider and Reichers (1983) described as their structural argument. This structural approach describes the relationship between the perceptual measures and objective measures of the organizational climate. According to this perspective, the climates emerge from objective aspects of organizational events. Consequently climates are born from the objective aspects of the organizational structure such as the size of the company, hierarchies and levels involved in decision-making, centralization, number of levels in the organizational structure, type of technology used and the understanding in which the rules and formal policies determine the individual's behavior (Payne and Pugh, 1976).

A criticism of the structuralist model is that firstly not all structural factors have the same influence or are common to all members of the organization, so this approach does not recognize different climates belonging to different workgroups within the same organization (Moran and Volkwein, 1988). Also, the structural approach argues that climate emerges in response to the characteristics determined by the organizational structure. However, this approach does not show clearly the relationship between these factors (Ibid.).

A more serious problem with this approach is the assumption that individuals are able to perceive the structural factors with considerable certainty and that those perceptions obviously generate other features of the same climate. In other words, this approach provides inadequate

consideration of the subjective impact of the structural variables in the reactions of individuals to specific situations within the same company.

The second approach is called *perception*. It incorporates an understanding in which the individual plays and responds to situational variables in a way that means something for him/her, it has a psychological meaning and is not based on objective descriptions or structural attributes (Moran and Volkwein, 1992).

In its purest form, the psychological climate is a product of the perceptual and cognitive processes that result in cognitive representations which reflect an interpretation of the situation in ways that are significantly important to the individual (James, et al., 1978).

Another way in which the perceptual model can be reviewed was presented by Joyce and Slocum (1984) who created what they called "collective climates"; sorting or grouping individuals based on the similarities of their perceptions of the climate of the organization. However, even though Joyce and Slocum argued that these collective climates constituted a theory whereby the organizational climate could be explained, this actually means that there are very few groups that divide employees, called "climate groups" (Moran and Volkwein, 1992).

The third approach, called the *interactive approach* builds on the foundations of the two previous approaches. This approach does not affirm that the origin of the organizational climate is exclusively attributable to the organization (structuralist approach) or that the organizational climate is generated only on the basis of individual perceptions (perceptual focus), but makes a mixture of both and presents it as we will see below.

The interactive approach can be seen from different angles. In a sense, it refers precisely to the interaction between individuals; for example, commitment is the process of comprehending and interpreting the organizational reality. In another sense, the interactive perspective recognizes that the intersubjective processes generate meaning and require interaction between objective conditions and subjective perceptions. This represents a marked difference compared to the two approaches previously reviewed.

Poole and McPhee (1983) established that intersubjectivity is a process whereby you create a supra-individual link between perspectives, interpretations, values, beliefs, etc. Initially this process begins with the recognition of the "other" who has experiences similar to one's own. Using this "other" as a model, the individual creates his/her own "being". Recognition of others means that the experiences of these "others" can develop awareness of the conscience of the individual.

The second way to explain organizational climate through the interactive approach is through symbolic interactionism, which has its origins with the American philosopher George Herbert Mead, whose ideas on the relation of self and meaning were adapted to the study of organizational climate by Schneider and Reichers (1983), who concluded that the environment and the individual are mutually determined. This is essentially the perspective of Interactional Psychology (Terborg, 1981).



The meaning of things within the organizational environment lies primarily in the interactions between those who work inside it. The actions of others are based on the definition of an event, or the practice or procedure of a specific person. This does not necessarily mean that people use the meanings of others, on the contrary, the individual reviews, suspends, regroups and transforms their own perceptions of events, in the light of the interactions he/she has with others (Schneider and Reichers, 1983).

The interactive approach fails, however, to explain the way in which contexts or the environment can be quantified, this approach leaves us with a partial explanation about the relationship between preconceived realities through the subject (Moran and Volkwein, 1992).

In contrast to the previous approaches, the **cultural approach** focuses on how groups interpret, build and negotiate reality through the creation of an organizational culture. Organizational culture contains the essential elements of historically constituted meanings and values, involving actions with purposes and valid consensus, making possible organized efforts and therefore making them real to the same organizations.

The cultural approach emphasizes the social arrangements in which cultural characteristics become significant. In other words, it foregrounds the analysis of the exploration of the dynamics in which the interaction produces a shared consciousness, towards an explicit field with the conditions in which these dynamics occur and become ultimately organizationally significant, implying discussion of the climate.

The employees of an organization may be motivated to some degree depending on their perception of how detailed activities to be performed on a daily basis may be. This means that regardless of the organizational level we are addressing, it is really relevant for employees that activities are clear and specific so that they can be performed optimally. We should also mention that the perception of this organizational climate can be significantly different, depending on features such as position, age, or seniority, among other factors.

A study conducted by Pattanayak (2002) in India about the satisfaction of the employee at work and the impact of the organizational climate on the performance of workers found that the clarity of the definition of the role of employees reduces the level of stress: this directly impacts on worker performance and therefore on company results.

Brown and Leigh (1996) define organizational climate as the properties of the work environment perceived by employees as distinctive or characteristic of the nature of the organization. These authors focused their studies specifically on the working environment and not on the organizational culture analysis, arguing that the aforementioned is established in the workplace and is related to the perception of the employee with respect to their peers in their everyday relationship. Like Brown and Leigh, we focused this analysis of the perception of the employee on the climate prevailing in the functional area where he or she works everyday, and not on their perception of the culture prevailing within the whole company.

Brown and Leigh (1996) established six components of the organizational climate: support of the immediate superior, role clarity, expression of feelings, personal contribution,

recognition and the job as a challenge. In addition to these authors, we collected a number of instruments designed and applied by other researchers in our definition of the variables we used in this research.

### **Relationship between Organizational Politics and Organizational Climate.**

There is an important amount of evidence in the respective literature indicating the negative effects of political behavior in the job. The negative perceptions of Organizational Politics (POP) are associated with lower levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Hochwarter, 2003; Witt et al., 2002), reduced levels of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and overall organizational performance as well as increased levels of negligent behavior; moreover, higher levels of perceived politics were indicative of negative psychological states such as job anxiety and stress related outcomes (Vigoda, 2000; 2002; Poon 2003). Meanwhile a meta-analytic paper considers that the perception of organizational politics is entirely detrimental to organizational life (Chang et al., 2009).

Organizational climate is built of perceptions and attitudes, so we can infer that the perception of organizational politics is an important issue for the organizational climate, as this paper will attempt to demonstrate.

Miller et al. (2008) provide a comprehensive examination of the relationship between POP and key employee attitudes (fundamental concepts of organizational climate) in their review of 59 published and unpublished papers. Their major findings are:

1. A strong negative relationship between POP and job satisfaction and organizational commitment.
2. A moderately positive relationship between POP and job performance, and
3. The existence of moderating variables (such as age, work setting, or cultural differences) that exert certain contingent effects on particular POP relationships.

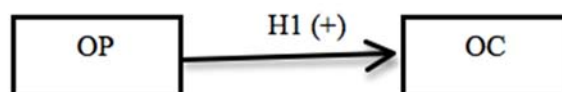
As mentioned previously, most of the literature argues the negative effects of POP but this empirical research seeks to identify a set of factors that may have the potential to mitigate the harmful effects of perceived politics (Gotsis and Kortes, 2011). Findings support the idea that employees who are in a position to properly assess the underlying rationale of organizational behavior and exert a certain control over their respective environment are less likely to report adverse effects associated with POP (Bozeman et al., 2001).

Variables affecting the POP employee outcomes relationship could be categorized as follows (Gotsis and Kortes, 2011):

1. Dispositional or attitudinal factors, such as higher level of commitment, self-efficacy, positive affective dispositions, pro-social behavior and personal reputation (Bozeman et al., 2001; Hochwarter, 2003; Hochwarter et al, 2007).
2. Situational factors, such as high levels of informal supervisor and co-worker feedback, increased levels of cooperation, trust and voice orientation (Rosen et al, 2006; Harris et al. 2005; Vigoda, 2006).
3. Ethical and normative factors, such as procedural and interactional justice, distributive justice, fair procedures and fair treatment of employees (Harris et al., 2007).
4. Political skills as a means to attain specific goals through the proper use of influence (Ferris et al., 2007; Kolodinsky et al., 2007; Treadway et al. 2007). Political skill involves a networking ability dimension that dominates the relations with employee outcomes (Todd et al., 2009).

Since politics can be a part of organizational reality and have the potential to contribute to organizational effectiveness (Butcher and Clarke, 2003; Ferris et al., 1996; 2007; Kacmar and Carlson, 1997), it is by nature participative as well as inclusive and a foundational concept for the organizational climate. Because of this, we present our hypothesis as follows:

*H1 Organizational Politics (OP) influences the Organizational Climate (OC) in a positive way.*



## METHODOLOGY

### Designing an instrument of measurement.

According to Kacmar and Ferris (1991) the perception of organizational politics consists of the perception of the individual about the political activities of others, not him/herself. These authors proposed three factors governing the perception of organizational politics:

**General political behavior.** This behavior is related to the active and visible attempts of individuals to influence others for their benefit. The literature tells us that political behavior in the company will increase if there are no rules or actions governing the effective exercise of power (Fiol, O'Connor and Aguinis, 2001; Kacmar et al., 1990;

Madison et al., 1980). In the absence of specific rules for guidance, individuals have few clues to what acceptable behavior means, and therefore they develop their own rules.

**Political behavior of permanency.** This behavior refers to the apparent lack of political action of the individual. Conflict is consistently related to company policy, the essence of this connection is that frequently political conduct is complacent and therefore has the potential to threaten the interests of others. According to Drory and Romm (1990), the existence of conflict is inevitable in a company. Some individuals may wish to avoid it and therefore not be resistant to the attempted influence of others; this type of political behavior refers to "passivity".

**Payments and promotions.** This factor relates to how the organization rewards political maneuvering through the establishment of regulations concerning payments and promotions (Kacmar and Ferris, 1993). Even though the decision makers of the company are not aware of this the developed human resources system tends to reward those individuals who match certain behaviors of influence and also penalizes individuals who fail to demonstrate such conduct.

In a review of the Perception of Organizational Politics Scale (POPS), the scale proposed by Kacmar and Ferris (1991), the authors Kacmar and Carlson (1997) proposed new items for the same three factors described above. Below is the original version with the items in English and the translation into Spanish: these are the same items we used in our empirical research.

<b>Table 2: Items related to organizational politics perception</b>	
<b>GENERAL POLITICAL BEHAVIOR</b>	<b>CONDUCTA POLÍTICA GENERAL</b>
CPG1. People in this organization achieve promotion by overcoming those who challenge them.	CPG1. La gente en esta organización busca su desarrollo pasando por encima del que se ponga enfrente. (R)
CPG2. There has always been an influential group in this department that controls everything. (R)	CPG2. Siempre ha habido un grupo muy influyente en esta área al que nadie ha podido brincar. (R)
<b>POLITICAL BEHAVIOR OF PERMANENCY (GO ALONG TO GET AHEAD)</b>	<b>CONDUCTA POLÍTICA DE PERMANENCIA</b>
CPP1. Employees are encouraged to speak out frankly even when they are critical of well-established ideas.	CPP1. Los empleados son animados a hablar francamente aún cuando critiquen ideas muy arraigadas en la organización.
CPP2. There is no place for yes-men around here; good ideas are welcomed even if it means disagreeing with superiors. (R)	CPP2. Aquí no hay lugar para lambiscones; las buenas ideas siempre son bienvenidas aunque signifiquen estar en desacuerdo con los superiores. (R)
CPP3. Agreeing with powerful others is the best alternative in this organization.	CPP3. Estar de acuerdo con los más poderosos es la mejor alternativa en esta organización.
CPP4. It is best not rock the boat in this organization.	CPP4. Lo mejor es "no hacer olas" en esta organización.
CPP5. Sometimes it is easier to remain quiet than to fight the system.	CPP5. Algunas veces es más fácil permanecer en calma que pelear contra el sistema.
CPP6. Telling others what they want to hear is sometimes better than telling the truth.	CPP6. Decirle a los demás lo que quieren oír, algunas veces es mejor que decirles la verdad.
CPP7. It is safer to believe what you are told than to make up your own mind.	CPP7. Es más seguro pensar lo que se te dice que pienses, que formar tu propia opinión.

Table 2: Items related to organizational politics perception	
PAYMENTS AND PROMOTIONS POLICIES	PAGOS Y PROMOCIONES
PP1. Since I have worked in this department, I have never seen the pay and promotion policies applied in a biased manner. (R)	PP1. Desde que trabajo en esta área, nunca he visto favoritismos en pagos y promociones. (R)
PP2. I can't remember when a person received a pay increase or promotion that was inconsistent with the published policies. (R)	PP2. No puedo recordar cuándo una persona haya recibido un incremento salarial o una promoción que no haya estado de acuerdo con las políticas publicadas. (R)
PP3. None of the raises I have received are consistent with the policies on how raises should be determined. (R)	PP3. Ninguno de los aumentos salariales que he recibido están de acuerdo con las políticas sobre cómo se deben determinar los aumentos. (R)
PP4. The stated pay and promotion policies have nothing to do with how pay raises and promotions are determined. (R)	PP4. Las políticas de pagos y promociones fijadas no tienen nada que ver sobre cómo se determinan realmente los aumentos y promociones. (R)
PP5. When it comes to pay raise and promotion decisions, the established policies are irrelevant.	PP5. Cuando se trata de incremento salarial y decisiones de promoción, las políticas establecidas son irrelevantes.
PP6. Promotions around here are not valued much because how they are determined is so political. (R)	PP6. Las promociones en esta empresa no son valoradas porque son determinadas de forma política. (R)
CPG: General political behavior; CPP: Political behavior of permanency; PP: Payments and promotions. R: Reverse question	
Source: Kacmar and Carlson (1997)	

The instrument and each one of the questions were tested with entrepreneurs and employees of different levels of education, to make sure that they were adapted accurately to Mexico.

The components of the organizational climate were grouped into two areas: one concerning psychological security and the other concerning psychological significance. The dimensions of the organizational climate of the first group are related to the perceptions that employees have in a safe and stable environment and are described as follows (James and James, 1989):

**Support of the immediate superior:** perception that the employee is supported by the superior, both in decision-making and in the way of doing things. In this dimension, two sides can be observed: one is located in a rigid style as a symptom of lack of confidence in the employee; and in the other the style allows change or adaptation of methods, taking advantage of errors and using the creativity of employees in problem solving situations (Scarpello and Vandenberg, 1987).

**Role Clarity:** degree of precision in the description of the roles and expectations of a specific position. If expectations regarding the way in which the desired results can be achieved are inaccurate, stress levels are increased and satisfaction, as well as commitment, will tend to decrease (Pattanayak, 2002; Breaugh and Colihan, 1994).

**Expression of own feelings:** perception of an employee about the freedom that he or she has to be sincere in expressing themselves, their own feelings about the job and the organization without fear of reprisal (Payne, Parasuraman and Wormley, 1990).

The following group of dimensions describe how the organizational climate relates to psychological significance and refers to the perception that employees have about the meaning of their work; whether or not they are convinced of the worthiness of their effort. These dimensions are described as follows:

**Personal contribution:** the perception of a worker about the importance and meaning of their work and how relevant it is for the achievement of the goals of the organization.

**Recognition:** Belief that the organization appreciates and values the effort and the contribution of a worker (Spector, 1997)

**Work as a challenge:** employee perception about how much of their work requires the use of their skills and capabilities (Sawyer, 1992). This dimension was finally removed because of its low level of significance.

<b>Table 3: Items related to organizational climate</b>	
<b>IMMEDIATE SUPERIOR SUPPORT</b>	<b>APOYO DEL SUPERIOR INMEDIATO</b>
S1. My boss is flexible in relation to the fulfillment of my goals.	S1. Mi jefe es flexible en relación al cumplimiento de mis objetivos.
S2. My boss supports my ideas and how I do things.	S2. Mi jefe apoya mis ideas y la forma en que hago las cosas.
S3. My boss gives me the authority to do things as I think best.	S3. Mi jefe me da la autoridad de hacer las cosas como creo.
S4. I am careful in accepting responsibility because my boss is critical of new ideas.	S4. Soy cuidadoso en la aceptación de responsabilidades porque mi jefe es crítico de las nuevas ideas.
S5. I have confidence that my boss supports my decisions at work.	S5. Puedo confiar en que mi jefe apoye mis decisiones en el trabajo.
<b>ROLE CLARITY</b>	<b>CLARIDAD DEL ROL</b>
CL1. I understand how to do my job.	CL1. Tengo perfectamente claro cómo hacer mi trabajo.
CL2. The amount of responsibility and effort expected of me at work is clearly defined.	CL2. La cantidad de responsabilidad y esfuerzo que se espera de mi trabajo está claramente definida.
CL3. Performance standards in my department are well understood and communicated.	CL3. Las normas de desempeño en mi departamento son bien entendidas y comunicadas.
<b>PERSONAL CONTRIBUTION</b>	<b>CONTRIBUCIÓN PERSONAL</b>
CO1. I feel my work is very useful.	CO1. Me siento muy útil en mi trabajo.
CO2. When done well, my work makes a difference.	CO2. Mi trabajo bien hecho, hace la diferencia.
CO3. I feel I am a key player.	CO3. Me siento pieza clave en la organización.
CO4. The work I do is very valuable to this organization.	CO4. El trabajo que hago es muy valioso para esta organización.
<b>RECOGNITION</b>	<b>RECONOCIMIENTO</b>
R1. Most of the time I feel my work is not recognized.	R1. Casi siempre siento que mi trabajo no es reconocido.
R2. My superiors generally appreciate the way I do my job.	R2. Mis superiores generalmente aprecian la forma en que realizo mi trabajo.
R3. The organization recognizes the significance of the contribution I make.	R3. La organización reconoce el significado de la contribución que hago.

**Table 3: Items related to organizational climate**

<b>EXPRESSION OF OWN FEELINGS</b>	<b>EXPRESIÓN DE LOS PROPIOS SENTIMIENTOS</b>
E1. I feel free to express my true feelings at work.	E1. Los sentimientos que expreso en mi trabajo son los verdaderos.
E2. I feel free to be myself in this organization.	E2. Me siento libre para ser yo mismo en esta organización.
E3. There are parts of me that I can't express freely at work.	E3. Hay partes de mí que no puedo expresarlas libremente en el trabajo.
E4. I am free to express my true feelings at work.	E4. No hay problema si expreso mis verdaderos sentimientos en este trabajo.
S: Immediate superior support; CL: Role clarity; CO: Personal contribution; R: Recognition; E: Expression of own feelings	
Source: Brown and Leigh (1996)	

### Sample.

For the purposes of the present study, the number of companies provided by the system of Mexican Business Information (2003) 117 companies was taken as valid. We added 17 more, to bring us closer to the number of companies that the Footware Chamber of Commerce said was correct. The study then considered a census of 134 companies; those that we were able to locate using the complete list that the Footware Chamber of Commerce had, as well as those that were able to locate through the yellow pages and references from employers we contacted, using a snowball strategy (Sincich, 1996). In this way we reached enterprises and workshops that did not appear in any type of record.

### Analysis.

Despite the general belief that organizational politics can be studied in a company to analyze organizational support (as a part of the organizational climate), it has been demonstrated using multiple regression analysis that organizational politics represent a useful construct in themselves, deserving of separate study. (Randall et al., 1999).

In order to test hypothesis 1, we applied the technique of simple linear regression analysis consisting of two hierarchical models. In model 1, the dependent variable was the organizational climate and explanatory variables were used as control variables only: the number of employees, age of the entrepreneur, gender, age and position of the respondent. Subsequently in Model 2, the independent variable was included: organizational politics.

The results in table 4 show the correlations between the variables. We can conclude that the control variables that are correlated significantly and negatively with the organizational climate are the number of employees of the company and the age of the entrepreneur.

We also found that there is a significant and positive correlation between organizational politics and organizational climate.

**Table 4: Correlation matrix of organizational climate and organizational politics.**

Correlation Matrix							
	Y1	XC1	XC2	XC3	XC4	XC5	XC6
<b>Y1</b> Organizational climate	1						
<b>XC1</b> Number of employees	<b>-0.089**</b>	1					
<b>XC2</b> Owner's Age	<b>-0.094**</b>	-0.001	1				
<b>XC3</b> Gender	0.046	0.010	-0.023	1			
<b>XC4</b> Seniority	-0.034	-0.032	<b>-0.264***</b>	-0.014	1		
<b>XC5</b> Top Level Management	0.062	0.064	-0.005	<b>0.201***</b>	-0.069	1	
<b>XC6</b> Supervisor	-0.041	-0.039	<b>-0.203***</b>	<b>0.308***</b>	<b>0.148***</b>	<b>-0.248***</b>	1
<b>X1</b> Orgnsizational Politics	<b>0.082**</b>	-0.059	0.059	-0.004	0.010	0.047	-0.029

\*\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (bilateral).

The results of the hierarchical linear regression in Model 1, using only control variables, yield a value of  $F = 2094$ , significant at a level of 90% ( $p = 0.053$ ). This indicates that not all the control variables are significant, which helps to explain part of the variance in organizational climate, therefore justifying the use of these variables. As for Model 2, it can be seen in table 5 that by including the variable organizational politics, the value of  $F = 3201$  significantly increases to 95% ( $p = 0.033$ ), the regression coefficient gives a positive value of 0.056 and significance at 90% ( $p = 0.096$ ). These results support Hypothesis 1, which states that organizational politics have a positive influence on organizational climate.

**Table 5: Linear Regression Organizational climate and organizational politics.**

	Organizational Climate	
	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept	3.607*** (.000)	3.620*** (.000)
<b>Control Variables</b>		
Number of employees	-0.002** (.048)	-0.002* (.060)
Owner's Age	-0.007** (.018)	-0.008** (.014)
Gender	0.085 (.280)	0.087 (.272)
Seniority	-0.037 (.273)	-0.039 (.251)
First level managers	0.070 (.516)	0.061 (.571)
Supervisor	-0.106 (.206)	-0.105 (.209)
<b>Independent Variables</b>		
Organizational Politics		0.056* (.096)
<i>R</i>	0.172	0.19
<i>R<sup>2</sup> Adjusted</i>	0.015	0.036
<i>F</i>	2.094* (.053)	3.201** (.033)

Coefficient values of the regression model

In parentheses is shown the value of  $p$

\*\*\*  $p < .01$

\*\*  $p < .05$

\*  $p < .10$



Our hypothesis is not only counterintuitive, but also runs contrary to results reported by other researchers in the field (Wilson, 1995; 1999; Poon, 2003). Therefore, in this paper we decided to make a more detailed analysis of the relationship between organizational politics and organizational climate, reviewing how these two constructs are related (Table 6).

Table 6. Correlations Matrix

	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	XC1	XC2	XC3	XC4	XC5	XC6	X1	X2	X3
<b>Y1</b> CLAS: Immediate Superior Support	1													
<b>Y2</b> CLCR: Role Clarity	.794***	1												
<b>Y3</b> CLCP: Personal Contribution	.340***	.299***	1											
<b>Y4</b> CLRE: Recognition	.867***	.560***	.302***	1										
<b>Y5</b> CLEX: Own Feelings Expression	.173***	.069	.209***	.159***	1									
<b>XC1</b> Number of employees	-.0625	-.024	-.198***	-.049	.101**	1								
<b>XC2</b> Owner's Age	-.096**	-.113**	-.021	-.128***	.030	.000	1							
<b>XC3</b> Gender	.0561	.093	.076	.043	-.010	.010	-.023	1						
<b>XC4</b> Seniority	-.0208	-.017	-.074	.022	.000	-.030	-.264***	-.015	1					
<b>XC5</b> First level managers	.0785	.092	.007	.107**	-.010	.064	-.005	.201***	-.069	1				
<b>XC6</b> Supervisor	-.0394	-.027	-.053	-.027	.000	-.040	-.203***	.308***	.148***	-.248***	1			
<b>X1</b> CPG: General Political Behavior	-.025	-.032	-.027	.008	-.110**	.000	.024	.011	.002	.025	.003	1		
<b>X2</b> CPP: Conducta Política de Permanencia	.115**	-.004	-.008	.122**	.000	-.180***	.022	-.025	.045	.051	-.013	.384***	1	
<b>X3</b> PyP: Pay and Promotions	.178***	.054	.123**	.092	.070	.074	.093	.006	-.032	.025	-.024	.234**	.234***	1

\*\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral).

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (bilateral).

The analysis of the correlations between the dimensions that make up the construct of organizational climate and organizational politics give the following results:

1. General Political Behavior (CPG) is only negatively correlated ( $r = -.110$ ) and significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), with the dimension of expression of one's feelings. This relationship is consistent with the opinion of other authors (Mintzberg, 1984; Chang, Rosen and Levy, 2009; Rosen, Levy and Hall, 2006; Atinc et al., 2010).
2. Political Behavior of Permanency is related positively and significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) with Immediate Superior Support ( $r = 0.115$ ) and Recognition ( $r = .122$ ).
3. Payments and Promotions related positively and significantly with immediate supervisor support ( $r = 0.178$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and Personal Contribution ( $r = .123$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and 4) Clarity of role is not significantly associated with any of the dimensions of organizational politics; these results are consistent with a positive view of political activity of some authors (Gotsis and Kortesí, 2011).

In order to learn more in depth how organizational politics can affect the formation of organizational climate, we applied the hierarchical regression analysis for each of the dimensions that make up the organizational climate; Model 1 measures the effect of control variables and in Model 2, the impact of the three dimensions of organizational politics is measured. We did this because with some exceptions (Kiewitz et al., 2002), there appeared to be a lack of papers including these two variables. The results are shown in table 7.

**Table 7: Hierarchical regression analysis the dimensions of organizational climate and their impact on the three dimensions of organizational politics**

	CLAS		CLCR		CLCP		CLRE		CLEX	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept	3.757*** (.000)	3.631*** (.000)	3.416*** (.000)	3.472*** (.000)	3.443*** (.000)	3.457*** (.000)	3.965*** (.000)	3.791*** (.000)	3.166*** (.000)	3.370*** (.000)
<b>Control Variables</b>										
Number of employees	-0.002 (.149)	-0.001 (.182)	-0.001 (.506)	-0.001 (.430)	-0.006*** (.000)	-0.006*** (.000)	-0.001 (.249)	-0.001 (.402)	0.002** (.035)	0.002** (.033)
Owner's Age	-0.009* (.022)	-0.01*** (.008)	-0.012*** (.009)	-0.012*** (.007)	-0.006 (.218)	-0.007 (.150)	-0.011*** (.008)	-0.012*** (.004)	0.002 (.484)	0.002 (.546)
Gender	0.118 (.231)	0.119 (.218)	0.221* (.064)	0.217* (.069)	0.282** (.030)	0.267** (.038)	0.069 (.504)	0.075 (.466)	-0.185** (.035)	-0.184** (.035)
Seniority	-0.034 (.431)	-0.037 (.374)	-0.039 (.452)	-0.038 (.464)	-0.092 (.100)	-0.088 (.113)	-0.003 (.955)	-0.007 (.869)	0.006 (.873)	0.005 (.891)
First level managers	0.127 (.345)	0.111 (.396)	0.167 (.301)	0.172 (.289)	-0.12 (.494)	-0.102 (.558)	0.243* (.085)	0.222 (.114)	0.037 (.754)	0.037 (.755)
Supervisor	-0.128 (.224)	-0.11 (.285)	-0.153 (.228)	-0.143 (.260)	-0.265* (.054)	-0.243* (.075)	-0.09 (.413)	-0.083 (.449)	0.08 (.388)	0.09 (.330)
<b>Independent Variables</b>										
CPG		-0.085** (.039)		-0.043 (.399)		-0.041 (.451)		-0.046 (.291)		-0.105*** (.005)
CPP		0.063* (.053)		-0.006 (.877)		-0.051 (.235)		0.074** (.034)		0.028 (.332)
PyP		0.124*** (.000)		0.06 (.139)		0.141*** (.001)		0.062* (.075)		0.052* (.075)
<b>Model Results</b>										
R	0.163	0.275	0.181	0.197	0.248	0.295	0.181	0.233	0.148	0.213
R2 Fitted	0.013	0.056	0.019	0.018	0.048	0.067	0.019	0.034	0.008	0.025
F	1.893* (.081)	3.747*** (.000)	2.325** (.032)	1.839* (.060)	4.531*** (.000)	4.338*** (.000)	2.331** (.032)	2.624*** (.006)	1.547 (.161)	2.173** (.023)

Coefficients values of the regression model. In parentheses is shown the value of p

\*\*\* p &lt; .01

\*\* p &lt; .05

\* p &lt; .10

From these results it can be concluded:

1. The control variables in Model 1 have significance to each of the dimensions of organizational climate (minimum  $p < 0.10$ ), except in the expression of one's feelings ( $F = 1547$ ,  $p = .161$ ). This could be interpreted as the perception of the possibility of expressing feelings, if is not related to either the size or age of the company, or with the number, or gender of employees.
2. Except in role clarity, in all other dimensions of organizational climate, the value of F increases and decreases in significance when included in Model 2 independent variables of organizational politics. This confirms the impact globally on organizational climate.
3. In the dimension of role clarity, none of the dimensions of organizational politics have a significant impact. That is, organizational politics do not explain whether or not employees have a clear role.
4. The three types of organizational politics (General Political Behavior, Political Behavior of Permanency and Payments and Promotions) significantly impact the perception of employees about the support of their immediate superior. Note that in the case of conduct policy the impact is negative ( $b = -0.085$ ,  $p = 0.039$ ), that is, if employees perceive an increase in political behavior they generally feel less supported by their immediate

supervisor. On the other hand, if employees perceive an increase in political behavior of permanency, payments and promotions, they will be more supportive of their immediate supervisor.

5. In the case of personal contribution, the only variable that impacts positively and significantly is payments and promotions ( $b = 0.141$ ,  $p = .001$ ).
6. Organizational politics that impact positively and significantly with an employee that receives recognition are the political conduct of permanency ( $b = 0.074$ ,  $p = .034$ ) and Payments and promotions ( $b = .062$ ,  $p = .075$ ).
7. Payments and promotions ( $b = .052$ ,  $p = .075$ ), stimulate the expression of own feelings, while political behavior generally inhibits ( $b = -.0105$ ,  $p = .005$ ).
8. Organizational politics of Payments and promotions positively affect all Organizational Climate dimensions (supervisor support, personal contribution, Recognition and Expression), except in clarity of role ( $b = .060$ ,  $p = .139$ ).

### **CONCLUSIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.**

One of the objectives of this work was to understand the nature of organizational politics and its relationship to the organizational climate in order to improve communication and the participation of the members of a company. Although we are aware that political tactics are linked to power and conflict and are associated with an unhealthy organizational climate, we in fact demonstrated the opposite: some kinds of politics can be beneficial for the firm. Therefore it is possible to reconcile both the legitimate interests of owners and managers with the needs of employees.

Disregard for organizational politics, seeing them as something that has to be eliminated from the organization, has an ideological bias. If a worker claims their rights, he/she is immediately deemed "confrontational" and he/she will be prohibited from involvement in any kind of "politics" in the company.

Political action in the company can also be characterized by a balance between self-interest and the interest of others, negotiations over scarce resources where both sides gain, addressing problems and making decisions, open and participatory ways of achieving action and participation of the members of the group, etc. We argue that politics is inherent to human behavior and therefore also inherent to the operation of any company and could be regarded as the foundation of a healthy organizational climate.

Another conclusion is that workers, regardless of the organizational level to which they belong, will be influenced in some way in their performance by organizational politics and therefore the climate or context in which he/she works. Workers will also be influenced by the perception that their immediate superiors might have of the work environment in which they are immersed.

As mentioned above, the results describe certain relationships which have not previously been studied by researchers; we found only one empirical study focused on how psychological climate can neutralize the effects of organizational politics (Kiewitz et al., 2002). Other empirical studies which include the same variables are virtually non-existent, rendering it difficult to compare the findings of this paper with other similar research. This suggests the need for further research in the field, both theoretical and empirical, using quantitative and even qualitative techniques.

Future studies should also explore the relationship between organizational politics and commitment in emergent economies, because at the time of writing, the empirical evidence only relates to developed economies. Thus, future studies are suggested to investigate the difference in effect from a cultural perspective, such as Hofstede's (Judge and Robbins, 2011) approach. An investigation in different countries would provide further evidence as to how the effects of POP differ. For example, an exploration of political skill and its relationship to "Power Distance" because in developed economies there is less distance between managers and employees than is perceived in emergent economies.

In our research we noticed that top-level managers perceived politics in a negative way; we regard this as a misconception by these individuals because political action in the company can be interpreted as a way to achieve the best decisions for the problems of the group. This perspective emphasizes the cooperative aspects of decision-making to achieve the common good in a company, reconciling and negotiating the different interests of the members of it. Managers should recognize that some political activities may be essential to the functioning of work groups; current research demonstrates that some political activities are perceived negatively but most of them are perceived in a positive way; therefore, it is important for top management to make decisions that balance the costs and benefits of engaging in behaviors that may be perceived as political.

Political strategies should be built with trust, collaboration, ethics and "win-win" negotiations in view of greater organizational well-being. Political tactics such as manipulation or intimidation fail to meet this criterion, and for that reason should be eradicated or minimized.

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# **“THAT’S A WRAP!” THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL FILM CREWS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This study seeks to determine through survey research what characteristics film production crews possess that makes them so successful as an organization. The factors of age, gender, years of professional experience and education level were tested for their significance on how the respondents view their culture. Hofstede’s six dimensions of organizational culture survey questions were rewritten to be applicable to the freelance film crew sample. The presentation of findings focuses on the resultant organizational profile of a film production crew, the workplace values of this group and the influence that the education level of the participants had on responses. The data presented here are valuable for organizational culture scholars, management scholars and those interested in applying the successful techniques of the film production crew to other business organizations.*

Keywords: *film crew, organizational culture, Edgar Schein, Geert Hofstede*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Since Louis Le Prince made the first film with his friends and family clowning around in their garden in France, in the spring of 1888, the creation of a film has been a team effort. Just seven years later, the Lumiere brothers presented the first commercial exhibition of a projected motion picture to a paying public in the world's first movie theater in Paris. By 1910, the first Hollywood studio was opened for the sole purpose of producing commercial movies (Higgins, 2005). In less than a generation, the creation of moving images developed from the odd hobby of a few inventors to the world’s favorite form of storytelling and launched a hugely successful industry that continues to thrive globally today, more than 120 years later.

The films themselves have changed greatly and innovation is integral to the industry’s continued success as popular entertainment. What has changed very little is the way film crews function while employed on the production. D.W. Griffith, American film director in the early 1900s, could step onto a set today and know exactly what was going on. The hierarchy, set protocols and the vocabulary itself are very much the same as they were at the very beginnings of the art form. The crew is divided into two parts, management and labor, much like any team

endeavor. This hierarchy has remained constant through the years. Even the studio system did not change the on set structure of the crew, it only altered the way the crews were put together, i.e. staff year round employment versus freelance employment. The organizational make-up remained the same (Davenport, 2006).

The nature of a career as a film crew member has also remained constant. There has always been a very robust freelance workforce in the film industry. Freelance in this sense is defined as a worker who is not employed full time by one entity, but rather goes from one short term job to another, seeking his/her own employment each time. During the heyday of the studio system the “majors” (Warner Brothers, Paramount, Universal, et al.) did indeed keep crews on staff and working all year round. But the first crews in film history were freelance and they existed concurrently with the studios during the rise and fall of the studio system. The studio system collapsed in the late 1960s, but the freelance structure remained strong and is the industry standard today (Bohn, Stromgren, & Johnson, 1978). Film crews come together for one project, execute it at the top of their game and then reconfigure into completely new line-ups for the next project. “...four people who’ve never worked together can meet each other at nine o’clock in the morning and by ten o’clock they know what they’re all doing” (Relph as cited in Davenport, 2006, p.254). The crew members are specialists in their skill sets. They need no training for each individual job. They know what the job descriptions are and they know where their responsibilities begin and end for them individually, as a department and as a film crew. They work in challenging and often physically harsh conditions, attempting to create a unique and compelling form of artistic expression, while under financial constraints and tightly constructed schedules with little or no margin for error. This study arises from the author’s personal experience from 1980 to 2000 as a freelance live action line producer and production manager. Work experience led the author to investigate the theoretical underpinnings of organizational culture and conduct research that could shed light on the film crew organizational structure. What makes film crews so efficient? How are they able to come together in different iterations time and again, always with a different script, different set of problems, a different artistic vision and a tight schedule, yet manage to create such items of universal wonderment? What is the profile of a film crew organizational culture?

Like the military, on a film crew all members know their jobs, where the boundaries are and who the boss is, always under absurd time constraints and while solving logistical problems under adverse physical conditions. Unlike the military, they are working on an artistic project that demands constant creative as well as financial problem solving. The ability of film crews to succeed so consistently under this tension is the seed of this research query. Scholarly work is scarce on the organizational culture description or profile of this type of group. This study seeks to define the film crew organizational culture as a way to determine the traits of the organization common to all levels of the film crew unit. As a unique form of project-based and boundaryless enterprise, the career of the film crew member has been the predominant focus of much of the research. Little evidence exists of research into the workings of the film crew organization

itself, once the crew member has secured the hard-won gig. There is room to define the culture of the film crew organization, and to study how it functions. There are also important connections between the way film crews have always worked and the way many workers are being forced to adapt to freelance careers as a result of the current economic turndown and layoffs. Many who assumed they would be employed by a permanent organization and enjoy benefits and job security now find themselves competing for short-term freelance work just as film crews have been doing since the beginning of the industry. Perhaps there are lessons to be learned from this group of successful project-based workers that can be applied to other fields.

A brief overview of the relevant theoretical approaches is provided herein, followed by an explanation of the methodology. The results, discussion, validity issues and suggestions for further research conclude the paper.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

While a film crew career may appear unique to those viewing it from the outside, it can still be described using two traditional definitions: Film productions are project-based and film crew members participate in what's termed a "boundaryless career". Research has focused on seeing the film-crew job through these lenses (Jones, 1996).

### **The Project-Based Enterprise**

As a project-based enterprise, the film crew fits the model to a T. "Project-based enterprises (companies formed to pursue a specific project outcome) and project-based careers (careers habitually moving from one project to another) are most typically found in knowledge-intensive professional service firms in fields such as law, management consulting and architecture" (DeFillippi & Arthur, 2002, p. 189). The project-based enterprise of filmmaking is similar to practices in architecture. Film scripts are often referred to as the "blueprint" for the project, and the sequence of production and building are very similar in that they both hire the best for a specific project and disband as soon as the project is completed (Epstein, 2002, p.1). Jones and DeFillippi (1996) describe filmmaking as a knowledge intensive process. Its crew members move from one project to another, several times a year and always for a different organization. A film production company is set up for just that one project and is disbanded when the film is released. The industry standard for filmmaking crews is to be thrown together with new colleagues on every film. There may be a few crew members who go from one project to the next with a few of the same members, but the majority of crews are combinations of professionals who have never worked with anyone on the crew before the current job. While the crew at large is made up of members who are new to each other, the departmental structure keeps some of the crew members together as a team. Department heads (i.e. director of photography, production designer, assistant directors) may be different on every film, but the members who work for these department heads are often a unit that the department head strives to keep together from show to show. It serves the department supervisor and the film production overall to have

cohesive units who know how to work together with each other on the small scale, even if the combination of departments as a whole consists of teams working together for the first time (Jones & DeFillippi, 1996). “Everyone comes with a team...because the job is too big for any one person” (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1998, p. 133). Fundamentally, the crew is a unique combination of talent – it does not have the benefits (or drawbacks) of having worked together on multiple projects consistently and with the knowledge that its members will be working together as long as they have a job, the expectations at a traditional enterprise. Yet the departments and the production benefit from the prior team experience of the units, as they fit into the larger crew made up of first time partners.

Typically, a producer procures a script through various means and finds the financing to turn the script into a film. The producer then hires a crew of freelance workers to execute the production. These crew members are selected for each project based on several variables – skill level, availability, salary range, affiliations with others on the crew and nature of past experience. The prioritizing of these variables changes with each film production. On a well-funded production, getting the best filmmakers available is the priority. On a smaller scale budget, the most affordable crew would be primary. Often, the director will have some assistants and department heads that he or she likes to work with on every production. The producer will often have favorites that have proven reliable and creative on past projects. The genre of the film can determine which department heads to consider. For example, when making a Western, it’s always a good idea to use a production designer who has worked on a Western at some point in his or her career. That way the production benefits from those tricks learned on previous “horse operas”. The budget will also dictate the experience level of the crew sought. If it’s a very low budget project, then the producer has to look at inexperienced, non-union crew members, as they will be cheaper than seasoned and union professionals (Benedetti, 2002).

### **The Boundaryless Career**

The “boundaryless career” is defined by Jones and DeFillippi (1996)) as “...job mobility across multiple employers, personal responsibility for directing one’s own career development, and the development of social networks to shape and sustain that career” (p. 307). Arthur and Rousseau (1996) refine the definition of the boundaryless career by outlining its six features:

1. The career moves across the boundaries of separate employers.
2. The career draws validation--and marketability--from outside the present employer.
3. External networks sustain the career.
4. Traditional organizational career boundaries, notably those involving hierarchical reporting and advancement principles, are broken.
5. The individual rejects existing career opportunities for personal or family reasons.
6. The interpretation of the career actor may perceive a boundaryless future regardless of structural constraints. (p. 6)

Jones and DeFillippi (1996) create what they call a topographical map of important dimensions of the boundaryless career. They utilize Rudyard Kipling's parable from his *Just So Stories* (1912) of the six honest men (What, Why, When, How, Where, Who) as the overlay in their examination of the film industry, "...characterized by scholars as an exemplar of the boundaryless network organization of network community" (Jones & DiFillippi, 1996, p. 90). The challenges to the freelance film crew worker are numerous. Freelance film crew workers must deal with uncertainty, strive to remain employed and adapt to bouts of activity and inactivity. They must produce quality work quickly. They must balance career and family while maintaining a passion for their *métier*. They must create their own career path and foster the relationships that will determine future employment. They must guard against getting typecast in a dead end role and they must know how to identify and exploit opportunities within those relationships (Jones & DiFillippi, 1996, p. 91). The film crew member's choice of job meets all the criteria for the boundaryless career.

Another aspect of the boundaryless career is the "lottery ticket" method of entry. "There are a number of professions in which workers are paid, in part, with a figurative lottery ticket. The worker accepts a lower-paying job in exchange for a slim but real chance of a large, future payday" (Davidson, 2012). Davidson goes on to describe the Hollywood employment system as an excellent example of "meritocratic capitalism". Those who dream of becoming a successful producer or director can enter the film business at the bottom and work their way up. The "occupational centrifuge" will separate out those who have the drive and skills to succeed from those who do not and will have to fall back on secondary career options. The studio mailroom is a well-known example of this in practice. "Warner Brothers pays its mailroom clerks \$25,000 to \$30,000, a little more than an apprentice plumber. While far from perfect, this strategy has done a pretty decent job of pushing those with real promise to the top. Barry Diller and David Geffen each started his career in the William Morris mailroom" (Davidson, 2012).

The challenges of the unstable nature of project-based employment, the boundaryless career are important to keep in mind when analyzing the motivations for why so many are attracted to the film business and in defining their organizational culture.

The field is rife with debate over the definition of organizational culture and the most appropriate methods of assessing it. "There are as many meanings of 'culture' as people using the term" (Ajiferuke & Boddewyn, 1970, p. 154). Deal and Kennedy (1982) elegantly stated the definition of organizational culture as "the way we do things around here" (p. 60). Phillips (1984) refined the definition to emphasize that the culture is specific to that one group stating that organizational culture "is a set of assumptions held by a group of people. The set is distinctive to the group. The assumptions serve as guides to acceptable perceptions, thought, feeling, and behavior, are local among members, are learned and are passed on to each new member of the group" (Phillips, 1984, p.6). Hofstede (2005) brings another dimension to the definition. He defines organizational culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (p. 5). Hofstede notes that there is no consensus about the definition of organizational culture but that most scholars would agree on his list of characteristics. Organizational culture is:

1. Holistic
2. Historically determined
3. Related to anthropological concepts
4. Socially constructed
5. Soft
6. Difficult to change

“All of these characteristics of organizations have been separately recognized in the literature in the previous decades; what is new about organizational culture was their integration into one construct” (Hofstede, 1990, p. 286). It is Hofstede’s insight into organizational culture being a combination of previously researched concepts that makes it relevant and useful for this paper. After careful examination of the prevailing organizational culture theories, Hofstede distills them into a comprehensive and sophisticated singular theory. He points out the flaws of the previous research in limiting itself to only qualitative, participant observation data collection (too subjective) or only survey questionnaires (too focused on employee satisfaction). Hofstede (1998) cites Wilkins and Ouchi and their observation that “...the use of survey methodology is seen by many current scholars of culture as being too much the product of the social scientist’s rather than the participant’s point of view and therefore inappropriate as a method for measuring culture” (p. 236). “Culture is a characteristic of the organization, not of individuals, but it is manifested in and measured from the verbal and/or nonverbal behaviour of individuals — aggregated to the level of their organizational unit” (Hofstede, 1998, p. 479). In addition to advocating for surveys as a valuable tool for assessing organizational culture, Hofstede also emphasizes that research should focus on the level of organizational units and not of individuals (Hofstede, 1998). This perspective is particularly appropriate for developing a profile of the unit of the film crew and it allows for integration of both survey and open question methodology.

Edgar Schein’s seminal work, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, initiated an interest in deconstructing the “way we do things” and in studying how groups create and maintain their cultures. According to Schein (1990), culture can now be defined as a pattern of basic assumptions:

1. Invented, discovered, or developed by a given group, as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration
2. That has worked well enough to be considered valid
3. That is to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems

Schein’s (1990) organizational culture theory chooses to determine and define a group’s culture through use of three cognitive levels of organizational culture: (a) observable artifacts, (b) values, and (c) basic underlying assumptions.

In Schein’s (1990) model, artifacts are those things that can be observed by an outsider; the facilities, offices, furnishings, awards and recognition, how members dress, how members interact with each other and with outsiders, company slogans, mission statements and other operational creeds. According to Schein (1990) and later, Denison (2000), behaviors are

included in the artifacts category. This would include rituals, myths, stories, and the history of an organization.

Espoused values include basic beliefs and assumptions and are often deeply ingrained within the organization's culture. Interviewing the organization's membership and using questionnaires to gather attitudes about organizational membership can define organizational behavior at this level.

The final level in Schein's (1990) model is assumptions. These elements are unseen and sometimes even too taboo to discuss inside the organization. Schein argues that the assumptions are the heart of an organization's culture and the researcher cannot define the culture by only observing the artifacts and values. Schein's model is best presented as hiding more than it reveals to indicate the tacit and hidden nature of assumptions – they exist beneath and are hidden from the artifacts and values (see Figure 1). "Once one understands the underlying taken-for-granted assumptions, one can better understand how cultures can seem to be ambiguous or even self-contradictory" (Schein, 1990, p. 112). These beliefs hold the key to what the organization members consider important, what they hold as values of the organization and leads to the motivation of how things are done in that organization. The articulation of the hidden part of any organization as being key to understanding the group's method of operation is singular to Schein. As the film crew is an understudied sample, its assumptions and ways of seeing the world have yet to be discovered academically. So much of the film crew world is hidden. With no permanent home base in which the work can take place, and beset by goals that change on a daily basis it makes it very difficult to identify and articulate the organizational culture of the film crew. It is a constantly moving target.

Denison and Mishra (1995) took Schein's (1990) three-part theory and developed a model that drilled down even more deeply into the assumptions level. As a way to quantify the dimensions that make up the profile of an organization's culture, Denison and Mishra put forth four broadly defined cultural traits identified through qualitative research. Each trait has three corresponding indexes, or value dimensions:

Table 1. Traits and Value Dimensions	
Trait	Value Dimensions
Involvement	Empowerment Team orientation Capability development
Consistency	Core values Agreement Coordination and integration
Adaptability	Creating change Customer focus Organizational learning
Mission	Strategic direction and intent Goals and objectives Vision

Beliefs and assumptions are at the heart of Denison's model (2000), aligning with Schein in the centrality of assumptions to understanding an organization's culture. Denison's four traits or dimensions provide a starting place for identifying how film crews can work so effectively despite the challenges of being project-based and of the boundaryless career category. Studies using Denison's model propose that organizations that display a higher overall culture score, show higher levels of performance (Sarros, Gray, Densten & Cooper, 2005; Eige, 2002; Yilmaz, & Ergun, 2008). Denison (2000) also notes that the four culture traits are often contradictory and present paradoxes in organizations. "Effective organizations are those that are able to resolve these contradictions without relying on simple tradeoffs" (Fey & Denison, 2003, p. 688).

Hofstede (1990) cites Deal and Kennedy (1982) for the four terms (symbols, heroes, values, rituals) because they are mutually exclusive and comprehensive. Symbols are words, gestures, pictures, or objects that have meaning within a culture. Heroes are persons, alive or dead, real or imagined, who possess highly prize features and who serve as models of desired behavior by the organization. Rituals consist of those collective activities that are "technically superfluous but are socially essential within a culture" (Hofstede, 1990, p. 291). Values remain as the core manifestation of the organizational culture, but the practices integrate symbols, heroes and rituals. "Symbols, heroes, and rituals can be subsumed under the term 'practices', because they are visible to an observer although their cultural meaning lies in the way they are perceived by insiders" (Hofstede, 1990, p. 291). Hofstede argues that values describe what the respondent feels should be, as opposed to practices, which are what the respondent feels already exists in the organization. Hofstede goes on to posit that values in an organization are a reflection of the founders values but not necessarily the employees. The works must follow the practices of the organization to keep their job, but this does not mean they share the values instituted by management. Hofstede (1990) points out that we enter the workplace as adults, with our values already set. They are not a feature that is implanted by the organization. In addition, Hofstede states that practices are specific to actual situations, while values are abstract preferences. Hofstede's research led to his emphasis on studying perceived practices as the path to defining an organizational culture, while an analysis of values is appropriate for comparisons of culture at an international level. His work led to the creation of six distinct dimensions by which to categorize and measure the practices aspect of the Hofstede model. These six dimensions are particularly appropriate for studying the film crew organizational culture – see author's notes in italics.

## **HOFSTEDE'S SIX DIMENSIONS OF PRACTICE**

### **Process Oriented Versus Results Oriented**

This dimension concerns the differences between how things are done and the outcome. In a process-oriented organization, employees avoid risk and plod through each day, one the same as the next. In a results-based group, the members are comfortable in unfamiliar situations and put in the maximum effort every day, with each day bringing unexpected challenges. *The latter is an excellent description of the film crew work process. The crew is challenged on a daily basis with factors such as weather, location logistics and large numbers of people to*



manage, just to name a few. In her experience, the author has overheard many a crew member commenting on how they love the work precisely because it is challenging and offers something different every day.

### **Employee Oriented Versus Job Oriented**

This dimension compares the group's concern for people and the concern for getting the job done. In an employee-oriented culture, the welfare of the employee is a priority to the organization; the employees feel their personal problems are factored into their work and committees make the important decisions. In the job-oriented group, the task at hand is the priority. The organization is interested solely in what the employee can do and important decisions are made by a select few. Family and personal problems are considered inappropriate for the workplace. *This is true of film crews. They are hired to work; the producer hires them based on their abilities and how efficiently they can perform. Their personal lives are irrelevant and not to be brought into the workplace. This may be in part due to the project-based nature of film production. While employed, crew members are expected to perform regardless of their personal situation. "If you can't make it in, send a sub" is standard practice and a tightly held value in the film crew culture.*

### **Parochial Versus Professional**

This dimension compares groups whose employees gain their identity primarily from the organization with those whose people identify with their job. *In the world of the film crew member, promotion and career advancement is derived from crew members' successful job performance and not because of the organization's concern with their crew members' personal lives. The organization ceases to exist after the film has been completed, so an attachment to the organization is not available beyond the short term.*

### **Open System Versus Closed System**

An open system is open to both newcomers and outsiders. It is easy to join and new members can quickly get up to speed. In a closed system, the group and its members are exclusive and secretive. Only very special people fit in. *The film crew is an open system in that anyone can attempt to become part of the organization. This usually requires connections with existing members. Access is difficult but democratic and egalitarian. If one puts in the time in developing contacts, they will get a chance to work on the crew. It is available to anyone who understands the process and puts in the time. Once access is gained through a personal connection, initiates are treated fairly and welcomed into the fold. All that is required is that the initiate demonstrates the necessary work ethic to be worthy of training by the insiders. Everyone gets a chance to join this group, but few succeed at sustaining their "membership". With this set of criteria, the film crew should be defined as an open system.*

## **Loose Control Versus Tight Control**

Members of loose control groups believe that cost is not an issue, punctuality is not important and jokes at the group's expense are commonplace. In a tight control group, the environment is very cost-conscious, staying on schedule is paramount and no one jokes about the group. *Although jokes about management are common on a film set, they are firmly grounded in the tight control type of group. Every decision regarding production of the film revolves around money, and time is money. If production slips off schedule, a lot of money is wasted. It is priority number one to the film crew to plan a realistic schedule and execute it.*

## **Normative Versus Pragmatic**

A normative group is driven by an ideology while a pragmatic group is market driven. The normative unit follows protocol rather than focusing on results and ethics are held to a high standard. In a pragmatic organization, results are most important. *The film crew is pragmatic in all its approaches. Staying on target, achieving the goals established during a careful prep are what drives the group. Adherence to a mode of operation that may not suit the situation at hand is quickly discarded for something that works, often at the expense of a more ethical or democratic choice of action.*

Hofstede's strides in identifying these dimensions and testing his assumptions through years of research studies at the Institute for Research on Intercultural Cooperation remain important breakthroughs in cultural profiling.

Embracing Hofstede's definition of organizational culture and implementing his model of six dimensions of practices as the scale for study leaves the task of operationalizing the process. "If one accepts the idea that 'culture is one of those terms that defy a single all-purpose definition' (Ajiferuke & Boddewyn, 1970, p. 154), 'then the choice of methods should be guided by one's particular interest in a given study' (Sackmann, 1991, p. 296). Sackmann makes a comprehensive report on the dissension in the field regarding not only the definition of organizational culture but also the prevailing wisdom on how best to operationalize and quantify it. What should be included, what should be excluded and does one methodology serve all types of organization? Time and resource constraints often determine the choice of instrument, but there are also frequent theoretical differences that guide the choice.

The data collection methods are diverse and include both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Questionnaires, structured interviews, documentary analysis, group discussions and in-depth interviews are common, both singly and in numerous combinations (Sackmann, 1991). The type of instrument most fitting for this study is of the dimensional approach, which describes a culture by its position on a number of continuous variables, using a Likert scale for indicating level of agreement with predefined statements (Likert, 1932; Fletcher & Jones, 1992). O'Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell (1991) developed the Organizational Cultural Profile (OCP) along these lines. According to Cooper, Densten, Gray and Sarros (2005), the OCP "...represents one of the major measures of organizational culture in use today" and cite the work of Agle and Caldwell (1999), Howard (1998), Judge and Cable (1997). The OCP contains 54 value statements that are to be sorted by the participants (Q-sort approach) (Block, 1978) and reflect the following seven

factors: (1) innovation; (2) stability; (3) people orientation; (4) outcome orientation; (5) easygoing; (6) detail orientation; (7) team orientation. In O'Reilly et al. (1991) study the respondents were asked to sort the 54 values into a row of nine categories, placing at the one end of the row those items they considered to be the most characteristic aspects of the culture, and at the other hand those items that they believed to be the least characteristic.

Another profiling instrument is the Organizational Culture Inventory (OCI) (Cooke & Lafferty, 1983). The OCI is a 96-item survey that measures 12 behavioral "styles" that identify the shared beliefs, values, and expectations that guide the way organization members interact with one another and approach their work (Human Synergistics, 2011). Cooke and Rousseau (1988) note that "there are innumerable ways to describe the content of a culture; the approach presented here emphasizes individual cognitions regarding appropriate ways of thinking and behaving within an organizational unit" (p. 250). Cooke and Rousseau note that their revised OCI model is not intended to be exhaustive, but to focus on a finite number of aspects of the organization theory they were studying. Denison's (2000) Organizational Culture Survey has been widely tested. This instrument includes 60 items, all of which are five-point Likert scales with anchors strongly disagree (=1) to strongly agree (=5). These approaches confirm that this study is served best by examining the existent theories and instruments of measuring organizational culture and creating the best tool for the job, designed specifically for that organization. For a comprehensive comparison of instruments available for measuring organizational culture, see *The Quantitative Measurement of Organizational Culture in Health Care: A Review of the Available Instruments* (Scott, Mannion, Davies, & Marshall, 2005).

Since this study seeks to create a baseline profile of the organizational culture of a film crew, the choice was made to limit the dimensions to those that bring the practices of the group into focus and to leave an examination of the values of the same group for a future study. As Hofstede (2005) states, practices are a reflection of symbols, heroes and rituals and are the visible part of a culture. Values are invisible and as noted earlier, and are not the result of the group as much as they are put forth by the company controllers and eventually embedded into the practices. After examining various instruments and theory models described above, it was determined that a questionnaire with a Likert scale and customized with the Hofstede practices dimensions specific to the project based nature of film production would be most suitable. There are several compelling reasons for using a questionnaire for data collection. Questionnaires are effective in mining large groups for low cost and in shorter time periods than a qualitative, ethnographic study. They also allow for controlled comparisons. "Because the format of a questionnaire is standardized, objectivity is usually high in regards to its administration, analysis, and interpretation" (Sackmann, 1991, p.6). Reiman and Oedewald (2002) find the questionnaire very useful. "Used correctly, questionnaires can provide sufficiently valid descriptive information about an organization and particularly about the views and attitudes of its staff. Questionnaires can also be used to clarify the various connections between variables and to explain statistically the differences found" (p.19). Hofstede (1990) states more anecdotally that "an approach that quantifies...makes a fuzzy field at least somewhat accessible" (p. 313). Sackmann (1991) notes that for an effective questionnaire, a priori knowledge of the cultural context is preferred. The author's knowledge of the film production culture provides an opportunity to develop a questionnaire customized for this study.

The review of the literature provides evidence that a film crew's organizational culture can be measured. The clarity of Hofstede's dimensions inspired a strong hypothesis that could be quantified through a survey revised specifically for freelancers who work in film production. The literature led to research questions about the possible differences with the hypothesis being connected to the demographics of the respondents.

*H1: The organizational cultural profile of film crews will prove to be results-oriented, job-oriented, professional, an open system, tightly controlled and pragmatic.*

*RQ 1: Are age or gender significant factors in how respondents view their culture?*

*RQ 2: Are years of experience in the business a significant factor in how respondents view their culture?*

*RQ 3: Is education level a significant factor in how respondents view their culture?*

## METHODOLOGY

The *LA 411*, published in Los Angeles, was contacted as a resource for a convenience sample of the film crew population. The *LA 411* is a subscription guide to freelance crew and production facilities and services. Individuals and companies that wish to be listed submit their information for publication and online access by the public. The publisher made available upon request the emails for their crew listings, totaling 2279 potential respondents in both Los Angeles and New York, New York.

The author reviewed the categories in the film crew email list provided by the *LA 411*. The desired respondents were defined as those freelance crew members who are required to be on set every day of production, excluding those who come and go as part of their job description. For example, the studio teacher hired to work with any minor child actors is only there on the days the children work and is not needed at all on sets without minors. The study sought to create a profile of the standard permanent crew necessary for any production who can speak to the baseline film crew organizational culture experience. Those jobs on film crews that are not required on set every day of production were eliminated, resulting in the survey email list totaling 2,075 members.

Table 2. Job Titles of Respondents	
Set Medics	Hair and Make-up Artists
Art Directors	Production Managers
Production Designers	Production Coordinators
Camera Assistants	Prop Masters
Camera Operators	Script Supervisors
Directors of Photography	Set Decorators

**Table 2. Job Titles of Respondents**

Assistant Directors	Sound Mixers
Gaffers	Stunt Players
Electricians	Transportation Coordinators
Grips	Wardrobe Stylists

Hofstede's (1990) model utilizing six dimensions in identifying organizational culture was reviewed. The questions Hofstede created for his initial study were revised to be applicable for the film crew sample. The 40-question pilot test of this survey was completed by 15 film crew members in Orlando, Florida and Los Angeles, California. Based on Cronbach's Alpha reliability test, this initial survey was modified by deleting those questions that scored below .50 on reliability through SPSS software. Twenty questions remained in the final survey, using Hofstede's six dimensions and including the following demographic questions: age, gender, years of professional experience and education. Lastly, through open-ended questions, the respondents were prompted to include their observations and experiences on how and why film crews work well together (see Appendix A for complete questionnaire).

The final survey was sent out via the Qualtrics survey program on December 17, 2011 and closed on January 6, 2012. The survey was completed by 308 respondents, a 15% response rate. After careful review of the Likert scale questions and responses the researcher determined that recoding was needed on survey question 11. The data was analyzed through the SPSS software system. A Cronbach's Alpha reliability test provided a .70 result after removing four unreliable questions from the original set of 20 (removed questions 6,9,13,16).

For the dimension item Open System versus Closed System, the questions were too flawed to be reliable. Survey question 11 was reverse coded. Survey question 13 was dropped during the initial test due to the low Cronbach alpha score. The subsequent Cronbach alpha score on the remaining two questions was .223. Based on these results, this dimension was excluded from the survey.

## RESULTS

Frequency tests were conducted to provide a profile of the demographics of the sample. Results indicated that the average respondent is a white male at least 51 years old or older. He has a bachelor's degree and at least 15 years of professional experience in the film business with an average annual income of \$100,000. He is married with one or more children.

The age group 51 and over was the predominant response. 61% (n=188) ranked in this group, with 28% (n=85) in the 42 to 50 year age range. 10% (n=32) selected into the 31-40 year age range, with 2% (n=4) in the 20 to 30 year age range.

A total of 71.8% (n=221) of the respondents were male, 26.9% were female (n=86). One respondent identified as Other.

88% listed themselves with 15 or more years in the business (n=270). The remaining 9% were between 10 years and 15 years, with less than 4% making up the balance of respondents in the 2 years to 10 years range.

Most of the respondents selected Bachelor's Degree as highest level of education reached (49.4%, n=152), "Some college" was second with 21% (n=64), followed by Masters degrees at 15% (n=46).

## HYPOTHESES

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Dimensions**

	Film Crews are Results-Oriented	Film crews are Job-Oriented	Film crews are Professional	Film crews exhibit Tight Control	Film crews are both Normative and Pragmatic
Number	308	308	308	308	308
Mean	11.8604	10.5390	7.5065	11.9675	10.7597
Minimum	3.00	3.00	2.00	3.00	3.00
Maximum	15.00	15.00	10.00	15.00	15.00
Standard Deviation	1.93123	2.08339	1.30520	1.77540	1.84605

Responses to Hofstede's dimensions have been summarized in the form of five composite indices. Each dimension had two to four questions per dimension, numbered 1-20.

### Process-Oriented versus Results-Oriented

Many of the respondents (76%) say that film crews are a results-oriented organization. The results support the hypothesis that film crews are results-oriented.

### Employee-Oriented versus Job-Oriented

Only 30% of respondents felt film crews are job-oriented. This suggests a lack of clear determination between these two dimension aspects.

### Parochial versus Professional

55% defined the film crew as a professional organization, supporting the hypothesis.

### Loose Control versus Tight Control

63.6% defined film crews as a tightly controlled organization, supporting the hypothesis of the film crew organization being a firmly regulated group.

### Normative versus Pragmatic

64.3% were neutral, or disagreed when it came to defining a film crew as a pragmatic organization. Only 34.7% agreed. This would suggest that the hypothesis was incorrect in assuming that the film crew organization is a pragmatic group. The uncertainty of the results led

to the conducting of post hoc tests on the individual questions to determine what set of cases are in disagreement or agreement with the hypothesis. Results from the post hoc Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) test showed that the age level of the respondents approached significance for the individual questions Dimension 6 (Normative versus Pragmatic), especially for Survey questions 18 and 19. The 20-30 and 31-40 year olds felt that a film crew is pragmatic and most like a military team, while the 41 and older groups were significantly less supportive of this view. The mean score for the 20-30 year olds response to Survey question 18 ( $M = 4.00$ ,  $SD = .816$ ) was significantly different than the 31 and older group.

However, these same age groups did not significantly differ in their response for survey question 20, "Production places a high value on results rather than procedures".

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

*RQ 1: Are age or gender significant factors in how respondents view their culture?*

Oneway ANOVA tests and a T Test were performed to compare the effects of age, gender, years of professional experience and education level on the responses.

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of age on the responses to all the dimensions. There was not a significant effect of age at the  $p < .05$  level on any of the dimensions except for Dimension 5 (**LOOSE CONTROL VERSUS TIGHT CONTROL**), which approached significance in an LSD test of the individual questions.

The T Test for gender did indicate some significance between gender and the responses for Dimensions 1, 4 and 6. In Dimension 1 (Process-Oriented versus Results-Oriented), the response from women approached significance with 12.3% responding in agreement, in contrast to 11.7 of the men.

In Dimension 6 (Normative versus Pragmatic), it was reversed, with men approaching significance at 10.9% and women at 10.4%.

*RQ 2: Are years of professional experience a significant factor in how respondents view their culture?*

There was not a significant effect of years of professional experience on any of the Dimensions at the  $p < .05$  level.

*RQ 3: Is education level a significant factor in how respondents view their culture?*

There is an effect that approaches significance of the respondents' education level on results for Dimension 5 (Loose Control versus Tight Control) at the  $p < .05$  level [ $F(5, 300) = 2.197$ ,  $p = .05$ ].

There was also a significant effect of education level on the results for Dimension 6 (Normative versus Pragmatic) at the  $p < .05$  level [ $F(5, 300) = 3.597$ ,  $p = .00$ ].

Post hoc comparisons using the LSD test were used on the individual questions in Dimension 5 (Loose Control versus Tight Control) and Dimension 6 (Normative versus Pragmatic) to determine where significant effect of education level resided for those results. To conduct this test, it was necessary to drop any results with just one case. The one case selecting “No education” and the one case selecting “Doctoral level” were filtered out for the LSD post hoc test.

The results of the post hoc test for Dimension 5 (Loose Control versus Tight Control) indicated that the mean score for survey question 15 ( $M = 4.63$ ,  $SD = .594$ ) was significantly different than survey question 14 ( $M = 3.72$ ,  $SD = 1.014$ ) and survey question 17 ( $M = 3.61$ ,  $SD = 1.042$ ). These numbers suggest that while the less formally educated respondents feel that being punctual and sticking to the schedule is a high priority, they do not feel that the crew is military in nature or that being militaristic is necessary to accomplish its goals.

For Dimension 6 (Normative versus Pragmatic) the results of the post hoc indicated that the mean score for survey question 19 ( $M = 3.66$ ,  $SD = .917$ ) approached significance in its difference with survey question 18 ( $M = 3.54$ ,  $SD = .834$ ) and survey question 20 ( $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = .963$ ) regarding the influence of education on the responses.

These data would suggest that the less formally educated respondents feel that the film crew has narrowly defined job descriptions and built-in autonomy.

## DISCUSSION

Prior research demonstrates that organizational culture can be measured and such theory-based measurement can reveal practical information about how and why professionals succeed. Hofstede’s model of six dimensions served this study as a guide for the examination of the creative culture in which film crews are brought together to serve on one particular project through to its completion. However, Hofstede’s model is only the measuring stick. The hypotheses were arrived at based on the literature review and the author’s personal experience in the field of film production. The results of this study indicated that of the six dimensions used, three of the hypotheses were supported (they are indeed results-oriented, tightly controlled and pragmatic).

Film crews desire the test of a constantly changing work environment and the challenges of each new day on a set. Unlike a process-oriented culture, the film crew chases risk and embraces the unknown. “They share a love of the work itself, the day to day activity, and the challenges. This is what they have in common,” noted one respondent. “Film crews love a challenge and pride themselves on meeting those challenges with success,” stated another. One respondent noted the characteristics of the film crew, stating, “...team work, humor, creativity and willingness to work long, arduous hours in all conditions for the common good: i.e. great work equals a good movie”. For Dimension 1 (Process-Oriented versus Results-Oriented), a process-oriented organization is described as being made up of employees who avoid risks and make a limited effort. The film crew is just the opposite and this study aligns with the author’s anecdotal experiences. “We all have a job to do and when at work we all do our jobs. Having a good time doing our jobs is part of the deal. Work hard but have fun doing it,” stated one



respondent. Another noted, "Film crews work well together when they are flexible and adaptable. Film making constantly involves change on the set to what might have been previously planned." The test results for this dimension support the hypothesis that film crews are a results-oriented organization.

The data for Dimension 2 (Employee-Oriented versus Job Oriented) shows both conditions to be true – film crews are employee-oriented and job-oriented. Respondents felt that both conditions can be true simultaneously, often enough to prevent the data from indicating just one or the other. "Film crews only work together in an efficient manner when there are department heads who care about their crews and make sure they are taken care of. Food, water, and a pat on the back goes *[sic]* a long way. Plus a paycheck of course," stated one respondent. Schein pointed out that cultures can seem to be ambiguous or even self-contradictory, and that study of the underlying values would help clarify some of that confusion. It may be that a well-managed film production is able to give both the employees and the task at hand equal emphasis, hence the equivocality of the response for Dimension 2 (Employee-Oriented versus Job Oriented). One of the challenges of the study was realizing that film crew members can hold two or more opposing ideas about themselves and the world in their head the same time.

Many respondents described the film crew as being a family in nature. One respondent wrote:

Aside from the military aspects of how a crew is organized there is often a feeling of a tight knit family when it comes to crews. I feel like production has my back and I have theirs, we look out for each other. If for some reason I do have a personal problem, production is sensitive to my needs and in turn I am sensitive to theirs. We work together to accomplish our work. The goal is always to make your day and everyone usually works together to achieve that goal.

In addition to identifying the organization as a family, respondents also referred to the film crew as a team, again noting that reducing the divide between getting the job done and feeling that the worker's needs are acknowledged by production management are the conditions that make for a productive and successful organization. "Film crews are paid well and a job well done leads you to the next job, so everyone does their best. As one of the crew you have a sense of being on the same "team" with everyone else, in a way you don't in most other jobs."

Potential practical application of this finding is worth noting by organizations that seek to improve dysfunction. Considering the high success rate for film crews in meeting difficult goals under almost always less than ideal circumstances, any organization would benefit by striking a similar balance in its organizational culture and should consider the behavior of supporting the individual employee's well-being as necessary to achieve the organization's goals. Noted one respondent, "I have always enjoyed how at say 6am *[sic]* on the first day of a shoot, people are meeting each other for the first time and within a few hours are getting great things done but most importantly there is a passion for cooperation and overcoming obstacles and enhancing opportunities. Well-fed and well-paid creative people do amazing things!"

For Dimension 3 (Parochial versus Professional), the respondents showed ambivalence in answering decisively whether film crew members derive their identity from the organization at work (parochial) and keeping their personal behavior separate (professional). It may be that the film crew members experience has been that both can be true at the same time on the same film set as results showed for the previous dimension. The Dimension 3 (Parochial versus Professional) hypothesis asserts that film crews are a highly professional organization and "...consider their private lives their own business" (Hofstede, 1998). In contrast to the hypothesis that film crews are exclusively professional, film crews often cited personalities as being of equal importance with technical skill and experience. "Personality is just as important if not more so than technical skill in making a film set work efficiently," states one respondent. Another respondent points out "crew members must have cooperative and pleasant personalities that are unflinching in the face of adversity, and the skills to professionally perform their expected role, as well as be capable of predicting the needs of cooperating with other departments." Comments like this one would indicate that the film crew organization defines itself as professional, and therefore greater awareness of the personalities of the co-workers and their private lives brings at least some of the parochial criteria into the profile of Dimension 3 (Parochial versus Professional). As organizational science theorists have noted (Fey & Denison, 2003; Hatch, 1993; Schein, 1990) it is the ability of an effective organization to resolve contradictions in characteristics that make them successful. The film crew embraces the duality of being both somewhat parochial and yet professional as well as being both employee-oriented and job-oriented in Dimension 2. The film crew is "...simultaneously achieving internal integration and external adaptation" (Fey & Denison, 2003). This may be the key to understanding the enduring success of this group. It is this ability to work within multiple sets of contradictory characteristics to the benefit of the organization that explains why the film crew organization continues to be an efficient organization in the long term.

It was difficult to ask the right questions and get conclusive results for the Dimension 4 (Open versus Closed System) aspect of the film crew organization. While the hypothesis assumes that film crews are open to newcomers and outsiders, the results made clear that certain criteria are required of those who want to succeed in this organization. "Where most personalities can fit into film production, certain personalities do better than *[sic]* others - those that are driven to succeed, good at networking, can work in a group as well as craft or artistic and or precise and punctual," stated one respondent. Another stated, "People are hired based 80% personality, 20% is based on your technical skills...it's not who YOU know it's who knows YOU." The results suggest that anyone may try his or her hand at working on a film crew, but succeeding and being hired again is particular to the individual. Everyone gets a chance, only a few will win. "There is a survivor mentality on a film set as well as a perverse pride in the masochistic nature of our working environments and the length of our days," states one respondent. "Each project is do or die. There isn't the complacency that exists in other work cultures. If you do a poor job, you will not be hired for the next project. Also because there isn't an HR Dept. *[sic]* the turn over rate is very high. You perform, or you are replaced," said another respondent, who added, "If you want to get hired again you tow *[sic]* the line". These qualitative responses further illustrate the complex nature of this dimension as it applies to film crew organizations. The data indicate differing yet not mutually exclusive responses that call for

further research. For these reasons, it was determined that Dimension 4 (Open System versus Closed System) should be excluded from the final results.

For Dimension 5 (Loose Control versus Tight Control), the respondents felt that the film crew is a tightly controlled organization. This accurately reflects the film crew's strong emphasis on scheduling and preparation, in addition to demanding that the crew adhere to these guidelines. Cost controls, insured in large part by sticking to a strict timeline on a daily and overall project level, is at the heart of film production strategy.

It is highly dependent on the efficiency of EACH department as dictated by the department head's hires; it is the most cohesive junior officers' teams, which carry out their superior's orders most efficiently. And as in the military, camaraderie and communication go hand in hand. Also, with tech improving communication throughout, so much more is expected in much less time, which amps up the stress on each department head to make the proper decisions on hiring and sometimes, firing.

This comment reflects the film crew members' acceptance of a hierarchy that manages from the top down. It is not a democracy and the crew accepts this as the only way to accomplish their extreme goals. One respondent noted:

Film crews work well together because the set wouldn't function if we didn't. Every person on set has some responsibility for the success of the production, and some individuals have greater responsibility than others. It is built into the culture of the film crew that each individual is expected to carry his/her own weight on set and have a good relationship with authority.

For Dimension 5 it was also noted that the younger respondents felt more strongly that a film crew was conscious of every penny, put a strong emphasis on punctuality and was military in its hierarchy. A possible explanation might be that the older film crew members no longer find the strict rules and regulations military in nature the same way a younger person might chafe during their initial exposure to the rigidity of the organization.

For Dimension 6 (Normative versus Pragmatic), Hofstede defines a normative organization as one where following organizational procedures is more important than the results. By comparison, a pragmatic organization favors results over procedures. As suggested by the data and the author's personal experience, films crews are nothing if not pragmatic in their emphasis on "making the day" and accomplishing the goals in the time allotted. At the same time, the set is rigidly hierarchical and has a fixed protocol that is never questioned. Like Dimension 2 (Employee-Oriented versus Job Oriented), the data point to both conditions being true simultaneously in this organization. Results are of supreme importance but protocol must be followed in order to achieve those results. "Unionized positions with specific job descriptions keep everyone organized and focused on specific tasks - people only do their job, and therefore become very skilled at that job," said one respondent. The older age group lower mean number would help explain the drop in the overall agreement with Dimension 6 (Normative versus Pragmatic).

In testing RQ1: (Are age or gender significant factors in how respondents view their culture?), results showed that there was no effect of age on the dimension responses. The rather narrow age range of the respondents may explain this. As a source for potential respondents, the LA 411 Production Guide would by definition list the more successful members of the film production community. It requires three references for each applicant and the fees begin at \$200 per application. Younger members of the business are still building their resumes and networks and are more likely to be loath to hand over that kind of money to be listed. As a result, 88.3% of the 308 respondents were 41 years old or older, with 60.7% of that number 51 years or older. Autonomy in the responses is possibly attributable to this older age range, which includes the more experienced and seasoned veterans of show business.

The T Test for gender did indicate some significance between gender and the responses. Women felt more strongly than men that the film crew is indeed a results-oriented organization, pursuing risk and feeling comfortable even in unfamiliar surroundings. Men more strongly agreed that the film crew is a pragmatic organization. It may be that women are accustomed to embracing risk and being comfortable in an unfamiliar setting as a female in a male environment. Film crews are notoriously male-dominated. A study conducted by the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film showed that while women comprised 25% of production managers working on the top 250 films of 2009 eighty five percent of the films had no female production managers (Lauzen, 2009). The numbers were a little more encouraging for production supervisors, with women comprising 44% of production supervisors, yet 72% of films had no female production supervisors. In the more technically focused careers on film sets, only 5% of the sound mixers were women, 1% of the gaffers and 1% of the grips were women. Only 4% of all the cinematographers were women, the same percentage for 2011 as it was in 2008 (Lauzen, 2011). It is possible that women feel that the very act of taking a job on a film set is one of risk, and they more fully appreciate the embracing the hazards of the film crew career. Women may also feel challenged on a daily basis to prove themselves “worthy” of acceptance in this traditionally male environment. It remains something women may be more keenly aware of than men in this work environment.

There was no indication in the results of any influence on any of the responses based on years in the profession (RQ2: Are years of experience in the business a significant factor in how respondents view their culture?). This can possibly be attributed to the narrow age range of the sample. The majority of the respondents fell into the 41 years and older group. The film crew member career is not one that someone falls into late in life. The conditions are too difficult, the years of apprenticeship experience required to succeed make it a field that one must enter fairly early in their professional life. In these results, the consistency of the age of the sample could imply that they have the same narrow range of years in the field. Further study of a wider age sample may lead to data indicating impact on the results based on professional tenure.

For RQ3: (Is education level a significant factor in how respondents view their culture?), the data showed the most significant influence on the responses by education level. The film

crew career can be described as vocational in nature. No formal education is required to gain entry, crew members are trained on the job and years in the field are what count for one's credentials, as opposed to formal academic markers such as degrees and tenure, for example. It remains an industry that has more in common with the apprenticeship style of passing on skills and information. The data indicate that the response set for Dimension 5 (Loose Control versus Tight Control) and Dimension 6 (Normative versus Pragmatic) showed significant difference in the way the "Other" group ( $n = 8$ ,  $p = 2.6\%$ ) answered the questions. The "Other" group were those cases that self-defined as possessing something other (self-taught, home-schooled, less than high school) than the remaining response choices (high school/no diploma through doctoral degree). Post hoc comparisons using the LSD test indicated that the cases defining themselves as "Other" in their education level had the most radically different response to the questions in Dimension 5 (Loose Control versus Tight Control) and Dimension 6 (Normative versus Pragmatic). Considering the prevalence of film crew members "inheriting" the job – many are third and fourth generation members of the industry – the explanation may be that there was no need for more than a high school education if the plan was to go into the business with a parent or relative who would train them. This lends credence to the observation that getting into a career in the film business as a film crew member is most like an apprenticeship in nature, based on acceptance by group who will train the individual, as opposed to academic or formalized training. It's all on the job.

In an effort to gather more information as to the way this "Other" group had responded, an examination of the three separate questions making up Dimension 6 (Normative versus Pragmatic) was done. To the first statement, "Production management counts every penny - saving money is of paramount importance on a film set," the "Other" respondents disagreed with this statement by a margin of 0.73 or more in the mean. For the second statement, "Being punctual and keeping to the schedule is a high priority when working as a film crew member," this group disagreed by a margin of 0.43 or more in the mean. For the third statement, "The military nature of the hierarchy of a film crew is necessary for it to accomplish its goals," this group disagreed by 0.20 or more in the mean. It is hard to know why this group with the lowest education level would have such a different opinion of the organizational culture of a film crew. It would seem that the life of the set is the same for everyone regardless of educational background, especially since one's education plays little or no role in the accessing of the job or the development of skills once in the organization. Clearly there should be further research into the factor of education level on the opinions of the film crew organization's definition of its work culture. Schein (1990) noted that the "lesson" of the story is not clear if one does not understand the underlying assumptions behind it (p. 112). Delving more deeply into the underlying assumptions that the less educated film crew member brings to the table would hopefully shed some light on this phenomenon.

The limitations for this study would include the narrow definition of the sample (all from the *LA 411*). This kept the age and salary ranges fairly narrow. The average respondent was a white male, 51 years old or older, 15 years or more of professional experience. Although this reads as a narrow sample, it is actually an accurate reflection of the power structure in Hollywood. A study conducted by the Los Angeles Times in February of 2002 determined that the membership of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the group that selects the

Oscar winners, found that of its 5100 members, 94% are white, 77% are male and have a median age of 62 (Horn & Kaufmann, 2012). The sample for this study is narrow but sadly, it is representative of the industry. That being said, it would be interesting to see whether a more diverse sample would lead to different results. The outliers, women and the less traditionally educated in this case, would make for an interesting sample on their own. Their point of view of working in a male-dominated and diversely educated organization is bound to be revealing.

The intent of this study was to arrive at a general and broad profile of the film crew organizational culture, using Hofstede's instrument. The ambiguity of some of the response sets indicates that further refining of the instrument would be advised. Hofstede was researching traditional, corporate-style organizations and the instrument he designed was specific for that group. Indeed, Hofstede has recently amended the instrument just since this study commenced. He has revised the six dimensions and added two new ones in an effort to create a more precise measuring tool (Hofstede, 2011). This work would have to be done for use of this instrument specifically for the film crew organization as well. The revised survey would have to be adapted for a boundaryless career in a project-based industry.

It would also be pertinent to conduct a qualitative research study. It may be a better approach for this artistic and expressive group and its tribal nature. A descriptive qualitative study combined with ethnography is just one of the ways a greater understanding could be developed about this group by applying qualitative techniques. As the reader can judge from this report, the respondents are lively and self-aware in their assessments in the open responses. Respondents in this study rankled at being forced into a multiple-choice answer because they felt that it did not capture the essence of who they are. Digging deeper with this type of methodology would be illuminating.

Another area for closer inspection would be dividing the sample into groups that reflect the hierarchy of the film crew itself. This study was intended as a broad cultural profile of all film crews as an autonomous unit. The next step would be to drill down to the next level. How do prop masters feel in comparison to key grips? Do make-up artists have a significantly different opinion about the military nature of a film crew as compared to the electricians? Other ways to subdivide the group is feature film production versus television narrative production, narrative versus commercial (advertising) production and so on. Managerial approaches for study could include research to determine whether there is a difference in how management perceives the organization compared to how the crew sees it – is there a difference? Does the producer feel differently than the craft service person about the way the organization operates and what its core values are? There is also the long-range perspective warrants examination. A longitudinal study surveying college film students and tracking them as they go into the industry and succeed or choose another path would be an example of the way to not only define the organization and the typical member, but also track this group as the overall employment environment goes through substantial changes. Will the film crew model continue to weather these storms or will they have to change in an effort to stay viable? How does the film student's perception of this organization change over time once they actually participate in it? There are many fascinating ways to create subgroups for study.

Despite these limitations, there is value in this broad profile and its approach. Hofstede's theory survives and thrives. It is continually being revised and improved to reflect the dynamics

of its subjects. These results also serve to shed light on an understudied group and one that has a strong legacy of survival and success for the more than one hundred years of its existence. A study such as this one also provides a baseline for an industry that is undergoing its own upheaval, separate from the world economy. The digital tsunami is underway. The organizational culture of the film crew may change to reflect such sweeping changes in the tools; indeed, the name itself will have to change to reflect the new medium. Will digital production crews work the same way as film crews always have? Will its military nature recede as each crew member feels more empowered than ever in handling even the most technical jobs in a way that was not available on a film-based production? The question arises as to why does the film production organization remains so attractive despite the long hours, hard work and lottery system of advancement? Perhaps it is the better odds in this industry of gaining advancement once one has invested the time and effort. It has a potential payoff that other jobs do not. It may also be the nature of the work itself. It allows the participants to be geographically close to the creativity, if not actually determining the outcome. There is satisfaction enough in supporting the artists who toil on set creatively. Even the craft service provider can feel a sense of ownership, especially when the final product is something so universally popular in modern culture. This reality may make the labor more fun than most jobs and therefore worth the effort and the toleration of a hierarchal and militaristic organizational structure.

For now we have our profile of the film crew organization and its culture. It is results-oriented, both employee and job oriented, and tightly controlled. Its open system is pragmatic and professional. Film crew members love their jobs because they are so unpredictable and challenging. They love the demands of throwing a stunt man off an 80 story building or rigging a car with an interior 360-degree camera. In exchange, production sees to it that their teams are taken care of and attended to as valued employees. As the management team of the film crew, the production staff tightly controls all aspects of the process. Mountains of forms and protocols enable the team to know exactly where it is in its progress, in the overall project schedule, the weekly schedule, and right down to the minutes of the daily schedule. To make all this happen effectively, the team must be pragmatic. The formal definition of pragmatic is something relating to matters of fact or practical affairs often to the exclusion of intellectual or artistic matters: practical as opposed to idealistic. Films crews are both pragmatic and idealistic. They seek practical solutions to artistic and intellectual problems. They have strict rules and break them all the time to accommodate their ever-changing work environments. The organization is open to anyone who wishes to test his or her mettle, yet the industry itself is professional in the best sense of the word. One has to prove oneself under fire and over time. All the training in the world means nothing if you can't cut it as a "pro" on the set.

The study of nontraditional groups can be useful when developing an organizational culture robust enough to survive economic upheaval. The boundary-less career is becoming the norm in this era of rapidly changing workforce profiles. Employees realize they can no longer count on a secure job for life as employers attempt to deal with productivity and profitability during times of crisis. Researchers can learn much from the organizational culture of the film crew, using the data to help organizations reconceptualize roles, revamp goals, and define and redesign organizational structures.

At the heart of the film crew, little has changed since its inception. D.W. Griffith is credited with first calling out the phrase, "Lights, camera, action!" on a Hollywood set in 1910. According to legend, Griffith was frustrated with multiple set problems – actors not hitting their marks, lights burning out, and the cameraman mistakenly putting previously exposed film in the camera. In an effort to organize the workflow, Griffith barked out those three little words and history was made. This same phrase is used on sets today, a testament to the enduring quality of the film crew's organizational culture (Imdb, "D.W. Griffith", n.d.). Griffith would certainly feel at home with today's film crew members. Times may change but "the way we do things around here" does not.

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# THE IMPACT OF PERFORMANCE ATTRIBUTIONS ON ESCALATION OF COMMITMENT

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## ABSTRACT

*This study examines individual biases in the attributions made for a generalized performance related event, and relates those attributional differences to the individual's propensity to escalate their commitment to a failing course of action. Initial results show that causality and internal attributions predict escalation of commitment, whereas stability attributions are only marginally significant predictors of escalation of commitment tendencies. Both theoretical and practical implications are discussed.*

## INTRODUCTION

Escalation of commitment (Aka misguided persistence) has been a salient topic in management research since the seminal work of Staw (1976). People exhibit strong tendencies to become locked into courses of action (Brockner, 1992; Staw, 1997). Individuals must be able to judge when it is appropriate to avoid or abandon tasks or projects (Janoff-Bulman & Brickman, 1982). When they fail to do so, individuals can escalate their commitment to a losing course of action. Escalation of commitment typically manifests itself as the tendency to continue to invest in a losing course of action, particularly when one is personally responsible for the initiation of the failing investment (Staw, 1976). Escalating commitment involves investing time and effort, even when the likelihood of failure is high and perhaps even certain. The causes of escalation of commitment can be found in self-justification, problem framing, sunk costs, goal substitution, self-efficacy, accountability, and illusion of control (Wong, Yik, & Kwong, 2006). Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that escalation of commitment (Moon, 2001; Staw, 1976:1997) can undermine performance (Steel, Brothen, & Wambach, 2001; Wolters, 2003), decision quality (Baumeister, Twenge, & Nuss, 2002; Staw, 1997), and goal setting (Baumeister, Heatherton, & Tice, 1994). However, despite multiple theoretical and empirical advancements and attempts aimed at disentangling the causes and processes behind escalated commitment, we know very little about the attributions people make of their escalated commitment. After a review of the literature we find that attributional biases offer important insights into the causal mechanism that leads people to escalate their commitment to a failing path. Therefore, we will present a review of attribution theory followed by theoretical derived and tested hypotheses about the relationship between performance attributions and misguided persistence.

## ATTRIBUTION THEORY

Originating from Heider's (1958) description of the "naive psychologist", attribution theory attempts to find causal explanations for events and human behaviors. Several models have been developed from this idea, which attempt to explain the process by which these attributions are made in the case of self attribution (e.g. Weiner, 1974; Abramson, Seligman & Teasdale, 1978) and social attributions made regarding the behaviors and outcomes of others (e.g. Kelley, 1973, Thomson and Martinko, 2004).

The attributional model of achievement motivation and emotion has evolved over the past 20 years as an influential theory in social psychology and management (McAuley, Duncan, & Russell, 1992). Weiner (1974), in his development of the achievement motivation model of attributions, classified causal attributions across two dimensions; the locus of causality, and the stability of the cause. The first, locus of causality, originally proposed by Rotter (1966), is the degree to which the attributed cause is internal to the person, or part of the external environment. Internal attributions might include factors such as low intelligence, or lack of attention. External attributions could include weather conditions, or task difficulty. A second dimension, stability, refers to the degree to which the cause remains constant over time. The example of low intelligence would be stable, where the example of lack of attentiveness, would be unstable. Weiner (1979) and Zuckerman and Feldman (1984) added the dimension of controllability to the achievement motivation model. This dimension focused on whether the cause of an event or behavior is controllable or uncontrollable.

McAuley, Duncan and Russell (1992) expanded the concept of controllability by proposing dual dimensions of personal and external control. For personal control, the attributor indicates that he or she either can or cannot personally control the outcome of the event. The external control dimension measures the degree to which the attributor sees the situation as being controllable by anyone else, such as a supervisor or co-worker. Viéla and Iraurgi, (2002) suggest that a response indicating external control is different from a response indicating uncontrollability. This paper proposes that the type of attribution made by an employee across these dimensions is likely to impact an employee's tendency to engage in the negative emotional activity referred to as escalation of commitment.

## ESCALATION OF COMMITMENT

Traditional models of economic rationality posit that resources should be allocated and decisions based on an assessment that the benefits outweigh future costs (Vroom, 1964), yet managers' tendencies to throw "good money after bad" have been well documented and examined from multiple perspectives. There is a strong stream of research that examines misguided persistence from the commitment perspective, recognizing that both behavioral consistency expectations and self-justification processes play an important role when

commitment escalates. According to Staw (1984), self-justification processes play an important role in commitment decisions and therefore can cause commitment to escalate. Self-justification theory postulates that managers will bias their future decisions in order to justify their past behavior. Further, research has shown that managers may selectively filter information from their environment in order to achieve consistency between their past behavior and their current and future decisions. The mechanism underlying self-justification is largely based on self-esteem protection. In other words, inconsistencies in behavior and decision-making present a threat to the decision maker's ego, which the decision maker will try to prevent by aligning past resource allocation decisions with future decisions. This is caused by the decision maker's perceptions of societal and peer expectations.

Escalation of commitment has been studied from different theoretical backgrounds. On the one hand researchers have focused on the characteristics of the task (i.e. sunk cost), while on the other hand researchers have focused on theories of risk (Staw, 1997; Moon, 2001), specifically, escalation of commitment has been studied using prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). It has been found that among other factors, sunk cost, degree of completion, the attractiveness of the outcome, and the record of success or failure play an important role in the decision to escalate commitment (Moon, 2001).

## **HYPOTHESES**

Past studies have looked at the role of internal and external attributions on employee behaviors and decision making (McCormick, 1997, Norris and Niebuhr, 1984). Of particular interest to this study are those that looked at the relationship between attributions and escalation of commitment. In particular, Bateman (1987), found a link between attributions made by powerful others and the subsequent escalation of commitment of subjects. Similarly, Staw (1981) found that escalation of commitment after a failure was highest when the attribution made for the failure was external, unstable and uncontrollable. While the results of his study have been criticized for methodological reasons (Conlon and Wolf, 1980), the basic finding that there was a relationship between attributions and escalation of commitment seem to encourage more research in the area (Bettman and Weitz, 1983). Using the findings of Staw (1981) as a starting point for our research, we hypothesize the following:

- H1: External LOC will be related to higher Escalation of commitment.*
- H2. High stability will be related to lower Escalation of commitment.*
- H3. High external control will be related to higher Escalation of commitment.*
- H4: Low internal control will be related to higher Escalation of commitment.*

## METHOD AND SAMPLE

Participants were 363 students at a regional state university located in the southeastern United States. The sample consisted of graduate and undergraduate students at the university's college of business. We distributed a survey instrument together with a cover letter and consent form. We asked the participants to read the cover letter and sign the consent form, provided they chose to participate. The cover letter explained the study and reiterated the fact that participation was voluntary. We explained that incentives were (or were not) provided at the discretion of the respective course instructor. The participants were also informed that they could discontinue the survey at any time without penalty or loss of reward that they were otherwise entitled to receive. We instructed the participants that they were to treat these questions as they relate to the jobs they currently hold, a job they have held in the past in case they currently did not work, or if they have never worked to treat being a student as their current job. The survey contained the measurement scales as well as questions on demographics of the participants. The participants took the survey during their respective class periods. 99% of the participants returned a usable survey.

Fifty-one point two percent (51.2%) of the participants were female, 47.1% were male; 1.7% did not respond to this question. The average age was between 23 and 25 years of age with 9.9% of the sample age 35 or older. 56.5% were white (non-Hispanic), 30% African-American, 4.7% Hispanic, 3.6% Asian, .6% Native American, and 2.2% specified as "other", 43.3% responded that they had high school diplomas, 11.8% indicated they had associate degrees, 38.9% stated they held a bachelors degree, and 3.9% stated that they had master's degrees. .3% suggested they had doctorates. The average work experience of this sample was 6 years and 5 months. 92.4% of the respondents had at least one year of work experience, 83.6% reported work experience of at least 2 years, 46.4% reported 5 years or more, and 14.8% expressed that they had worked for at least 10 years. We believe that this demographic composition of the sample makes a strong argument for the generalizability of the sample to an average "working" population. The average participant also maintained a 2.9 GPA.

## MEASURES

### Attributions

For the measurement of performance attributions, we used the Causal Dimension Scale II (CDS II), developed by McAuley, Duncan and Russell (1992). The CDS II consists of a 12 questions, which make up 4 scales, with three items per scale, which evaluated the attributional dimensions of (1) locus of causality, (2) external control, (3) stability, and (4) personal control. Reliabilities using the CDS II are generally reported to be high (McAuley, Duncan and Russell,

1992). The reliabilities of the scales in our sample are as follows: Locus of causality  $\alpha = .74$ , external control  $\alpha = .7$ , stability  $\alpha = .6$ , and personal control  $\alpha = .83$

### Escalation of Commitment

Escalation of commitment was assessed with an adaptation of the blank radar plane scenario, which has been established and validated in the literature (Arkes & Blumer, 1985; D.E. Conlon & Garland, 1993; Garland, 1990; Garland & Conlon, 1998). On the basis of the scenario, participants indicated via two questions on a scale of 0 to 100% the extent to which they would continue to pursue the project and invest more resources toward its completion.

### ANALYSIS

We conducted a series of regression analyses to examine the relationships between attribution styles, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions using SPSS. Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations are reported in Table 1.

<b>Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Correlations among all Variables</b>						
	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
Locus of Causality	6.3	1.46	<b>-0.74</b>			
External Control	5.1	1.53	-0.1	<b>-0.7</b>		
Stability	5.3	1.49	.44**	.17**	<b>-0.62</b>	
Personal Control	2.4	1.46	.68**	-.26**	.35**	<b>-0.83</b>
Escalation	61.25	25.14	-0.001	-0.073	0.1	1.09*
Note: Reliabilities (Cronbach's Alphas) are given in parentheses.						
**Correlation is significant at the .01 level.						
*Correlation is significant at the .05 Level.						

The initial results show that, as hypothesized in H1, based on the early tentative findings of Staw(1981) locus of causality is significantly related to escalation of commitment at  $p=.01$ . The standardized path coefficient for the relationship between locus of causality and escalation of commitment was estimated to be  $\beta=-.20$ .

However, unlike Staw's earlier (1981) study, we found no support for H3, which hypothesized that the attribution dimensions External control was related to escalation of commitment.

Interestingly, H2 received some support as the hypothesized relationship was marginally significant at  $p=.06$ . However, while we hypothesized, consistent with Staw's (1981) findings that unstable causes would be more likely to lead to escalation of commitment, the findings are in the opposite direction. We found that stable attributions lead to higher incidence of escalation of commitment.

However, as hypothesized by H4, we also examined the relationship between internal control and escalation of commitment. We found a significant, positive relationship between internal control and increased escalation of commitment. While this is directly opposite of the findings of Staw (1981), we do not find the results surprising. This is entirely consistent with Staw's earlier (1976) assessment that escalation of commitment typically manifests itself as the tendency to continue to invest in a losing course of action, particularly when one is personally responsible for the initiation of the failing investment

<b>Table 2: Regression results</b>				
<b>Regression results with Escalation of Commitment as Dependent Variable</b>				
	$\beta^*$	s.e.	t-value	p-value
Locus of Causality	-0.2	1.4	-2.4	0.017
External Control	-0.06	1.5	-0.955	0.34
Stability	0.121	1.1	1.9	0.06
Personal Control	0.206	0.21	2.5	0.01
*Standardized path coefficient				

## DISCUSSION

While past studies have peripherally included attributions in their examination of the phenomenon of escalation of commitment (Staw 1981, Bateman, 1981 Bettman and Weitz, 1983), few have explicitly questioned the relationship between attributions and escalation of commitment as a main or primary focus. We explicitly ask the question: "Do attributions impact escalation of commitment?" through the use of four hypotheses. Our results explicitly support one of these hypotheses and find a significant, yet in the opposite direction, relationship for two others. The traditional locus of causality dimension was negatively related to escalation of commitment, as we hypothesized. Those who personally placed the responsibility for a specific performance related failure on environmental rather than internal causes were more likely to exhibit escalation of commitment. However, these specific findings highlight the contrast between locus of causality and the construct of internal or external controllability. External locus of causality relates to higher escalation, however, external control (someone else controls your failures and successes) is not statistically related to escalation. In contrast, internal control (you have control over success and failure) is statistically related to escalation. What this suggests is that individuals will be most likely to engage in escalation of commitment if they feel that they generally control their success or failure, but that this particular event is failing due to external causes. Essentially, the high internal controllability leads the individual to believe that they can personally force a positive outcome, in spite of the fact that environmental forces are stacked against them. Related to this, we also found that attributions to stable causes increased escalation of commitment. While this differed from Staw's (1981) findings, it is not inconsistent with the original conception of escalation of commitment. Since escalation of commitment involves



making decisions to achieve consistency with past behaviors, there would be more need psychologically to do this when confronted with a stable cause for failure. The cause would have been present in the same form and therefore factored into the original decision, while in the case of an unstable cause, it would give the decision maker an way to psychologically let themselves “off the hook” in terms of responsibility, as the cause was not already present when the original decision was made.

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# STRATEGIC SEMANTICS: WORD CHOICE ESSENTIALS IN ESTABLISHING A HIGH-PERFORMANCE CULTURE

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## ABSTRACT

*Much has been written and reported about bullies and how to countermand their influence both on the playground and in the workplace. Little attention has been paid to the origin of bullies and the people who contribute to their persistence. This study purports to offer just such an explanation of a phenomenon that is damaging, not only to individuals, but also to the business enterprise culture, long-term potential profitability and overall success.*

## INTRODUCTION

Bullying is not a new phenomenon and it has spawned numerous studies on schoolyard bullies both on the playground and in cyberspace (Swartz, 2005). An extreme case in 1992, a student in Indiana was bullied by classmates over a boy; she was tortured and burned alive (Lohr, 2008). Suicide is another, unfortunately common, response to bullying. A young Canadian soldier committed suicide in 2011, saying in his suicide note that he couldn't take the pain any longer ([www.foxnews.com/world/2012/09/06](http://www.foxnews.com/world/2012/09/06)). A similar case was that of an 18-year-old student who likewise committed suicide when the bullying became intolerable and authorities did nothing to hold the bullies accountable ([drphil.com](http://drphil.com), 2003).

To understand the origin of bullies, there are several definitions that must be established and accepted:

1. Responsibility is the willingness to be held accountable.
2. Accountability is the obligation to justify the use of organizational resources.
3. Authority is the right to control the use of organizational resources.

These definitions are the foundation of the argument presented herein. *Responsibility* is a word that is overused, and therefore easily dismissed. (McCabe, 1989). It is found on nearly every diploma, certificate, and award within the phrase "rights and responsibilities." However, hundreds of thousands of examples exist that show people shirking their responsibilities while exercising their rights. Might such documents hold more weight if they were to say "rights and obligations?" Similarly, it is a daily occurrence to hear, "It's your responsibility to..." or, "I'm

giving you the responsibility to....” Anyone who has worked with an irresponsible person knows the futility of the latter statement.

Since irresponsible people do not want to be held accountable and cannot be given responsibility they don’t possess, it would be folly to delegate authority to them. An irresponsible person who is given authority is an organizationally-created bully. The repercussions are potentially devastating to an organization’s long-term viability. Lawsuits are the most obvious consequence of irresponsible behavior, be they for negligence, gross negligence, fraud, or contributing to someone’s death. That is only a partial list of grievances that follow irresponsibility.

The authors’ insistence on precision in word usage is grounded in semantics. Semantics is the study of meanings imparted by interrelationships of words, phrases, and sentences. “Words are all we have, really,” according to the late comedian George Carlin. (Brown, 2008, p. 1). Books, articles, and commentaries about the importance of words are abundant. Words and their meanings are shaped by people but individuals are also shaped by words.

Two concepts point to establishing clear definitions of words used between and among employees. The first of these is *semantics*, a doctrine aimed at recognizing the essential benefit of using words and symbols appropriate to a desired outcome (Webster, 2009). Finally, *rhetoric* encompasses various writing and/or speaking skills essential to communicating and persuading an audience as to expected behaviors (Webster, 2009).

In the United States, broadcast networks have “Standards and Practices Departments” that are safeguarding the moral, ethical, and legal implications of programs aired by the network. In the 1950s, words such as *pregnant* could not be spoken on the air. This was so even when Lucille Ball was actually pregnant while filming the *I Love Lucy* show. She could be *with child*, or *in a family way*, or *expecting*, but never the single word *pregnant*. (Semonche, 2007; FCC Encyclopedia, 2012).

Hundreds of legal outcomes have been based on the interpretation of a single word. Examples abound, but a few include:

In *Flagship Credit Corporation, v. Indian Harbor Insurance Company* (2012 U.S. App. LEXIS 12201 [5th Cir. Tex., June 15, 2012]) the court’s decision turned on the word: *penalty*. It has yet to receive final disposition. This same issue arose during the Supreme Court debate regarding the Affordable Care Act’s requirements for an individual mandate. (www.foxnews.com, June 28, 2013)

In another case, *United States v. Turkette*, (632 F.2d 896) the decision was affected by a single word: *enterprise*. Mr. Turkette had been convicted under the RICO act of illegal actions that crossed State lines. He sought to have his conviction overturned because the Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act pertained only to legitimate businesses. The decision stated that the language and structure of RICO was

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in concert with legislative history which indicated that Congress intended the term "enterprise" to include all enterprises, both legitimate and illegitimate. (lexisnexis.com)

While these cases do not directly address the issues of authority and responsibility, they do address our fundamental argument: the importance of precision in word choices for effective communication to organizational culture and success.

A pioneer in corporate culture, Smircich (1983), explains the culture as the "glue" emanating from communication patterns that holds a company together. In short, it is "the way we do things around here" (Deal & Kennedy, 2000, pp. 4).

Blake and Mouton (1985) developed a model that is useful in identifying a working atmosphere and the leadership style that engenders it. The atmosphere encompasses a complicated and intricately intermingled vision of the founders, current executives, performance of managers, and company history and expansion. Over time, a system of shared values and common methods of handling crises emerges.

The Blake and Mouton's leadership model avows that most managerial behavior can be described and predicted by considering their preferred approaches to managing. The atmosphere is attributed to the interplay of two facets of managerial concern: people and production (Blake & Mouton, 1985). The *people-oriented* leader will value harmonious goal attainment, investing in career growth. If a managers' concern is for production, they will assist task completion by providing concrete plans and emphasizing efficiency.

Hersey and Blanchard (1972), employing a four-cell model added another variable, called *Follower Readiness*, proposing that the leader isn't the only one whose behavior is operative at any one time. The followers display varying levels of readiness that will affect the successfulness of the leader's actions. These four cells result from the interplay among issues of followers' willingness, ability, and confidence in regard to performance. Thus, the model illustrates the situations (S1-S4) in which leaders and followers interact as well as the most effective behaviors of managers in each situation, recognizing the influence of stages of followers' readiness (R1-R4) on successful task completion.

These two theoretical models are significant as a foundation for further exploration of leader-follower behaviors and the situations generated by these dynamics, or to which the dynamic is in response to a situation. Managers with escalating duties can be found from the bottom to the top of an organization. The manager of an organizational unit determines the quadrant in which various employees should be placed. Following a subjective assessment of follower readiness, the manager then chooses the leadership style most likely to be appropriate for interacting with these employees. The question remains, "Which factor(s) other than leader behaviors and follower readiness create or contribute to less than desirable situations?"

The workplace bully is also the subject of a number of publications, most of which take the usual bureaucratic path to minimizing or extinguishing bullying. Thus, companies are encouraged to:

- a) Devise a bullying policy,
- b) Use third-party climate surveys,
- c) Create investigation procedures, and
- d) Regularly deliver stern, zero-tolerance exhortations from top-level management (McCord & Richardson, 2009).

While these steps might be effective, they overlook important dynamics in the workplace and complicate their resolution. The following model (see Figure 1), “Bullies and Babies Matrix,” proposes that studying the behavior of subordinates, specifically the interaction of someone’s level of responsibility and authority, may provide some answers to the question about the origin of dysfunctional behaviors.

**Figure 1. The Bullies and Babies Matrix**



Many people have suffered the frustration that comes with having virtually no authority but a high level of responsibility (willingness to be held accountable). A Victim will, without authorization, undertake tasks that are clearly needed, but successful completion is either ignored or someone else is in a position to take the credit for it. Alternatively, if the Victim goes out on a limb to manage a problem and fails, the person is reminded that he/she has no authority to attempt the task and should not have undertaken it. Many of a company’s best employees are found in this quadrant and most of them will seek other employment. Two other outcomes are: 1) Victims become babies, by no longer volunteering to stay late, helping coworkers, or working extra shifts, or 2) Just as people will “parent” the way they were parented, so too people tend to manage the way they have been managed. Victims are given more authority but, after years of being bullied, become Bullies themselves. Observing the behavior of a Victim and gradually increasing authority can help the Victim move upward into the Adult quadrant (which is explained below).

Managers create bullies by granting too much authority to an irresponsible person. Irresponsible people are not willing to be held accountable for anything. They always have a plausible excuse for failure, and rarely give credit to employees who deserve it. Terms that are used by a bully’s subordinates are used to describe this kind of person are: unreliable, dishonest, untrustworthy, and fraudulent. Reduce the amount of authority wielded by a Bully, and he/she

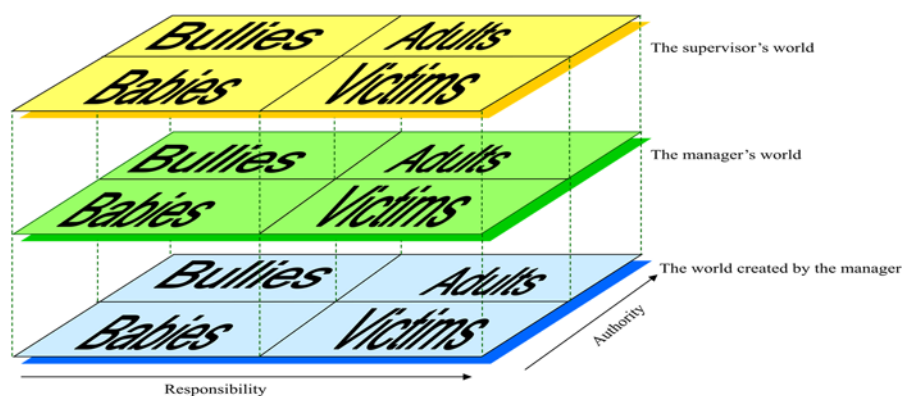
becomes a Baby with authority granted only in the amount that can be used to handle small tasks successfully.

A Baby is an employee who has very little authority because they also lack responsibility, not always by choice. Babies may be very young, inexperienced employees who have rarely been allowed to make decisions. They may also be former Bullies who have been demoted, or Victims who decided to stop trying to “help” because they were discouraged from, or punished for, doing so. A manager can be directive with Babies, giving them small tasks that gradually increase in importance. To help Babies develop a healthy willingness to be creative and to be held accountable, they need to be taught that failures are learning experiences. It is important to match the level of authority with the level of responsibility displayed by the Baby. Failure to do so will create either a Bully or a Victim.

In every case, a manager’s goal should be to assist employees to become on-the-job Adults. The only thing suggested for managers’ interaction with Adults is, once mutually acceptable goals and authority to command adequate resources are established, is *get out of their way!* They were hired for specific jobs, and they should be trusted to perform their jobs and exercise appropriate authority.

This model can be expanded into another dimension, showing the matrix created by a manager, that created by the manager’s supervisor, and the matrix in which that supervisor works (See figure 2). At each level, there are people who may populate each quadrant. A supervisor may have a bully for a manager and believe that bullying is the only way to accomplish goals. It may be that a manager has never had a role model with an empowering style. It is suggested that a healthy company can be a maximally successful and sustainable organization if the goal is to employ and celebrate Adults throughout its ranks.

**Figure 2. The Expanded Bullies and Babies Matrix**



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# THE ROLE OF INGRATIATION IN HEIGHTENING SUSPICION

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## Abstract

*In June 2013, Paula Deen's empire crumbled. Between the dates of June 20<sup>th</sup> and June 28<sup>th</sup>, both the famous cook's reputation and financial success suffered severe blows. Following an interview with Matt Lauer on the Today Show where Deen was not only asked why she used particular discriminatory language years ago but also was questioned as to why she was now seeking forgiveness for the use of that language, ten business partners severed their ties with her. Prior to and during the interview Deen attempted to provide a defense to mounting accusations through story-telling and by acting in a manner she apparently believed would make her likeable. She recounted stories of past happy visits to the Today Show and at one point reached out to physically touch Lauer. Although the news story had been brewing for several days, within hours of the June 26<sup>th</sup> NBC broadcast Random House, Target, Wal-Mart, Sears, JC Penney, Home Depot, Caesars, Smithfield Foods, Novo Nordisk and QVC announced the end of their lucrative deals with Paula Deen.*

*The above vignette provides an example of the interplay of suspicion, ingratiation and correspondence bias. After the initial news broke on June 20, 2013, Paula Deen fell under the shadow of suspicion. Despite Deen's attempt to ingratiate herself to interested parties during the days that followed, it appears that while inferences about her behavior were suspended, ultimately the correspondence bias played out for some corporate sponsors. This paper proposes that while suspicion underlying a target's behavior is an antidote to the correspondence bias, suspicion may be heightened when perceivers observe the target of their suspicion employing the ingratiation tactic. A temporal model of attributional processing is presented that incorporates suspicion and ingratiation.*

**Keywords** Suspicion, Ingratiation, Correspondence Bias, Influence Tactics, Attribution Theory

## INTRODUCTION

Perhaps you missed one of the most talked about news stories in the summer of 2013. If that is the case you merely did not witness how someone who was incredibly successful in the business arena was unsuccessful in staving off suspicions about her behavior. There is a common curiosity that all people share in the desire to know how to make sense of human behavior. We want to understand the behavior of our colleagues, family, neighbors and even a celebrity chef like Paula Deen. Attribution theory and correspondence bias explain how people attempt to understand another's behavior. According to attribution theory people attempt to understand why others do what they do by examining the person's dispositional tendencies and the contextual factors of the situation. A determination is made that the behavior was either the result of individual choice or caused by the situation (Heider, 1958). Although researchers first began writing about attribution theory over half a century ago, interest continues today as current literature reveals an attempt to launch this theory as an integral component of motivation (Eberly, Holley, et al 2011). Correspondence bias occurs when people attribute the target's behavior disproportionately to that person's unique disposition and pay less attention to the situational influences that may have impacted the target (Gilbert & Malone, 1995). This particular finding is so robust that it has also been labeled the fundamental attribution error (Ross, Amabile & Steinmetz, 1977).

However, an antidote to the correspondence bias is observed when suspicion of the target is present. When perceivers are suspicious of the target's behavior, they do not automatically conclude the behavior is the result of personal disposition but rather engage in cognitive labor to consider possible rival alternative explanations for the behavior. (Echebarria-Echabe, 2010, Fein & Hilton, 1994, Marchand & Vonk, 2005). This cognitive energy is expended when people are more interested in learning about the situation rather than the actor (Krull, 1993).

Of particular interest is the role that ingratiation plays in alerting people to the target's actions when suspicion is present. Ingratiation is an influence tactic where one acts in a friendly manner using tools such as flattery and compliments in order to put the perceiver of ingratiation in a good mood as well as invoking camaraderie and willingness to conform to the ingratiator's wishes. (Vonk, 1999, Yukl & Tracey, 1992). However, because perceivers already harbor suspicion about the target they are highly attentive processors of information and actions of ingratiation may only serve to increase suspicion. Suspicious perceivers engage in a sophisticated analysis of the target's behavior that departs from standard cognitive processing (Fein & Hilton, 1994).

Therefore this paper posits that while targets may attempt to influence perceivers by means of ingratiation, this strategy may be dashed. Any behavior that the target engages in while in the shadow of suspicion is critically analyzed and scrutinized. Any error made by the target is

very costly in terms of perception and ultimately whether the perceivers' suspicions are confirmed or rejected. Moreover, ingratiation can sometimes be viewed as manipulative and therefore a target under suspicion should proceed with caution (Yukl & Tracey, 1992). This paper opens the door to increased understanding of the interplay of the correspondence bias, suspicion and the ingratiation influence tactic and presents a temporal model of attributional processing.

## **CORRESPONDENCE BIAS**

Researchers have spent decades attempting to disentangle correspondence bias in the pursuit of gaining knowledge about how people come to understand human behavior. The correspondence bias has been typically tested in experimental design using college students but recently was found to be present in a national representative sample of American adults (Bauman & Skitka, 2010). Moreover, other recent research found evidence of the correspondence bias in experiments conducted with students from Taiwan and China that established the effect exists in both individualist and collectivist cultures (Krull, et. al, 1999). Taken together, this recent research provides evidence that although we live in an age filled with technological advancements that keep the world just a few keystrokes away, people still tend to take human behavior at face value.

## **SUSPICION**

Research that first offered an antidote to the correspondence bias found that suspicion of ulterior motives will cause subjects to suspend decisions attributing behavior to the target's disposition. (Fein, Hilton and Miller, 1990). The method employed a familiar scenario within attribution theory research in that subjects were to read speeches written in favor of or opposing a highly debated topic and decide whether the speech reflected the true attitude of the author. The experiments, however, included a unique twist in that subjects were either informed or not informed that the author could have had ulterior motives for writing the speech.

The presence of an ulterior motive was manipulated in the first study by indicating that a student could ingratiate himself to his professor who is to decide whether or not to continue the student's internship. The student can ingratiate himself to his professor by choosing to write the speech in a pro-proposition or anti-proposition manner to directly agree with the professor's attitude that has been made known to the student. The results of the first study indicate that subjects showed correspondence bias in the condition where no ulterior motive existed. Correspondence bias did not emerge in the condition where subjects ascertained that the student could have chosen to write the speech in an attempt to ingratiate himself to his professor.

In the second study, two conditions exist, with one condition being that subjects were to read speeches and decide whether the speech reflected the true attitude of the author. The second condition was constructed so that the target could choose to write a speech supporting or opposing proposition to disfavor himself from a potential employer of an undesirable job. The results were similar to the results obtained in study one which reflected that subjects did not show correspondence bias when contextual information suggested that the target could have more than one motive for writing the speech in the manner the target chose.

Study three contains a different dimension in that subjects were given additional information that would disambiguate the target's motives. In other words, when the 4th condition included alternative motives for the target's behavior, subsequent information was given that removed the likelihood of the alternative motive. The subsequent information appeared to remove subject's suspension of attributing behavior to unique personal dispositions because the correspondence bias appeared. Subjects' responses showed no difference between the condition where no ulterior motive was present and when an ulterior motive was present because the ulterior motive had been ruled out by attending to the additional information.

More recent research indicates that suspicion is a process (Marchand & Vonk, 2005). Results from the study show that when perceivers have reason to suspect ulterior motives, suspicion increases as more information is received about the target.

Another study found that suspicion caused a disruption in systematic processing of a persuasive message (Echebarria-Echabe, 2010). In the high suspicion condition versus the low suspicion condition, subjects were found to report negative thoughts and reject acceptance of the persuasive message.

In summary, research has established that suspicious perceivers are highly attentive information processors and additional information received regarding the target of suspicion may in fact increase the level of suspicion and arouse a negative assessment of the target.

## **INGRATIATION**

Research on influence tactics has traditionally been conducted to determine how often and what particular kinds of influence tactics are used in the workplace. A recent meta-analysis of influence and work outcomes indicates that ingratiation and rationality have positive effects on work outcomes (Higgins, Judge & Ferris 2003). Other research suggests that ingratiation is linked to the appointment of a position on a board of directors (Westphal & Stern, 2007). Taken together this research on ingratiation points to positive outcomes associated with the use of the ingratiation tactic.

This stands in contrast to an earlier research document that employed a field study to investigate the consequences of nine different influence tactics. The nine influence tactics

studied were rational persuasion, inspirational appeal, consultation, exchange, personal appeal, coalition, legitimating, pressure and ingratiation. A table of the nine influence tactics with a description and example of the tactic is shown here.

<b>Table 1. Influence Tactics</b>		
<b>Influence Tactic</b>	<b>Basis of Influence</b>	<b>Example</b>
Legitimacy	Authority and position in the organization	"As your supervisor I am asking you to work overtime on Friday."
Rational Persuasion	Facts and logical reasoning	"Based on three years of excellent safety inspection data, I recommend the steel reinforced design."
Inspirational Appeals	Emotions and aspirations	"Take my advice and your dreams of success will come true."
Consultation	Inclusion in decision making	"Can you choose the media outlet that you think would work best for our new advertising campaign?"
Exchange	Rewards and favors	"If you will agree to finish the project early I can get you a backstage pass."
Personal Appeals	Friendship and loyalty	"I have known you since we helped each other get through boot camp."
Ingratiation	Flattery and praise	"I think you are such a great manager because you are an excellent listener."
Pressure	Demands and threats	"If you do not what I ask of you today I won't be able to help you in the future."
Coalition	Support of others	"All of your colleagues have already voted in favor of the new policy."

According to theory regarding influence processes, tactics that are likely to cause internalization of favorable attitudes about the request such as consultation, rational persuasion, and inspirational appeal, ought to be more successful than influence tactics which cause behavioral compliance without changing target's attitudes (Kelman, 1958).

Yukl and Tracey (1992) found that the tactics rational persuasion, inspirational appeal and consultation showed significant correlation with managerial effectiveness while all other

tactics (including ingratiation) showed non-significant to negative correlations. Ingratiation was also found to be only moderately effective for influencing subordinates and peers and ineffective for influencing superiors with regard to task commitment. Yukl and Tracey (1992) conclude that ingratiation is perhaps more effective over a long term influencing strategy although it can sometimes be perceived as manipulative.

## INTERPLAY

While it is clear that some research points to the positive effects of ingratiation, it is important to note that these effects were measured without targets being in the shadow of suspicion. Westphal and Stern (2007) measured three scales of ingratiation; opinion conformity, other enhancement and favor rendering. The meta-analysis research on ingratiation was clearly linked to organizational outcomes such as performance assessments, and extrinsic success such as salaries and promotions (Higgins, Judge & Ferris, 2003). This paper proposes that when a target is under the shadow of suspicion the positive effects of the ingratiation influence tactic may fall away.

Marchand and Vonk (2005) propose that suspicion is a process. As previously stated, once perceivers become aware that ulterior motives could account for one's behavior, suspicion becomes a part of attributional decision making. Moreover, suspicion is found to increase as additional information is gathered about the target.

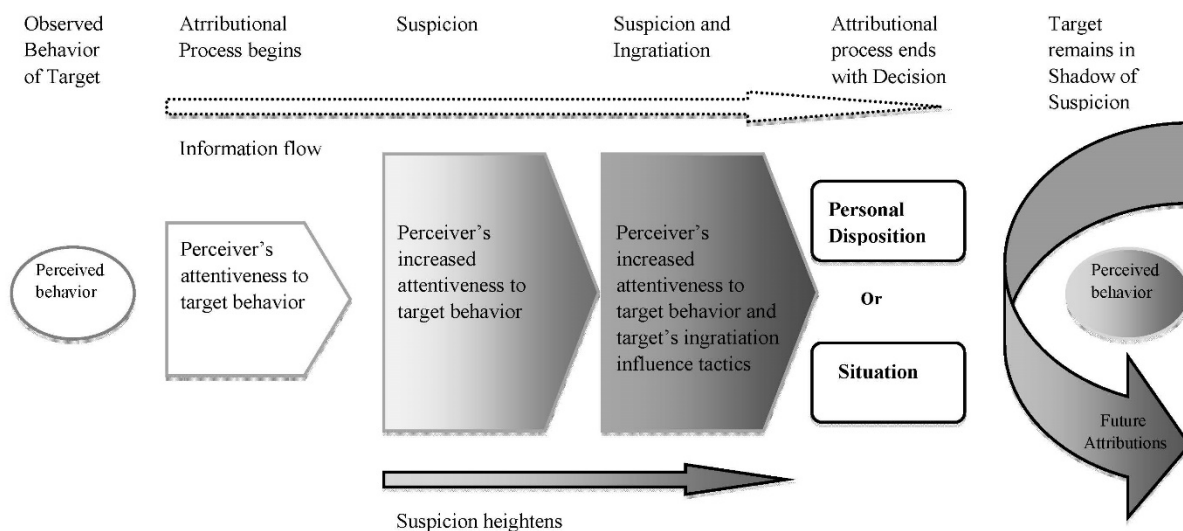
A temporal model of attributional processing with suspicion shows the perceiver's attention to the target's behavior increases as more information is received. In the perceiver's state of increased attention to target behavior there is little room for error. In other words the target must be extremely careful to act in ways that enhance the perceiver's view of them.

Therefore the target may be tempted to engage in ingratiation tactics. However, because ingratiation can sometimes be viewed as manipulative, the tactics may fail. Moreover, regardless of whether the perceiver ultimately decides that the initial observed behavior was due to personal disposition or the situation, the presence of suspicion during the attributional process results in the target remaining in the shadow of suspicion. Thus future attributions of the target are "shaded" by past behavior that included suspicion and ingratiation influence tactics.

Fein, Hilton and Miller (1990) found that subjects suspended decisions about behavior when suspicions about the motivation of the behavior were present. The possibility exists that targets of the ingratiation influence tactics suspend their decisions about the behavior of the one who is attempting to influence them. Perhaps the reason that Yukl and Tracey (1992) found that the ingratiation influence tactic produced nonsignificant findings about a manager's effectiveness is that those who are the target of the influence attempt become suspicious of the manager's

behavior. The target suspends a decision about the manager's effectiveness because they are suspicious of the flattery or compliment analogous with the ingratiation tactic.

**Figure 1. Temporal Model of Attributional Processing with Suspicion**



Krull (1993) concluded that examining social phenomena outside the laboratory might help us gain more knowledge about when perceivers will attend to the situation more than to behavior when making social inferences. In addition, Krull (1993) suggests that prior knowledge and the perceiver's goal in learning more about a situation may influence social inference. This finding could account for Yukl and Tracey's (1992) results that showed that ingratiation is only moderately effective for task commitment. Perhaps those who are targets of ingratiation tactics recall prior ingratiation tactics and situations and conclude that the flattery or compliment received in the past was used only to get him or her to commit to the task. The target may come to learn that ingratiation is merely a guise and the target is then not enticed to engage in task commitment. Perhaps Krull's (1993) insights and the Yukl and Tracey (1992) research results together suggest that in order for the ingratiation tactic to be more than moderately effective, it should be used sparingly and with care.

## CONCLUSION

Although considerable research has been conducted on correspondence bias, suspicion and ingratiation over the past several years, to the best of the author's knowledge, this is the first paper to specifically propose a model to represent the interplay of all three constructs. This model may prove to be of interest to both researchers in social psychology and managers. Research on correspondence bias has laid the concrete foundation that people consistently attribute one's behavior to their personal disposition. However, when suspicion is present, perceivers suspend this decision and become highly attentive to the actions of the target. When the perceivers observe the target is engaging in ingratiation, suspicion is likely increased. In this increased level of suspicion perceivers will more likely thoroughly analyze and inspect the target's action than in a lower level of suspicion. Therefore there is little room for mistakes and blunders on the side of the target. Although the attribution about the person's behavior may still be ascertained to be a personal disposition, the negative effect of the increased suspicion may result in negative assessments of the target. Similar to what Paula Deen experienced in terms of financial loss it still remains to be seen whether she can recover her public persona. It appears that while Paula was in the shadow of suspicion, her financial partners were waiting to determine whether her actions were internally or externally caused. Deen's activities of YouTube videos in general and her Today Show interview in particular were under extreme scrutiny and as this paper proposes, an increased level of suspicion. One could speculate that when Deen attempted to engage in ingratiation, her tactics failed to successfully satisfy her corporate sponsors need to have their suspicions nullified. In fact, Fein & Hilton (1994) found that the relationship between the target and perceiver plays an important role. If perceivers have reason to suspect that the target could deceive them and that the perceivers would then have to pay a price for that deception, they are likely to doubt the sincerity of the target. One can only propose that Deen's corporate sponsors did in fact have enough reason to suspect being deceived and decided the price of maintaining the relationship was literally too high.

The purpose of this paper was to propose that the interplay of ingratiation, suspicion and the correspondence bias help explain human behavior. Ultimately research in this vein will lead to increased understanding about findings on the effectiveness of the ingratiation influence tactic. Gaining knowledge about influence tactics may have managerial implications such that managers may learn why and in what situations certain influence tactics are more effective than others.



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# **A COMPARISON OF PROCESSES USED BY BUSINESS EXECUTIVES AND UNIVERSITY BUSINESS COMMUNICATION TEACHERS TO EVALUATE SELECTED BUSINESS DOCUMENTS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Business communication instructors as well as business communication textbook writers generally agree on common principles for writing business documents. Message content and arrangement, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and other mechanical writing issues are all deemed important. Do business executives' views of these principles match the views of instructors and writers? Two writing cases were developed for evaluation by a selected group of executives and business communication teachers. Their assessments were compared statistically for points of agreement and disagreement.*

## **BACKGROUND**

Business communication teachers have long subscribed to the idea that specific principles should be applied when tackling various communication tasks. One theory is that business message arrangement directly affects the receiver's reaction to the message. Positive or neutral messages, for example, are arranged with the main idea presented early in the message, typically in the first sentence. Negative messages, on the other hand, are introduced with a neutral or positive statement that "buffers" the information that follows. With few exceptions, these concepts apply to written and spoken messages, both internal and external to the organization. Business communication teachers also place considerable emphasis on correct document format and mechanical issues such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

A review of current as well as older business communication textbooks will reveal similar principles being advocated by each author. Lewis and Adams (2003) mentioned several commonalities among these principles, such as ". . . 'C' qualities—conciseness, correctness, coherence, completeness, courtesy, clearness, and conversational tone" (p. 51). They cited ". . . other commonly accepted writing principles . . . using positive wording, buffering negative news, writing short sentences with simple words, avoiding passive voice, and applying ethical standards to all communications" (p. 51). Carbone (1994) noted that the "you attitude," a principle included universally in collegiate business communication textbooks and taught in college classes throughout the United States, was promoted in the early 20th Century. Hagge

(1989) asserted that business writing principles subscribed to today have actually been around for decades, and in some cases, centuries.

Advances in communication technology have changed the way many executives communicate today. Electronic mail, texting, and more recently, “tweeting,” dictate to some degree what is included in messages. Shortened messages may not permit inclusion of all accepted writing principles, and technology enthusiasts are prone to become lax in their writing. Even so, Gantenbein (2000) suggests that business writers should still be mindful of correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling in their electronic messages, the same as they would for traditional messages. Nordquist (n.d.) adds that “Business writing legitimately varies from the conversational style you might use in a note sent by e-mail to the formal, legalistic style found in contracts. In most e-mail messages, letters, and memos, a style between the two extremes generally is appropriate” (p. 1).

## **PURPOSE**

Communication principles described in textbooks and taught in collegiate classrooms can be easily identified; however, one might question whether business executives advocate and incorporate these principles in their own documents. The purpose of this study was to determine whether business executives view message arrangement, format, grammar, spelling, and punctuation with the same degree of importance as business communication teachers.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Cases were developed for two writing assignments, and a sample solution for each case was written. Case No. 1 required a “negative news” message to a credit applicant. Case No. 2 was a “positive news” message accepting a speaking invitation. Appendices A and B contain the problem solutions for Cases 1 and 2, respectively.

The cases and sample solutions were sent to a convenience sample of business people throughout Tennessee. “A convenience sample is a group of individuals who (conveniently) are available for study” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, p. 98). For example, the attendees of an organization’s annual conference assembled for a keynote presentation would represent a “convenience” sample. The selected participant pool for this research consisted of business men and women who had worked with one of the researchers over a 20-year period in placing cooperative education students. Selected executives were queried as to their willingness to participate. Of the 100 executives who were sent materials, 77 returned completed evaluation forms.

The same cases and solutions were sent to a purposive sample of business communication teachers. With purposive sampling, “. . . researchers do not simply study whoever is available but rather use their judgment to select a sample that they believe, based on

prior information, will provide the data they need” (p. 99). College and university instructors known to teach business communication courses comprised this segment of participants. Twenty instructors were surveyed; 15 returned usable evaluation forms.

An evaluation form designed in Likert-scale format was developed. Appendix C provides a sample portion of the form. Participants were asked to read each case and evaluate the corresponding response based on five characteristics: content arrangement, letter format, grammar, spelling, and punctuation. To avoid “leading” participants to conclusions about any aspects of the letters, no specific grading criteria were provided. Participants were instructed to mark their evaluations on a scale of 1 “poorly written” to 10 “well written.”

## FINDINGS

The Mann-Whitney Test was run to identify differences in attitudes of executives versus business communication teachers for the five areas: content arrangement, format, grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Table 1 provides results for Case No. 1. This case was a letter refusing credit to an individual. Business communication textbook writers and teachers alike ordinarily suggest beginning a “negative news” message with a buffer to cushion the news. Explanations then follow with the negative news either implied or stated outright. The message is closed with a positive statement. Case No. 1 was written intentionally to violate these principles. Likewise, format, grammar, spelling, and punctuation problems were incorporated into the case. With the exception of *content arrangement*, executives and teachers did not differ significantly in their assessment of the case solution. The median score (7.000) for executives indicated general approval of the arrangement while the teachers’ median score (2.000) showed overall disapproval.

<b>Table 1: Case No. 1—Negative News Message (Mann-Whitney Test)</b>			
<b>Quality Measured</b>	<b>Executives (Median Score)</b>	<b>Teachers (Median Score)</b>	<b>Mann-Whitney (Significance)</b>
Content Arrangement	7.000	2.000	0.000
Document Format	8.000	7.000	0.824
Grammar	8.000	8.000	0.421
Spelling	9.000	10.000	0.346
Punctuation	8.000	7.000	0.133

Table 2 shows the results for Case No. 2, which required the writer to accept a speaking invitation. Teachers typically stress that “yes” or “positive news” messages should be written deductively, i.e., the good news is delivered in the first sentence. Explanations follow, and the message is closed positively. The solution for this case purposely did not reveal the acceptance until near the end of the message. As with Case No. 1, mistakes in formatting, grammar, spelling,

and punctuation were “planted” to determine their relevance to research participants. Significant differences were found for *document formatting* and *punctuation*. For those two items, median scores differed by only one point. However, the difference may be explained, for example, by a “low” 8.000 for the executives and a “high” 9.000 for teachers with regard to document formatting. Similarly, executives’ median score (9.000) for punctuation might actually be at the low end of the range, causing a statistically significant yet small difference.

<b>Table 2: Case No. 2—Positive News Message (Mann-Whitney Test)</b>			
<b>Quality Measured</b>	<b>Executives (Median Score)</b>	<b>Teachers (Median Score)</b>	<b>Mann-Whitney (Significance)</b>
Content Arrangement	7.000	6.000	0.082
Document Format	8.000	9.000	0.004
Grammar	8.000	8.000	0.623
Spelling	9.000	10.000	0.255
Punctuation	9.000	10.000	0.046

To reinforce results of the Mann-Whitney Test, a Two-Sample T-Test was performed. Knapp (1990) addressed the controversy of treating ordinal scales as interval scales, and his commentary presented pros and cons from various authors for doing such. Knapp quoted multiple authors “. . .who have shown empirically that it matters little if an ordinal scale is treated as an interval scale” (p. 122).

Table 3 presents the results for Case No. 1. Results for the two statistical procedures compared favorably. The Two-Sample T-Test showed significant differences for only one item—content arrangement. The executives’ mean score (6.47) indicated little resistance to beginning negative messages with the negative news. Conversely, the teachers’ mean score (2.40) suggested they were averse to beginning the message in this fashion.

<b>Table 3: Case No. 1—Negative News Message (Two-Sample T-Test)</b>					
<b>Quality Measured</b>	<b>Executives (Mean Score)</b>	<b>Executives (Std. Dev.)</b>	<b>Teachers (Mean Score)</b>	<b>Teachers (Std. Dev.)</b>	<b>P-Value</b>
Content Arrangement	6.47	2.40	3.07	1.94	0.000
Document Format	6.96	2.28	6.80	2.60	0.807
Grammar	6.92	2.28	7.47	1.96	0.390
Spelling	8.78	1.64	9.20	1.21	0.349
Punctuation	7.66	1.89	7.07	1.62	0.257

Two-Sample T-Test results for Case No. 2 did not mirror exactly the results for the Mann-Whitney Test; however, there were close similarities. Table 4 reveals a marginal difference between executives and teachers with regard to content arrangement. The P-Value for

document format reveals a significant difference in the two groups, which was also true when the Mann-Whitney Test was applied. Punctuation, which varied significantly with the Mann-Whitney Test, was not found significantly different with the T-Test.

<b>Table 4: Case No. 2—Positive News Message (Two-Sample T-Test)</b>					
<b>Quality Measured</b>	<b>Executives (Mean Score)</b>	<b>Executives (Std. Dev.)</b>	<b>Teachers (Mean Score)</b>	<b>Teachers (Std. Dev.)</b>	<b>P-Value</b>
Content Arrangement	6.96	2.44	5.53	3.04	0.050
Document Format	7.55	2.16	9.13	1.06	0.007
Grammar	7.92	1.76	7.93	1.33	0.980
Spelling	8.80	1.63	9.07	1.83	0.576
Punctuation	8.37	1.61	9.20	1.01	0.057

## CONCLUSION

Based on data gathered through evaluative research of business documents, business executives appear to place less emphasis on document content arrangement than do business communication instructors and textbook authors. For documents relaying bad news, executives seem to be more accepting of a straightforward approach, i.e., opening the message with bad news. Instructors, on the other hand, seem to cling to the long-standing principle that bad news should be buffered and explained prior to delivery.

The view that business executives place less emphasis on content arrangement was solidified by their assessment of the positive news message. A mean score of 6.96 (T-Test) on this item showed a small but statistically significant difference with teachers (5.53). This finding revealed that stating positive news at the beginning of a message was not critical to executives.

## APPLICATION

For business communication teachers, these findings suggest that emphasis on content arrangement may not be as critical as was once thought, particularly in the viewpoint of business executives. Although the findings do not show executives' aversion to stating bad news early in a message, the data likewise do not necessarily suggest that executives oppose buffering negative news. Thus, teachers might continue to recommend delaying bad news but not with the same intensity as was previously thought.

Document format appeared to be more important to teachers than to executives. Hence, teachers might evaluate their attitude toward this aspect with an eye toward more emphasis on message content and less on document format. Correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation

should continue to be encouraged in business communication classes since executives and teachers alike agreed on the importance of these items.

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## APPENDIX A—NEGATIVE NEWS LETTER

**R & L Building Supply, Inc.  
2800 Saddle Boulevard  
Lascassas, Tennessee 37084**

615.273.8000

R&LBuilding.com

615.273.8005 Fax

*Serving the Greater Lascassas Area since 1953*

August 31, 2012

Seth Penman  
Penman Contracting  
8120 Lakeview Dr.  
Lascassas, Tn. 37085

Dear Seth,

We regret to inform you that we cannot approve your line of credit at this time. Although a credit check showed you have been consistent in repaying borrowed funds we just don't think extension of a line of credit at this time is a practical action for you or us.

In addition to a thorough credit check, we consider other factors as well when making credit decisions. For example, we review things such as the overall economy and commercial activity specific to the customers' business. In your case, we also looked at sales of new and established homes in your area. The timing just does not seem right for new home construction.

We appreciate your consideration of our company and are sorry that we cannot extend credit at this time. However, we look forward to doing future business with you on a cash basis. Please let us know how we can assist you in providing all of your needs for construction supplies.

Sincerely,

**Shayne Vinson**

Shayne Vinson, Finance Director  
Commercial Accounts

## APPENDIX B—POSITIVE NEWS LETTER

*City of Mellville, Tennessee  
Mellville Municipal Building  
One Public Square  
Mellville, TN 37136*

615-807-2525

[www.VisitMellville.com](http://www.VisitMellville.com)

*Mayor Robert Sylvin*

*Deputy Mayor Jan Simpkins*

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August 31, 2012

Mr. Ben Rohman  
2603 Regency Street  
Mellville, TN 37135

Dear Mr. Rohman:

Thank you for asking me to speak to the local Rotary Club on Nov. 15. The Rotary Club is well known in this area for their work with youth.

Little League Baseball, which your organization sponsors, provides an excellent physical outlet for many children that might not otherwise have an opportunity to play an organized sport. I commend the Rotary Club for its involvement.

I am pleased to accept your invitation to speak at your meeting. To ensure that the session runs smoothly, I will arrive at approximately 5:15 p.m. to set up and check equipment. Please have a projection screen and projector table available. I will bring my laptop computer and portable projector for showing PowerPoint slides.

The title for my presentation will be: "Children and Sports—The Health Connection." You and your fellow Rotarians no doubt recognize the need for youth to become active if they are to grow to be healthy adults. This is especially true in an age of "electronic gadgetry" where kids often spend too much time playing video games and not enough time in physical activity. Inactivity of youth has lead to obesity and other health issues in our nation, and this has been well publicized in the media.

If there should be any changes in your plans, please do not hesitate to contact me here at the office. Otherwise, I look forward to sharing with you and your members on November 15.

Sincerely,

Jan Simpkins

Jan Simpkins  
Deputy Mayor

## APPENDIX C—EVALUATION FORMS

### Letter No. 1 (to Mr. Seth Penman)

Using whatever criteria you feel appropriate, rank Letter 1 in the following categories (circle your response):  
(Provide any written comments on the back of this form.)

	Poorly Written									Well Written
Content arrangement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Letter format	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Grammar	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Spelling	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Punctuation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

### Letter No. 2 (to Mr. Ben Rohman)

Using whatever criteria you feel appropriate, rank Letter 2 in the following categories (circle your response):  
(Provide any written comments on the back of this form.)

	Poorly Written									Well Written
Content arrangement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Letter format	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Grammar	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Spelling	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Punctuation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10



# EFFECTS OF GENDER SIMILARITY/DISSIMILARITY, GENDER STEREOTYPING AND CULTURE ON PERCEIVED SERVICE QUALITY

Musa Pinar, Valparaiso University  
Lee Schiffel, Valparaiso University  
Sandy Strasser, Valparaiso University  
James M. Stück, Valparaiso University

## ABSTRACT

*Do men and women have a preference to be waited on by either a male or a female service provider? Do these gender preferences change from industry to industry and from culture to culture? This paper investigates whether customers perceive better service from same-gender service providers—similarity attraction theory—or from opposite-gender service providers—flirting theory. It also analyzes how occupational stereotyping and differing cultural values impact the gender effect and influence perceived quality of service. Based on 497 respondents from ten service industries in Turkey and the U.S., this exploratory study found that gender differences between customers and service providers had no significant impact on perceived service quality. The results, however, did show that both occupational stereotyping and cultural differences significantly affected perceived service quality. The paper concludes with a discussion of the managerial implications of these findings.*

**Keywords:** *Gender Effect, Similarity Attraction, Flirting, Services, Culture, and Gender*

## INTRODUCTION

During the past several decades, one of the significant trends in the business world is that more women have joined the work force in both developed and developing nations. This has triggered a new stream of research to examine the potential effects of gender on such issues as recruiting, selling effectiveness and sales performance, and service quality and service outcomes. The main goal of this stream of research is to investigate whether gender similarity or dissimilarity of a recruiter and applicant, buyer and salesperson, or customer and service provider had any impact on performance and/or outcome. The underlying logic is that same-gender relationships seem to be associated with greater relationship investment, more open communication, and greater trust and satisfaction within relationships that could influence the outcome of business decisions and/or relationships (Crosby *et al.*, 1990). For example, in recruiting, researchers have shown that gender and gender-role stereotyping can influence hiring

decisions (Gallois *et al.*, 1992) and/or can impact hiring recommendations (Zebrowitz *et al.*, 1991). Some other studies also covered the gender effect in such areas as accounting (Hardin *et al.*, 2002), academic hiring and tenure policies (Steinpreis *et al.*, 1999), symphony orchestras (Seltzer, 1989), banking (Fernandez & Weinberg, 1997), and restaurant hiring practices (Neumark *et al.*, 1996).

While some studies suggest benefits of matching buyer/seller gender (Churchill *et al.*, 1997), other studies demonstrate no such benefit (Dwyer *et al.*, 1998; Jones *et al.*, 1998). Research dealing with the gender effect on sales performance (Crosby *et al.*, 1990; Smith, 1998) indicates that gender similarity between the salesperson and customer is positively related to the quality of their relationship, and ultimately to sales performance. However, Dwyer *et al.* (1998) found no gender similarity effect; the male-female and female-male mismatched dyads significantly outperformed the gender-matched pairs. In fact, females selling to males (a mismatch) performed better than the matching female-female dyads and exceeded the performance of both male-male and male-female dyads. However, a study by Graves and Powell (1995) found no effect of gender similarity. These findings suggest that the expected relationship between salesperson-customer similarity and salesperson performance produced mixed and inconsistent results concerning gender effects on sales performance (Crosby *et al.*, 1990; Weitz, 1981).

The above studies indicate the impact of gender similarity on business performance and outcome in various situations. On the other hand, some prior research shows that customers prefer to interact with service providers who are opposite in gender (Hall, 1993; Kulik and Holbrook, 1998), suggesting potential effects of gender dissimilarity on business relationships and outcome. Concerning the opposite-gender preference, Hall (1993) suggests that gender stereotyped role behavior (or flirting between the opposite-gender dyads) is likely to have occurred during the service encounters that may cause the perception of good service quality. For example, in a restaurant study Hall (1993) found that in mismatched cases good customer service was often associated with some degree of flirtation, where good service is rewarded with a tip and/or customer loyalty. This positively reinforces and leads to a repeat of such gender role behavior (Rind & Bordia, 1996). Moreover, according to Mills and Moshavi (1999) and Moshavi (2004), interacting with the opposite gender can create an increased psychological attachment caused by a positive sentiment exercised by service providers in an attempt to provide a warm and comfortable environment to boost customers' self-esteem. It seems that the opposite-gender bias during the service encounters can be explained with flirtation (Hall, 1993), which we call flirting theory.

The above review of the literature indicates that there seem to be two theoretical frameworks (gender similarity theories and flirtation or flirting theory) albeit competing, to explain gender stereotyping or gender bias resulting from gender similarity/dissimilarity in the workplace and/or during service encounters. Gender similarity theories (GST) of the similarity attraction paradigm, social identity theory, and self-categorization theory suggest that customers

would prefer to interact with the same-gender service providers. On the other hand, flirtation or flirting theory indicates that customers would prefer to deal with the opposite-gender service providers because of the warm and comfortable environment the service provider could provide to boost customers' self-esteem. In this exploratory study we investigate which of these two competing theoretical frameworks better explains the effects of gender similarity/dissimilarity between customer and service provider on perceived quality of service and customer satisfaction resulting from the service encounter. In order to accomplish this goal, the study will examine whether respondents perceive that, based on their prior experiences, they receive better quality and more satisfying service from the same-gender service provider (gender match, which supports gender similarity) or from the opposite-gender service provider (gender mismatch, which supports flirting theory) in ten different service areas.

Unlike previous studies, each of which covered a specific area or single field, this current research includes ten different industries in order to examine customers' experiences in diverse services. This could provide a more holistic approach to understanding the effects of gender similarity/dissimilarity on perceived service quality resulting from service encounters in multiple industries. Gender stereotypes or occupational stereotyping could influence the perception of service quality offered rather than the service provider gender. This was the case in a study by Fischer et al. (1997), which showed that customers' perception of the service quality was impacted more by occupational stereotypes (or status of occupation) than by the gender of service provider. In order to investigate a potential impact of occupational stereotyping (status) on perceived service quality, the ten industries are classified as low or high status occupations. Finally, it is possible that any gender effect on service quality could be influenced by cultural values. This implies that depending on the cultural values of a society, customers may prefer and/or perceive to receive a better quality of service from the same gender or opposite gender. As there are limited studies about the role of culture on gender similarity (e.g., Mobley, 1982; Schaubroeck and Lam, 2002; Tsui and O'Reilly, 1989), this study is conducted in both the United States and Turkey to investigate the potential impact of culture and cultural differences on gender similarity. Given that gender similarity/dissimilarity, gender stereotyping, and cultural values could individually or collectively affect the perceived service quality received by customers, this study offers some insight into the main effects of these factors, as well as the their interactions on service quality.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **Gender Similarity Theories**

Many of the prior gender studies are based on three primary gender-centered approaches: the Similarity-Attraction Paradigm (Byrne, 1971; Byrne & Neuman, 1992; Graves & Powell, 1995), Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and Self-Categorization

Theory (Turner, 1982, 1985). The Similarity-Attraction Paradigm (SAP) suggests that individuals tend to be attracted to, or seek membership in, groups that are (demographically) similar to themselves. Similarity is the degree to which members of a group are alike in terms of personal characteristics or other attributes (Byrne & Neuman, 1992; Smith, 1998). Demographic similarity constitutes an important basis of interpersonal attraction and of social integration and cohesion (Baron & Pfeffer, 1994). Byrne and Neuman (1992) state that gender similarity seems to have a very strong influence on perceived similarity and interpersonal attraction. In addition to SAP, Social Identity Theory (SIT) advocates that belonging to a group creates a psychological state that confers social identity and a collective representation of self-identity and behavior. This theory assumes that an individual's self-identity formation is partly a function of group membership (Tajfel, 1982). People in groups share experiences and attitudes. They like each other and increase their understanding of one another, and this interaction reinforces or ratifies one's own self (McNeilly & Russ, 2000). In this regard, SIT suggests that individuals derive a portion of their self-worth from membership in social groups (Moshavi, 2004). As a result, customers are expected to favorably evaluate membership in their demographic group (e.g., gender) to help increase their self-worth.

An important aspect of SAP and SIT involves self-categorization. Self-Categorization Theory (SCT) suggests that individuals take socially defined categories into account when making evaluations about others, where those characteristics that are similar would likely be considered as positive and vice versa. Since demographic characteristics such as age, race, and gender are observable and accessible (Messick & Mackie, 1989), they are useful for social and self-categorization (McNeilly & Russ, 2000). Such a categorization can cause a person to perceive himself/herself as similar to other members of a category or group and trigger stereotyping of the out-group (Messick & Mackie, 1989). Self-categorization also takes place during the formation of dyadic relationships (Benkhoff, 1997) in which similarity facilitates communication, development of greater trust, and more satisfaction within relationships (Kanter, 1997; Smith, 1998).

In essence, the above SAP, SIT, and SAT (which will be referred to as Gender Similarity Theories – GSTs) predict that demographic similarity will have positive effects on performance by increasing interpersonal attraction and decreasing cognitive biases (Linville & Jones, 1980), leading to more open communication and decreased interpersonal tension. However, some of the similarity literature in sales suggests that the relationship that exists between dyadic similarity and salesperson performance is weak at best (Crosby *et al.*, 1990; Weitz, 1981). Other studies found a statistically significant relationship between visible similarity (i.e., gender, age, height, race, education, and nationality) and salesperson performance (Churchill *et al.*, 1997). On the other hand, Dwyer *et al.* (1998) found that female salespeople were just as effective as male salespeople, and gender similarity was not a significant factor in sales performance. Prior research by Graves and Powell (1988) shows no significant effect of applicant gender on interview outcome, but the perceived similarity and interpersonal attraction were important in



recruiters' decisions. In another study, Graves and Powell (1995) found that female recruiters saw male applicants as more similar to themselves and more qualified than female applicants. In services, Fischer et al. (1997) used social identity theory to posit a gender bias in favor of same-gender provider, but they found no support for their proposition. Also, Mohr and Henson (1996) found some supporting evidence for social identity theory that female customers prefer female service providers. These studies indicate that the gender effect in the sales field did not produce consistent and conclusive results; in some cases gender similarity is supported, and in other cases it is not.

### Flirting Theory

As stated before, during some service encounters customers prefer to interact with a service provider of the opposite gender (Hall, 1993; Kulik & Holbrook, 1998). In this case, flirting [theory] is used to explain the opposite-gender bias in service encounters (Hall, 1993). Hall (1993), who found support favoring opposite-gender matching bias, asserts that gender-stereotyped role behavior (e.g., flirting) is likely to occur in opposite-gender dyad service encounters and may result in a perception of good service. For example, in a restaurant setting, Hall (1993) found that in mismatched-gender dyads—female server/male customer(s) or male server/female customer(s)—good customer service was often associated with some degree of flirtation. Since good service is often rewarded monetarily (in the form of a tip in restaurants), such gender role behavior is positively reinforced and repeated (Rind & Bordia, 1996).

Another benefit of interacting with the opposite gender could be an increased psychological attachment, which is defined as a positive sentiment exercised by service providers to create a warm and comfortable atmosphere that boosts customers' self-esteem (Mills and Moshavi, 1999; Moshavi, 2004). This may cause higher perceived service quality and higher customer satisfaction resulting from opposite-gender interactions. For example, Kulik and Holbrook (1996) found that bank customers seeking loans from the same-gender provider responded more negatively to unfavorable outcomes than did customers who had an opposite-gender provider. Also, in a study of phone-based service encounters, Moshavi (2004) found gender bias on customer evaluations of phone-based service encounters. His results indicate that customers were equally satisfied with male or female customer service representatives (CSRs), but they were more satisfied with CSRs of the opposite gender than with CSRs of the same gender.

Flirting theory may also offer an explanation for some of the findings of the study by Dwyer *et al.* (1998). In an empirical study, they found that the male-female and female-male mismatched pairs significantly outperformed the gender-matched pairs. In fact, their results showed females selling to males (a mismatch) performed higher than the matching female-female salesperson dyads and male-male salesperson dyads. While these results contradict the predictions of gender similarity theories that the dyadic relationships are easier to develop with

similar others (Dwyer *et al.*, 1998; Churchill *et al.*, 1997), these finding could be explained with flirting theory in which the dyadic relations seem to be easier to develop with those who are dissimilar (Hall, 1993).

### **The Effect of Occupational Stereotypes**

Gender Similarity Theory and Flirting Theory offer inconsistent mixed and often contradictory results in explaining the behavior of gender dyads. Fischer *et al.* (1997) tests the theory that gender stereotypes and gender-specific industries account for these inconsistencies. They found that stereotyping did have an impact on the dyads; however, it was not in a uniform or predictable manner. The result was an interaction among the genders of the service provider, the genders of the customer, and the expectations of service based on the stereotype of the occupations. Therefore, it is possible that customers' perception of better quality service could be impacted more by occupational stereotypes than by gender of the service provider. However, this is not clear from previous studies because each of those studies covered only a one service industry. By including multiple industries and classifying them as low status and high status occupations, we hope that our study can provide more generalizable results in addressing the effects of gender stereotypes and occupational stereotypes on service quality.

### **Cultural Values Affecting Gender**

Turkish and American cultural differences have been extensively documented in both cross-cultural management in the workplace (Hofstede, 1991, 2005; Adler, 2008; House *et al.*, 2004) and in the cultural values that affect gender (Kabasakal, 1994; Aycan, 2004; Kagitcibasi, 1986). The primary cultural value affecting the differences between men and women in the workplace is the Power Distance Index (PDI) (Hofstede, 1991), also referred to by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner as Achievement versus Ascription (Trompenaars, 1998) and by GLOBE as simply Power Distance (House *et al.*, 2004). This cultural dimension deals with the role of authority within a society, or the extent to which less powerful members of organizations accept an unequal distribution of power. This can be defined as the degree of inequality among people that the population of that country accepts as normal.

In a relatively high PDI country such as Turkey, people accept differences in power, or inequality, more willingly and therefore have more hierarchical tendencies. In a low PDI country such as the United States, people do not accept differences in power as willingly and have more egalitarian tendencies (Hofstede, 1991).

Historically, women have been the less powerful members of organizations, and the higher PDI score in Table 1 shows that women in the Turkish culture have more of a tendency to both accept a hierarchical workplace and to work in an environment with more inequality in gender roles than is found in comparison with women in the United States. This relatively

higher gender inequality has been demonstrated through studies showing that Turkish society is highly patriarchal with clear-cut gender role differences (Kandiyoti, 1978, 1995; Sanal, 2006). Male employees regard females as being less capable than men and less fit for responsible positions, as female family obligations take priority and make them prone to lower productivity and increased absenteeism (Celikten, 2005). Women who oppose traditional gender stereotypes and roles, such as career women, are viewed negatively (Beydogan, 2001).

<b>Table 1</b>	
<b>Comparative Power Distance Dimensions for Turkey and the U. S.</b>	
Turkey (Score = 66)	United States (Score = 40)
More hierarchical workplace	More egalitarian workplace
Less equality of gender roles	More equality of gender roles
Larger gaps: compensation/authority/respect	Smaller gaps: compensation/authority/respect
Acquired professional status	Achieved professional status

This literature has established that socio-cultural context determines the significant differences between Turkish and American work-related values, societal norms regarding gender roles, and attitudes towards women in business (Aycan, 2004). One of the goals of this study is to discover whether these cultural differences between the two countries play a significant role in the effects of gender similarity or dissimilarity on service quality. It is important to note that as Turkey is changing and modernizing; it is moving toward more equality in gender-role stereotypes in the workplace, especially in urban areas, in higher socio-economic classes, in highly professional and technical jobs, and among higher-educated women (Kabasakal & Bodur, 2009; Askun, 2010).

### **Conceptual Framework and Study Objectives**

The potential effects of customer gender and service-provider gender on perceived service quality and customer satisfaction are conceptualized in a framework shown Figure 1. The proposed framework also includes occupational stereotyping and cultural values in order to examine their potential effects on service quality. Based on customer gender (male/female) and service provider (male/female), Figure 1 shows two gender-matches and two gender-mismatches. According to prior research on GSTs, there should be an expected gender effect (bias) resulting from similarity of customer gender and service-provider gender during the service delivery process. More specifically, customers would perceive that they might be getting a better quality of service from the same-gender service provider (gender match) than from the opposite-gender service provider (gender mismatch). Based on this framework, this study will investigate the effects of customer gender and provider gender similarity and dissimilarity on service quality during the service encounter in ten different service industries.

While the results of previous gender match/mismatch studies provided support for either similarity attraction theory or for flirting theory, these studies offered inconsistent results without any conclusive supporting evidence for either theory, partly because each one covered specific cases and/or fields and often ignored the impact of gender stereotyping. In order to offer a more holistic approach, this study includes ten different service industries (listed in methodology section) divided into two levels of occupational status (low or high). As shown in Figure 1, these ten different services and their classifications into two levels will allow us to examine the potential effects of occupational stereotyping on perceptions of service quality. Finally, since the gender effect on service quality could be influenced by cultural values of the society, the potential effect of culture on gender effect on service quality will be examined by comparing the perceptions of the Turkish and American respondents. Therefore, the main objective of this exploratory study is to examine whether respondents perceived better quality of service from male or female service providers, while also testing for the impact of gender stereotyping and cultural differences.

## **HYPOTHESES**

Based on the main objective of this study, the specific research questions are:

- H1: Whether GSTs or flirting theory offers a better explanation for customer–service-provider gender match/mismatch on service quality. While GSTs predict that gender match between customer and provider will result in better perceived quality, flirting theory predicts that gender mismatch between customer and provider will result in better service quality.
- H2: Whether gender stereotyping as measured by occupational status will have an effect on perceived service quality.
- H3: Whether the cultural differences between Turkey and the United States will have an effect on service quality.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The survey instrument includes questions to determine the effect of gender similarity/dissimilarity on service quality during service encounters. Specifically, respondents were asked, based on their past experiences, if they perceived they had received better quality and more satisfying service from male or female service providers in ten service industries. It is important to note that the study did not ask for their most recent experiences in order to avoid the potential bias of a single negative/positive experience.

To test the three hypotheses, the authors divided the ten industries into either high or low status (prestige) based on census reports (Nam & Boyd, 2004) and supporting articles (Baunach, 2002). The low status (female stereotype) services included in the study are bank teller/officer,

women's clothing store salesperson, coffee shop server, and fast-food restaurant server. The high status (male stereotype) services are men's clothing store salesperson, cell phone service representative, pharmacist, doctor, dentist, and professor/teacher. The reason for selecting these industries are: (a) these industries are commonly used/experienced and available for respondents; (b) respondents have an opportunity to have multiple experiences to form perceptions for service quality from male or female service providers; (c) the services industries are readily and commonly available in both countries; and (d) these service industries represent a diverse group of industries rather than the narrow or a single industry that were covered in prior studies, (e.g., restaurant setting (Hall, 1993), customer service representative (Moshavi, 2004), recruiting (Graves and Powell, 1988; 1995), selling (Dwyer *et al.* (1998)).

**Figure 1: Effects of gender, Occupational Stereotyping and Cultural Values on Perception of Bank Service Quality**

		Service Provider Gender	
		Male	Female
Customer Gender	Male	<b>Gender Match:</b> Perceived Similarity ( <i>Similarity Attraction Theory</i> )	<b>Gender Mismatch:</b> Perceived Dissimilarity ( <i>Flirting Theory</i> )
	Female	<b>Gender Mismatch:</b> Perceived Dissimilarity ( <i>Flirting Theory</i> )	<b>Gender Match:</b> Perceived Similarity ( <i>Similarity Attraction Theory</i> )
		Occupational Stereotyping	
		Cultural Values	

Because of these reasons, we believe that the ten industries used in this study are sufficient to examine the effects of gender similarity/dissimilarity, gender stereotyping, and culture and to test our hypotheses in a multiple industry setting. Based on their experience, the respondents were asked to indicate whether they had received better quality and more satisfying service from male versus female service providers for each of the ten service areas. The effect of this gender similarity/dissimilarity on perceived service was measured with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from -3 = definitely men, to 0 = equally, and to +3 = definitely women. On the actual instrument, the negative and positive signs were omitted in order to eliminate any potential confusion and/or response bias in association with negative numbers (see Appendix A for the survey questions).

After the instrument was developed, it was pretested with respondents who are similar to the target population. This process improved the wording and meaning of the survey questions. For the Turkish part of the study, the questionnaire, which was originally developed in English, was translated into Turkish and later back-translated into English by persons experienced in research and bi-lingual to avoid translation errors (Ball *et al.*, 2002) and to ensure that the intended meaning of the questions was maintained. The Turkish version of the survey was further pretested with respondents similar to the target population. These pretests of the English and Turkish versions of the questionnaire provided useful input for improving the survey questions and for establishing face validity of the constructs (Churchill, 1979; Churchill & Iacobucci, 2005; Narver & Slater, 1990). The survey also included such demographic questions as gender, age, student classification, and hometown size.

### **Sampling**

The survey was administered to college students in Turkey and in the United States. For this purpose, the survey was conducted at a major university in Ankara, the second largest city in Turkey, and also at a university in the Midwest United States. There are several reasons for selecting these universities. (1) We believe that both universities attract fairly diverse groups of students who represent the target population in their respective countries. Therefore, students at these universities represent diverse socio-economic, family profiles, ethnic backgrounds, and socio-cultural backgrounds. We feel that this diversity in their backgrounds is important for the objectives of our study, which more than offsets the lack of age diversity. (2) We also believe that these students, better known as millennials (or Gen. Y), are potential long-term customers for these services. Understanding their perceptions of these issues could have significant managerial implications for the success of businesses in the future. (3) Finally, our use of student sample is also consistent with prior research in this field (e.g., Jones *et al.*, 1998). In order to have a representation of students from all levels of classification, the study included classes from freshmen, sophomore, junior, senior, and graduate levels. When administering the surveys, we selected classes that were required for students at each level of classification. This allowed us to avoid the same student completing the survey more than once. This sampling process produced a total of 497 useable surveys; 230 surveys (46.3%) from the Turkish university and 267 surveys (53.7%) from the U.S. university.

### **Respondent Profiles**

The respondent profiles in Table 1 show that the majority of the total respondents (62.0%) are male and 38% are female. On a country basis, 68% of the American respondents are male and 32% are female, and 56% of the Turkish respondents are male and 44% are female. Concerning the classifications for all respondents, the responses appear to be distributed evenly

across the majors with seniors having the highest percentage of respondents (26%). In the United States, 60% of the respondents are juniors or seniors compared with Turkish respondents who are 60% freshmen and sophomores. The distribution of the responses for size of town shows that, overall, 32% of the respondents are from towns of 500,001 and more people. The results for American respondents indicate that most of the respondents came from towns of 2001 to 50,000 with the combined percentage of about 50%, whereas 50% of the Turkish respondents are from towns of 500,001 and more people.

<b>Table 2: Demographic Profiles of the respondents</b>						
<b>Demographics</b>	<b>All Respondents</b>		<b>American Respondents</b>		<b>Turkish Respondents</b>	
<b>Gender</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Male	308	62.0	179	67.8	129	56.1
Female	186	37.7	85	32.2	101	43.9
<b>Classification</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Freshman	109	22.3	27	10.4	82	35.7
Sophomore	100	20.4	44	17.0	56	24.3
Junior	93	19.0	74	28.6	19	8.3
Senior	128	26.2	81	31.3	47	20.4
Graduate	59	12.1	33	12.7	26	11.3
<b>Town size</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Percent</b>
< 500 People	16	3.3	9	3.3	7	3.0
501-2,000	38	7.7	22	7.7	16	7.0
2001-10,000	57	11.6	39	14.9	18	7.8
10,000-25,000	48	9.8	38	14.5	10	4.3
25,001-50,000	69	14.0	53	20.2	16	7.0
50,001-150,000	49	10.0	29	11.1	20	8.7
150,000-500,000	57	11.6	29	11.1	28	12.2
500,001 & more	158	32.0	43	16.4	115	50.0
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>
<b>Age</b>	21.49	3.45	21.24	3.11	21.95	4.05

## RESULTS

The study tests three hypotheses: (1) whether GST or flirting theory offers a better explanation of customer service, 2) whether gender stereotyping, as measured by occupational status, has an effect on the perception of service and 3) whether cultural differences have an effect on the perception of service. As indicated earlier, we grouped the ten different industries into two occupational groups of high status and low status. This gave us three independent variables: occupational stereotype with two levels of low or high status, gender with two levels of male or female, and culture with two levels of Turkish or American. An ANOVA (2x2x2

design with stereotyping, gender, and cultural) was run to test the main effect (GST or flirting theory) and possible interactions with gender stereotyping and cultural differences. The dependent variable was the perceived customer service rating. Results of the analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 ANOVA			
Source	df	F	Sig
(Occupational) Stereotyping	1	396.51	.000
Cultural	1	17.27	.000
Gender	1	.19	.661
Stereotyping * Cultural	1	3.03	.082
Stereotyping * Gender	1	.05	.820
Cultural * Gender	1	12.79	.000
Stereotyping * Cultural * Gender	1	2.34	.126

The first hypothesis can be addressed by looking at the main effect of gender on perceived customer service. Based on the results of the ANOVA, the main effect- *gender* is not significant ( $p$ -value = .66). The gender of the customer does not seem to have an effect on his or her opinion of whether men or women deliver better customer service.

More specifically, Table 4 includes the average customer service rating for both males and females. The measurement scale used in this study indicates that a negative rating score means that the respondent received better service from a male and a positive rating score means that the respondent received better service from a female. For example, the cell containing the mean rating of .033 is a positive number and can be interpreted that male customers received slightly better service from female providers. The average for female respondents also indicates slightly better service from female providers. However, as the main effect is not statistically significant, there is no gender effect on rating of customer service. With zero falling within the upper and lower bounds of the confidence intervals for both groups, there is essentially no significant preference for either male or female service providers.

Table 4 Main Effect—Gender				
Gender	Mean	Std Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Male	.033	.028	-.022	.088
Female	.013	.035	-.056	.082

**Scale:** Definitely men -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 Definitely women

Based on these results, there is no support for customer service provider gender match or mismatch. It makes no difference whether the provider and customer are of the same gender or different genders in terms of how they rate males and females in perceived customer service.



The second hypothesis asks if gender stereotyping has an effect on perceived customer service. To measure stereotyping, the ten services industries were divided into low and high occupational status. According to the results in Table 3, the dichotomous variable stereotype had a significant effect on customer service rating ( $p$ -value = .000). Respondents rate industries differently, depending on whether they are in the low or high status group. For further analysis, Table 5 lists the means for each status group. The positive mean score of .472 indicates that customers perceived women providers in the low status group (bank tellers, women's clothing store salesperson, coffee shop server, and fast-food server) as giving better service (the mean is positive). The negative mean score of -.425 suggests that men in the high status group were perceived as giving better service (men's clothing store salesperson, cell-phone service representative, pharmacist, doctor, dentist, and professor). Since mean values are significant for both low and high stereotyping groups (confidence intervals do not include zero), it is clear from the means that respondents expected females to give better service in low status jobs and males to give better service in high status jobs.

<b>Table 5 Main Effect—Stereotyping</b>				
Stereotyping	Mean	Std Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Low	<b>.471</b>	.035	.402	.539
High	<b>-.425</b>	.028	-.480	-.369

**Scale:** Definitely men -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 Definitely women

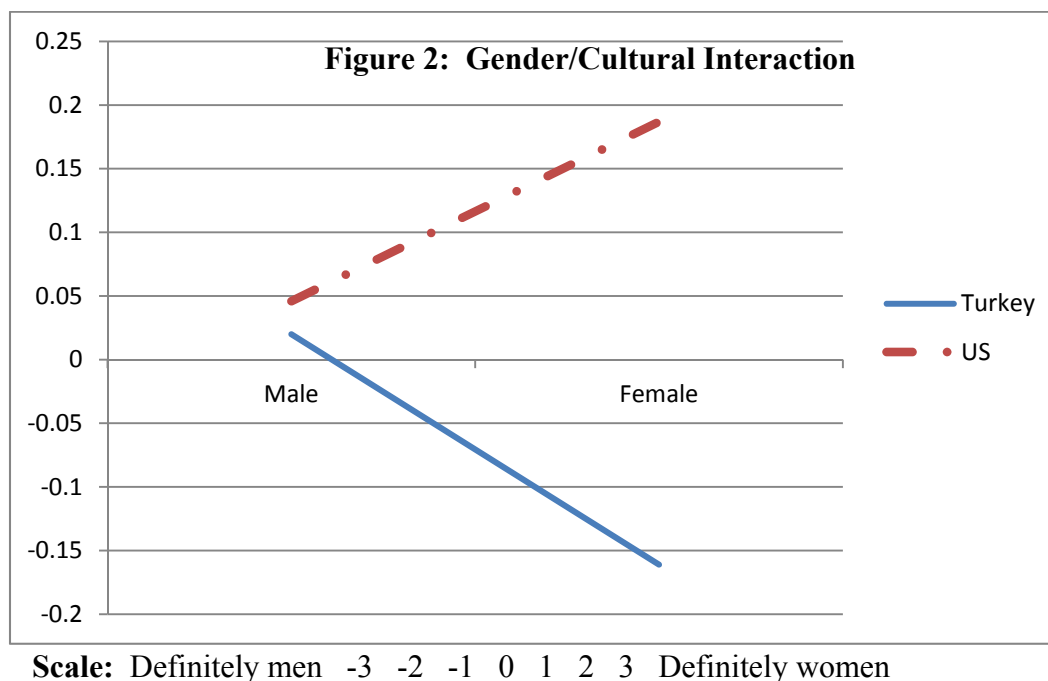
The third hypothesis explores the impact of perceived customer service based on cultural differences, specifically between the U.S. and Turkey. The two countries were compared using the zero-one cultural variable. Again, the results of the ANOVA in Table 2 support a significant effect ( $p$ -value = .000). The rating of customer service is affected by the country of origin of the respondents. Table 6 shows the average rating for Turkey is slightly in favor of male and the average for the U.S. is slightly in favor of female. Since the confidence intervals for both Turkey and the U.S. do not include zero, both means are significantly different from zero. This suggests that the Turkish respondents perceive men as providing a better quality of service (negative mean score), whereas the U.S. respondents perceive females as providing better quality of service.

<b>Table 6 Main Effect - Cultural</b>				
Cultural	Mean	Std Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Turkey	<b>-.070</b>	.035	-.134	-.006
US	<b>.116</b>	.031	.056	.177

**Scale:** Definitely men -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 Definitely women

Based only on the main effects, it appears that gender match or mismatch is not a factor affecting customer service; however, stereotyping and cultural differences do affect the

perception of service. Of particular interest are the variable interactions, especially the interaction of gender and cultural changes (significant with a  $p$ -value = .000). The graph in Figure 2 indicates that males from both Turkey and the U.S. perceive male and female customer service providers as giving almost equal quality of service. However, females in the two cultures have very different perceptions. Turkish females perceive males as providing better quality of service while U.S. females perceive females as providing better quality of service.



## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This exploratory study investigates the gender effect to determine whether customers perceive better service from the same gender service providers as suggested by similarity attraction theory or from the opposite gender service providers as suggested by flirting theory. This is based on the framework presented in Figure 1. Three specific hypotheses tested in this study are: (1) whether GST or flirting theory offers a better explanation of customer service, (2) whether gender stereotyping, as measured by occupational status, has an effect on the perception of service, and (3) whether cultural differences have an effect on the perception of service. The findings of this study provide important insights into the effects of customer and service-provider gender, occupational stereotyping, and culture on service quality during the service encounter in two countries—Turkey and the U.S.

The results show significant effects for occupational stereotyping and cultural variables, but no significant gender effect. The non-significance of gender indicates that the customer gender (male or female) does not appear to have any significant effect on their perception of quality of service delivered by male or female service providers. The results suggest that customers have no significant preference for either male or female service providers. Since the similarity/dissimilarity of customer and service provider have no effect on service quality, these results support neither similarity attraction for gender-match cases nor flirting theory for gender mismatch. These findings are not consistent with some of the prior research regarding gender similarity or preference for gender-match (e.g., Churchill *et al.*, 1997; Graves & Powel, 1995; Pinar *et al.*, 2009) and gender dissimilarity or preference for gender-mismatch (e.g., Fischer *et al.*, 1997; Mohr & Henson, 1996; Moshavi, 2004).

Concerning occupational stereotyping, the results indicate that respondents rate services differently, whether the service industries are in low status or high status groups. The study suggests that respondents perceive women providers in the low status group (bank tellers, women's clothing store salesperson, coffee shop server, and fast-food server) as offering better quality of service, whereas men in the high status group (men's clothing store salesperson, cell-phone service representative, pharmacist, doctor, dentist, and professor) were perceived as giving better quality of service. These findings suggests that it is not gender-match or mismatch; rather, it is service provider status (occupational stereotyping) that seems to have a significant effect on the perception of service quality received by the customer, which is consistent with the findings of Fischer *et al.* (1997). Based on these results, service organizations should not try to match the gender of service provider and customer, but may try to match service provider with the occupational status. These findings also indicate that despite the recent societal progress in many areas, occupational stereotyping still seems to persist in modern society—a disappointment for human progress.

Also, the results for effects of culture showed significant cultural differences between the perceptions of the Turkish and the U.S. respondents, indicating that the rating of service quality is significantly affected by the country of origin (or culture) of the respondents. It appears that the Turkish respondents perceive men as offering a significantly better quality of service, whereas the U.S. respondents perceive women as offering a significantly better quality of service. The perceptions of the Turkish men offering a better quality of service could be due to the patriarchal nature of the Turkish culture (Kandiyoti, 1978, 1995; Sanal, 2006) and/or women being perceived as being less capable than men (Celikten, 2005), as well as societal norms and attitudes toward women in business (Aycan, 2004). These findings could have important managerial implications for the service organizations in recruiting and hiring to improve perceptions of service quality and customer satisfaction. This could be especially significant for the international companies entering new markets, in this case Turkey.

Finally, the study found a significant interaction effect between gender and culture. Specifically, while the male respondents from Turkey and the U.S. perceive both male and

female service providers as offering almost the same quality of service, female respondents have different perceptions. That is, Turkish female respondents believe that male service providers (gender-mismatch) offer better quality of service, and the U.S. female respondents believe that female service providers (gender-match) offer a better quality of service.

This specific interaction between gender and culture might be more easily understood when comparing the Power Distance cultural values scores of Turkey and the United States in Table 1. Turkish culture, at the higher end of this dimension, demonstrates a central tendency for less powerful members in society—historically women—to accept an unequal distribution of power. This may lead to a form of cultural imperative, in a more patriarchal society, which leads to female respondents having expectations that male service providers offer better quality service. Conversely, U.S. culture lies at the lower end of the Power Distance continuum, where there is a more egalitarian workplace and more equality of gender roles. It might be postulated that American female respondents therefore have no cultural imperative biasing them in one direction or the other and have chosen female service providers for other, non-cultural reasons. These findings show the effects of gender in a cultural context in which each gender is not equally affected by the culture. In the cultural context, the results suggest that Turkish female respondents' perception of male service providers offering a better service is consistent with flirting theory, and the U.S. female respondents' perception of female service providers offering a better service is consistent with similarity attraction theory.

The results of this study have managerial implications for service organizations. First, since gender considered by itself is not statistically significant, it is clear that respondents perceive both male and female service providers as offering almost equal quality of service on average. These results regarding the gender effect on service quality do not offer any support for similarity attraction theories or flirting theory. Therefore, service companies should not attempt to match the gender of the customer and service provider. This was also suggested in prior research for sales occupations (Dwyer *et al.*, 1998; Jones *et al.*, 1998). Second, concerning occupational stereotyping, since women are perceived to offer a better quality of service in low status occupations and men are perceived to offer a better quality service in high status occupations, service organizations may try to recruit their personnel accordingly. Third, given a significant effect of culture on service quality and its interaction with gender, service companies should be aware of the cultural differences in recruiting by gender, especially when targeting female customers. This is because the gender of service providers seems to have an impact on service quality within the cultural context.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study provides some insights into the potential effects of gender similarity/dissimilarity and which of these two competing theories of similarity attraction and flirting better explains the gender effect on service quality during the service delivery. However,

our results and conclusions must be put in the context of the potential limitations of the study and directions for future research. The first limitation of the study is that it was done with students. While a student sample offered us respondents with diverse backgrounds, their experience could be limited to fully capture the gender effect on service quality. Research with more mature and diverse customers could offer additional perspectives on this topic and may be more generalizable. The second limitation is that this study covered only ten service industries. Future research could cover more service industries in order to gain better insights regarding the potential impact of gender similarity/dissimilarity during service encounters. Also, future research may identify the male-dominant, female-dominant, and gender-neutral services, as well as gender stereotype services in order to investigate the effect of gender match/mismatch and gender stereotyping in these cases. The third limitation is that the study did not take into account the demographics of the respondents, which may provide different results and may help explain the gender effect on service quality. A final limitation is that the study was only in two countries. Including more countries may expand our understanding of the role of culture on the gender effect on service quality as a result of customer gender similarity/dissimilarity.

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Appendix A: Survey Questions and Measurement Scale							
<b>1. Based on your experience, have you generally received better quality and more satisfying service from men or women?</b>							
Business or Service	Definitely Men      Equally      Definitely Women						
Bank teller / officer	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Men's clothing store salesperson	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Women's clothing store salesperson	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Coffee shop server	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Fast-food restaurant server	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Cell-phone service store representative	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Pharmacist / staff	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Doctor	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Dentist	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Professor / teacher	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
<p><b>2. In your mind, generally who is more helpful when you ask for a help?</b>            Definitely Women ____ Women ____ Both equally ____ Men ____ Definitely Men ____</p> <p><b>The following questions are just for classification purposes.</b>            Your Gender: Male ____ Female ____</p> <p><b>3. Your Classification:</b> Freshmen ____ Sophomore ____ Junior ____ Senior ____            Graduate (Masters and Ph.D.) ____</p> <p><b>4. You are from a town or city with:</b> Less than 500 people ____ 501-2,000 ____ 2,001-10,000 ____            10,001-25,000 ____ 25,001-50,000 ____ 50,001-150,000 ____ 150,001-500,00 ____ 500,001 and more ____</p> <p><b>5. Your age:</b> ____</p>							



# THE WORKPLACE BULLY: THE ULTIMATE SILENCER

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## ABSTRACT

*In an effort to add to our understanding of workplace bullying, this paper seeks to explore the rhetorical strategies employed by bullies and the communicative strategies targets employ in response. Thirty-one (31) working women with at least a bachelor's degree between the ages of 25 and 62 ( $M = 38$ ) were interviewed to discuss their workplace experiences, and particularly interactions with supervisors. As such, three themes emerged from this paper, including Communication is Silenced, which emerged as the women discussed how their supervisors sought to silence them. The second and third themes, Hedging Phrases and Communication is Shutdown, emerged as descriptions of how the women rhetorically responded to the bullies' attacks. Overall, the women shared that beyond leaving the organization, the use of limited rhetorical tactics were their only hope for minimizing the mistreatment.*

## THE WORKPLACE BULLY: THE ULTIMATE SILENCER

*...when people are put in positions of power, they start talking more, taking what they want for themselves, ignoring what other people say or want, ignoring how less powerful people react to the behavior, acting more rudely, and generally treating any situation or person as a means for satisfying their own needs... (Sutton, 2007)*

There is a significant body of literature that situates workplace bullying as a significant phenomenon in the American workplace (Lewis, 2006; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006; Sutton, 2007) and provides evidence that it damages organizations, including difficulties implementing organizational change, lowering organizational commitment, decreasing productivity and diminishing organizational performance (Crothers, Lipinski, & Minutolo, 2009; Girardi et al., 2007; Harvey et al., 2006). The National Institutes for Occupational Safety and Health deemed workplace bullying to be a form of workplace violence. According to a 2007 Workplace Bullying Institute US Survey, 72% of bullies are bosses, who outrank their targets by at least one level. Similarly, a 2007 Zogby survey of 8,000 adults found that 72% had been abused by a supervisor (Sutton, 2007). Further, organizational communication research has provided evidence via a nationally representative study that in most cases many employees are involved; they range from bullies to silent witness, making the cases that bullying is an organizational problem, and not tied to the pathology of a few bad employees (Namie & Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010).

Bullying is often defined as “prolonged exposure to interpersonal acts of a negative nature... which make up a highly stressful situation characterized by lack of control” (Hansen, Hogh, & Persson, 2011). The definition also generally includes elements of frequency, intensity, duration and power distance (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003; Hoel, Cooper, & Faragher, 2001; Lester, 2009). Most studies argue that workplace bullying, unlike other forms of harassment, are interpersonal in nature and marked by an abuse of power (Lester, 2009). The effects of relational hostility in the workplace are well documented to include decreased mental and physical health (Hansen, Hogh & Persson, 2011; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2001; Zapf & Einarsen, 2001). The research also provides evidence that workers suffer from “anxiety, depression, burnout, frustration, helplessness...difficulty concentrating...lowered self esteem and self efficacy” (Keashly & Neuman, 2005, p. 335). The comments below from an Administrative Assistant, age 48, offer an exemplar of these effects:

*“It sucks, because it does cut into your self-esteem and because when you hear all the time that you don’t do anything right that you start to wonder, maybe I don’t do anything right, you know? Well, at the time, when I was working for her it was horrible on my personal life. It was, not a job that I could go home and forget about, you know. I would be stressed out all evening thinking about going back the next day. It was destructive really to your character and everything and how you thought about yourself, ‘cause you heard so much crap all the time about how bad you were doing.”*

In an effort to expand our understanding of workplace bullying, this paper seeks to explore the rhetorical strategies employed by bullies and the communicative strategies targets employ in response. As is demonstrated in the previous quote, work is integral to employees’ lives and identity, so the experiences of those that are bullied affect every aspect of their lives, not simply their work lives. However, their ability to respond to the attacks of the perpetrators is often limited, as they must negotiate responses that allow them to maintain their employment, which limits their responses, and often renders them powerless. While the effects of bullying may infringe on individuals’ personal lives, they often do not have the rhetorical strategies available to them in response to bullying that they may have in their personal lives; they are often silenced in the work place, unlike they would be in their personal lives. Therefore, this paper seeks to examine the rhetorical strategies that the targets do (or do not) employ in an effort to manage the attacks of the bully; how do they communicatively respond to these negative attacks?

### **WORKPLACE BULLYING: TERMINOLOGY, IMPLICATIONS, AND THE POWER/FEAR RELATIONSHIP**

*“As a female, I would have expected to have someone as more of a mentor. This woman saw me as an adversary and took every opportunity to write me up as being insubordinate for sharing ideas or just doing my job.” Director of Major Giving, age 30*

If the management is tough, but consistent with all employees, most employees will find this fair; however, bullying is a form of abusive supervision where a targeted few are the only ones met with this “tough” style (Namie & Namie, 2011). Bullies tend to “zone in” on a targeted few, causing their misery to grow exponentially. Compared to incivility, bullying is generally focused on one or two individuals; it is a methodical crusade of interpersonal destruction (Namie & Namie, 2011). A Project Manager, age 34, describes how it felt: “So it’s a little disheartening to think that, it [bullying] could happen to you; you think it can’t happen to you. Disheartened, feel a little saddened that, uh, we haven’t come quite as far as we think we have.” Additionally, an IT Project Manager, age 54, adds: “It limits the feeling of security. It limits the feeling of loyalty and, um...it just kind of leaves you with emptiness.”

Bullying means that something wrong occurred and that we can identify the individual who is the perpetrator (Namie & Namie, 2011). Bullying is repetitive, uninvited, and performed openly or privately and often leads to psychological or physical damage (Namie & Namie, 2011). As a 59 year-old Benefits Administration and Senior HR Coordinator expressed, “It makes me feel incompetent. It makes me second guess myself. It’s affecting my job performance. This has made me physically ill.” In sharing the costs physically and in terms of self-confidence a 55 year-old Coordinator shared: “I was frustrated, angry, devalued. It made me question my abilities. My blood pressure was higher, gained some weight because of it; honestly, I knew I was very stressed out over it and I learned to just cope with it best I could, but until it was really over and behind me onto something new, then I realized just how much better I felt.”

### **Personal and Organizational Costs**

The suffering of the targets of bullying manifested in overall decreased performance, including diminished morale and motivation, disrupted organization functioning, reduced productivity, and increased turnover (Crawshaw, 2011; Crothers, Lipinski, & Minutolo, 2009). Janus-Bulman, (1992) found that emotional responses, such as shock, despair, anger and helplessness are linked to bullying; others have found links to health problems, such as sleep problems, chronic fatigue, loss of strength, and musculoskeletal complaints (Brodsky, 1976; Einarsen, Raknes, & Mattheisen, 1994). Referencing her sleep patterns and overall disposition, an Academic Advising Counselor, age 33, shared the following: “It was discouraging, it affected my health a lot; I didn’t sleep much, tired all day long and still couldn’t sleep much the next night and so on. I didn’t realize how defeated I was, because I spent so much time trying to be strong on the outside that I didn’t realize how defeated I was on inside.” In addition to negative emotional responses, bullied workers have a higher risk of suicide (Pompili et al., 2008). Overall, abused employees have poorer attitudes towards work, decreased psychological health and are more likely to suffer from health complaints related to the suffering at work. A Communications/Event Manager, age 28, shared this exemplar regarding her work-related health

struggles: “I definitely had a lot of health issues. I had very severe headaches. I was really depressed.”

In addition to personal costs, there are organizational costs, including damaging organizational reputation (Lutgen-Sandvik & McDermott, 2008) and company performance (Crothers, Lipinski, & Minutolo, 2009). Interestingly, targets frequently report that their anxiety is not triggered by openly aggressive behavior, but, rather, by those situations where the aggression is more hidden and they feel they may have had some responsibility (Hirigoyen, 2012). For example, often the behavior is hidden under the auspices of furthering organizational goals; as Krasikova, Green and Breton (2013) argued, even when supervisors are pursuing goals outlined by the organization, they can still harm individuals by bullying them using non-verbal or verbal tactics.

### **Power and Fear**

As is illustrated in the opening quote, bullying is often perpetuated by those in power, as the relational hostility is often garnered by those who are “prepared to abuse that imbalance” (Randall, 1997). This unequal power structure leaves the targets vulnerable and unable to defend themselves (Lewis & Orford, 2005); further, targets often have no choice but to remain in the situation, because no one takes their accounts seriously (Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, Alberts, 2006) or they are financially dependent on those that abuse them (Tepper, 2000). Hence, they often have little, if any, recourse for rebutting the attacks. In fear-based organizations, employees are so concerned with avoiding blame and humiliation that they cannot help the organization, even when they have the skills to do so (Sutton, 2007). As Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy & Alberts (2007) have noted, bullying obstructs organizational goals and processes. Further exacerbating the problem is that workplace bullying is often perpetuated by organizations that “condone, model, or reward it” (Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2011, p. 8).

“Because this phenomenon is perpetrated by and through communication, and because workers’ principal responses are communicative in nature, it is vital that communication scholars join the academic dialogue about this damaging feature of worklife” (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006, p. 406). While bullying has been the subject of much international research, and has been a topic of the psychological and management scholarship for many years, arguing it harms both individuals and organizations (see Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2011 for a review), communication researchers have been slow to study the phenomenon. However, communication scholars, including, Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik and Alberts (2006), Alberts, Lutgen-Sandvik, and Tracy (2005) and Meares, Oetzel, Derkacs and Ginossar (2004) have enlightened our understanding of bullying. For example, Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik and Alberts (2006) argue that similar to victims of sexual harassment, targets of bullying have a hard time sharing their stories and making sense of their experiences. However, as part of this sense making, Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik and Alberts (2006) found that targets compared themselves to slaves and prisoners and used metaphors, such

as helplessness to describe their experiences; further, they used metaphors such as narcissist or demon to describe their abuser. In addition, muted group has been offered as explanation for how targets of bullying are silenced within organizations, as the non-dominant work place groups (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003).

As such, central to the focus of this paper is to expand the communication scholarship; specifically, the foci are the communication strategies employed by supervisors that seek to silence employees and the rhetorical strategies employed in response by the targets. Few studies have sought to understand the communicative tactics used by bullies or sought to explain the complexities of the responses that targets employ. In addition, research has provided evidence that women suffer from workplace bullying more often than men (Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Hjelt-Back, 1994), with 58% of targets being women (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2010) and that the psychological effects are greater for women (Niedl, 1996). Hence, this study seeks to enlighten our understanding of the communicative strategies women employ (or do not) in their rhetorical repertoire of coping mechanisms as the targets of workplace bullying aggression; as such, we began this inquiry with the following research questions:

*RQ1: How do professional women characterize the communicative tactics of their bullying supervisors?*

*RQ2: What are the communicative responses of bullying targets?*

## METHOD

Thirty-one (31) working women with at least a bachelor's degree between the ages of 25 and 62 ( $M = 38$ ) were interviewed to discuss their workplace experiences, and particularly interactions with supervisors. The interviews were conducted using a structured protocol in an environment where the women felt comfortable. This open-ended approach allowed the researcher to probe with questions that guided the women through discussions, aimed at sharing their perceptions about their experiences being bullied in the workplace. The participants were adult women solicited through a snowball sample in three mid-sized cities. Eligible women completed a filter survey and determined whether they wanted to complete the interview. Twenty-eight (94%) of the participants were Caucasian and 2 (6%) were African American.

Five female interviewers conducted the interviews in a private setting after the participants volunteered to participate; each participant read and signed an informed consent form before the interview began. The interviewers were trained by the primary researcher and comfortable with the topic. The interview times ranged from 25 minutes to 45 minutes and averaged 30 minutes, depending on the extent of the women's experiences and willingness to share information with the interviewer regarding those experiences. The sessions were audio taped with consent from the participants and transcribed verbatim.

The interviews were semi-structured, guiding the participants through a series of open-ended questions, using an interview protocol developed to probe the participants' experiences with workplace communication and bullying. The interviewers asked the participants to focus on one supervisor, previous or current, in responding to the questions about communicating with a superior. The questions in the protocol focused on the participants' rhetorical strategies for communicating with their supervisors. The word bully was not used until near the closing of the interview; at that time, the interviewer read a definition of bullying to the participant and asked if it described her experiences. There was a series of follow-up questions at that point, which specifically addressed bullying.

Following transcription, the interviews were analyzed using an inductive process of framework analysis. First, the primary researcher examined the transcripts to identify the emerging themes in the dataset considering communication about bullying. Consistent with Ritchie and Spencer (1994), the researcher used notes taken while reviewing transcripts to identify the themes, focusing on communication exemplars. The primary researcher then indexed the data for salient framework strategies, issues, and constructs, which captured important elements in relation to the research questions. After reviewing all of the transcripts, the primary researcher and a second researcher reexamined the indexed framework; next, the researchers inductively examined interviews for repeated strategies and issues, and for new strategies, issues or concepts that may have been missed from the first review. Finally, the researchers identified the key thematic concepts and examined the range and nature of these concepts identified in the interview transcripts through a recursive process of searching for themes, reviewing themes, and finalizing the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

## FINDINGS

*"You're not supposed to be treated like this at work." Volunteer/Event Coordinator, age 29*

Overall 90% (28) of the women characterized their experiences with their supervisors as bullying; the remaining 10% (3) of the women, while describing their supervisors' communication as poor, and often hostile, did not believe it could be categorized as bullying. Sixty-five percent (20) of the women worked for a female supervisor and the remaining 35% (11) answered to a male boss. Further, 61% (19) of the women believed that the sex of their supervisors impacted their supervisors' communication with them.

All (100%) of the women described their organizations as having an overall negative communication culture; further, 71% (22) of the women described this as being destructive to the organization. Ninety percent (28) described their experiences as the target of bullying as impacting their personal life, either by eroding their self-esteem, affecting personal relationships, or adversely affecting their health. The women shared stories of devastation of their personal lives, as this 55 year-old Health Care Coordinator expressed: "I felt frustrated, angry, devalued.

It made me question my abilities. My blood pressure was higher, gained some weight because of it, honestly I knew I was very stressed out over it and I learned to just cope with it best I could, but until it was really over and behind me onto something new, then I realized just how much better I felt.” Another woman offered a similar experience, “I definitely came home in a bad mood. I was upset all the time. I had real high anxiety. I lost 10 pounds during a pregnancy.” Chef, age 35

### **The Bully as a Silencer**

“I really thought it would be sexual harassment before I got bullied. Over the years, I never really understood what that could do to a person, until, you know, you feel it every day and then you’re like “‘good God, this is really hard’. It’s just disheartening. I always thought I would just work and do the job well and then you get rewarded for it; I don’t know, silly me, that’s how I thought it worked.” Victim Advocate, age 42

“I think that because of the way he acted, he really brought down the morale of the office and it could be a great place to work, but because he’s there, it’s not and people are looking to get out of that office.” Office Manager, age 28

As previously discussed, bullying is characterized by a power disparity, duration, escalation, attributive intent and is repetitive in nature (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2005); thus, bullies may employ a variety of communicative approaches in their arsenal, but the participants described their tactics as part of an overall strategy to silence the target. As a 44 year-old Health Insurance Consultant shared, “If you did express your opinion, it was just shut down, you know, it either was not acknowledged or it was, not necessarily made fun of, but, it was opposed immediately in public.” In turn, the participants overwhelmingly described a response that eventually led to them withdrawing and choosing to become silent as much as possible. Many targets of bullying try to respond positively and constructively to bullies before their eventual withdrawal from their organization (Zapf & Gross, 2001). When discussing why she quit communicating, a 29 year-old Insurance Claims Adjuster shared the following, “They are not taken very well and all this person would do is shoot them down, because things are her way or the highway and she can only see things from one perspective and she doesn’t like to see them from any other perspective and they feel that, that’s the way things are done, so that’s how we are going to do and that there is no better way to do them regardless of what you think so, why bother?” In short, the participants described the bully as the ultimate silencer.

As such, three themes emerged from this paper. The first theme is that *Communication is Silenced*, which emerged as the women discussed how their supervisors sought to silence them. The second and third themes emerged as descriptions of how the women rhetorically responded to the bullies’ attacks. These themes are: *Hedging Phrases* and *Communication is Shutdown*. A discussion of the themes follows:

### Communication is Silenced

A central theme that emerged from these data is that *communication is silenced*. A young woman, working as the Director of Major Giving, age 30, shared the following, which offers an exemplar of the narratives women shared that saturated this theme:

*There were definitely times in staff meetings or meetings involving any number of other co-workers whether it was myself that spoke up or someone else offered an opinion that differed from hers, it was not met with very welcoming, um, body language or communication and a lot of times whether it was me or a fellow co-worker, we would always be reprimanded in front of those others for vocalizing something and contradicting her would be seen as insubordinate.*

The participants shared that they made attempts to express ideas or communicate with supervisors, but described these efforts as being ignored. A 35 year-old Communications Consultant shared, “The communication was very challenged; it was very, you know, one way, there were times we tried to have meetings and discuss issues and share amongst each other, but the manager wasn’t really open to that.” A Professor, age 62, shared the following when describing how her supervisor ignored her attempts to communicate: “...and the reaction is not appreciative, there’s, nod, nod, okay, are you done? Can we move on now? There is no impact, as if the words bounce off.” Hence, while the women attempted to share their ideas, they often used words such as *lack of openness, challenged, one way communication, words bouncing off* and *insubordination* to describe their supervisor’s response to open communication.

In an effort to silence open communication, the participants described management as a top-down structure and a structure in which communication was intentionally withheld from employees. A 35 year-old Communications Consultant shared: “She would communicate to our customers before she would communicate to us and let them know some of the things that were going on before letting our team members know some of the things that were going on and she would also withhold information, so that the Product Manager would beg and beg to know about an event coming up or what would their responsibilities for this product launch or what have you and she would withhold information. ...I mean they would be at our desks constantly begging for information when we didn’t know it; it didn’t look like we had any empowerment as well and it made us all really frustrated.” The women also consistently referenced that their input was not welcome; while they were hired because of their professional expertise, this theme was inundated with exemplars illustrating how the women’s professional opinions were simply never requested; on the contrary, their professional advice was ignored and often they were reprimanded for sharing it. They were expected to just obediently do as they were told, as described by this 33 year-old Academic Advisor, “It was...it wasn’t good....it was very... it was more top down than bottom up. They come up with an idea and then we’re just told to do it.” Further exemplifying the blind obedience that was expected and lack of input that they were



allowed this same Academic Advisor shared the following regarding the experiences of her own supervisor, illustrating how the bullying was woven throughout the organization:

*“There were times actually when my immediate supervisor came to me and said, look I know that what they are asking you to do is not right, but I need you to do it, because she is going to cuss me out again for not getting you to do what we are asking you to do. Even though it’s not right to do, so is there a way that we can work around this so I’ll stay out of trouble, too?”*

The women also described their employers as intentionally thwarting employee communication; they often labeled it as *ignoring*, *ridiculing* or *threatening*. A 54 year-old IT Project Manager described it in the following manner: “Your opinions, they are not valued. We were reprimanded for asking a question.” The women expressed that they were often *put in their place* when they did try to share; hence, regardless of the tactics used by supervisors, the overall intent to *silence communication* was a clear theme as is demonstrated by this 28 year-old Librarian, “I thought, even if I do have a request or an idea, it wasn’t really a safe place, she wasn’t really a safe relationship to share, share things that could be rejected.” Further, as shared by this 35 year-old Chef, “If I would have anything to say, he would, all the sudden, my schedule would change and I would get all the worst shifts, and the shifts he knew that I hated or he’d stick me in a spot where I wasn’t even supposed to be, a spot that was lower than what I was hired to be.” Hence, *reprimanded* was peppered throughout their accounts; the participants felt that their supervisors used their authority as a tactic to *silence* the women.

Their accounts were overwhelmingly besieged with accounts of the fear and uncertainty this environment facilitated. The *fear of reprimand* built an overall unsafe work culture, as is shared by the following women:

*“There were times when I actually had to go to the HR and discuss it with them, because it was just to the point that I couldn’t take it anymore. And I was being bullied at work to the point where it was just too much, you know, too much to be crying every night and dreading coming into work. Not just “oh man it’s Monday” it was “oh man, it’s Wednesday, oh man it’s Tuesday” you know?” Medical Assistant, age 32*

*“I really thought it would be sexual harassment before I got bullied. Over the years, I never really understood what that could do to a person, until, you know, you feel it every day and then you’re like “good God, this is really hard”. It’s just disheartening. I always thought I would just work and do the job well and then you get rewarded for it; I don’t know, silly me, that’s how I thought it worked.” Victim Advocate, age 42*

As such, the women described their work environment as a place where *communication is silenced* by employers, and the risk for employees’ communicating was very high. The participants shared that the risk might be as low as their opinion being ignored, moving along a continuum to their ideas being ridiculed to reprimand and retaliation. Overall, the theme was inundated with descriptions of supervisors that did not promote safe communication

environments for women to share their professional expertise and opinions, and whose ultimate goal was to *silence* these women.

### **Hedging Phrases**

The second theme that emerged addresses the rhetorical tactics that the women engaged when attempting to communicate with the bullies. When discussing how they managed their own communication with their supervisors, the women overwhelmingly described themselves as utilizing tactics that *hedged* their communication; hence, not only are they silenced by their supervisors, but they enact that assigned identity by communicating as a nuisance, as is exemplified by this Victim Advocate, age 42: "So, I would literally tip toe in her office and be like, so I was just checking to see... and again I would have to make sure it was a right mood kind of day to be able to do that. So, this was a constant flow...it really slows you down when you have to consider all of those variables before you ask a question." As this Project Manager, age 34, described her attempts to manage rhetorical tactics, "I said I hate to bother you a lot and I know it's not my place." Thus, in response to the bullies' attempts to silence, the women identified themselves as a nuisance and engaged with the bully as if they had done something wrong or were bothering the supervisor with attempts to communicate.

They described the tactics they used in managing their routine communication as being peppered with hedging phrases, such as this Insurance Claims Adjuster, age 29 describes: "I say I'm sorry to bother you when asking questions or bringing something up it's, I'm sorry to bother you, but I need to talk to you about this. Sorry to bother you, I have a question about this; I need to run this by you." The communication was so strained that asking questions required planning, effort and the need to apologize or identify oneself as a bother. The women described themselves as nuisances as described by this Process Manager, age 33: "I felt I was an annoyance to that person." Further, a Medical Assistant, age 32, stated that she was unable to complete her work without acting as a bother and begging for information, "It was usually like, I'm sorry to bring this up, I don't mean to be a pest, 'cause when you feel like you can't get anything done, you feel like you're being a pest and have to go back and ask just to find out what's going on." They described the communication as timid and often apologetic, even when an apology was not warranted, as this Home Care Coordinator, age 29, shared of her day-to-day interactions, "I'm always saying I'm sorry to bother you, I guess when you don't feel like the communication is as open as it supposed to be, you always feel like you are bothering someone, so definitely bothering and saying sorry when you don't really need to." The need to ask for forgiveness for discussing work tasks or asking for a supervisors' time saturated the interviews; the women found themselves constantly saying I'm sorry or I don't mean to bother as rhetorical tactic for opening lines of communication.

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## Communication is Shutdown

The third theme is that *communication is shutdown*. This theme is interesting because, while management thwarts communication by limiting and preventing it, employees eventually limit communication by disengaging. This 35 year-old Communications Consultant's description is indicative of the comments that saturated this theme: "You just knew it wasn't worth the trouble to speak up." The employees give up either out of fear or because they no longer see the point in attempting to communicate. The participants' personal narratives were inundated with exemplars of communication withdrawal, as is typified by a 25 year-old Metrician, "She was very condescending would make up stories. Even when I talked to the supervisor above her, changes were not made; I didn't feel that saying something was worth it." Similarly, the woman in the excerpt below noted, the organization supported her supervisor's tactics:

*"Overall, communication was horrible, just in the sense that, when we got the new director, the new management, we got yelled at, not necessarily at one person, but it was like everybody was getting yelled at in the meeting. Basically, telling people that they were going to lose their jobs, instead of trying to influence the jobs to get better."*  
Medical Assistant, Age 32

Thus, the women often described their attempts to communicate as exacerbating the problem, because the organizational culture supported the bullies' behavior. The participants discussed their attempts to positively deal with the situation by sharing their experiences with management and human resources; however, none of the women shared any positive outcomes from this strategy. Rather, they often found their supervisors to be more punitive once it was communicated that the target had talked with upper management or human resources. As a Marketing Manager, age 42, expressed: "It makes me angry that the company would tolerate that style. Similarly, a 62 year old Professor shared this sentiment regarding lack of support from human resources and top leadership: "It just feels unjust." Hence, withdrawal became an important tool for survival; it helped the women to rhetorically manage the terror of work by choosing silence as often as possible.

Overall, this theme describes how the women *gave up* after a period of time and silenced themselves, as is demonstrated by this quote from a 28 year-old Office Manager:

*"It was bad, horrible. There was a lot of communication through email instead of face to face communication. Because I knew that he wasn't going to do anything to change the situation or he would just lie about it. I didn't feel like I would get results I wanted or needed in speaking with him. I think as time went on I pretty much said whatever, but there's going to be no satisfaction, so it was like, why waste your breath? Interaction became less and the only time that I would interact with him was if I absolutely needed to, but I would still try to find the answer from somewhere else if I could."*

Hence, the women's descriptions were overwhelmed with exemplars that including *giving up, not wasting your breath, or avoiding interaction*. Over time, they came to believe that there was either no benefit for communicating or it involved a cost that was simply too high. As this 42 year-old Consultant shared, "I did my best to avoid any communication." They were clear that they did not begin with this tactic, but it evolved as a way to survive, because every attempt they made to communicate was met with a negative response from being ignored to contempt or anger. Over and over, the women shared that they tried more positive methods of communication, but after multiple failed attempts, they felt they had no choice, given the way they were treated by their supervisors, as a Grant Writer, age 57, shared: "I have a pretty easy going, go with the flow personality, but this was not just anything, you would not talk to your dog the way he talked to me."

## DISCUSSION

*"I was not able to do my job to its full potential, because I didn't have all the tools and resources that I needed to do that. So, basically, he was very selective in what he communicated to us." Process Manager, age 33*

The central concern of this paper was to examine the rhetorical tactics of targets in response to bullies; as such, the first research question addressed how professional women characterize the communicative tactics their supervisors use? Overall, the theme that emerged in response to this research question is that *communication is silenced*. While supervisors used a variety of communicative tactics, the women clearly described an overall strategy aimed at silencing the targets. Rhetorically, the targets described the bullies as thwarting communication by engaging in *one way communication, lacking openness, challenging communication* and charging employees with *insubordination* when they shared ideas, asked questions or spoke openly. Further, the supervisors ignored, *ridiculed* and *threatened* the women.

In response, the women were unable to perform their jobs at peak performance; their jobs were more time consuming and tasks often required frustrating amounts of time for completion, because communication was constantly thwarted. Their jobs were hindered by the lack of information they received, as this Consultant, age 44, shared: "I'd say the philosophy was, um, need to know but not necessarily in a positive way, a lot was withheld under the guise of need to know. So, it made communication difficult." Essentially, their supervisors treated routine communication as secretive, and often combative, which prohibited open lines of communication and resulted in employees that were afraid to speak; thus, as the women shared openly, they could not perform their jobs to the best of their ability without the ability to communicate openly with supervisors. As a reminder, all of these women possessed at least a bachelor's degree and worked in professional settings, so they were often dumfounded why their supervisors sought to silence them; why would they be reprimanded for asking questions that would help them perform their jobs and offering ideas that may benefit the organization? In line with Sutton's (2007)

arguments, although these women possessed a skill set that was valuable to the organization, they could not help the organization, because their supervisors were more concerned with silencing them than the skills and abilities that the women brought to the organization. Quite simply, the women were afraid, because they worked for supervisors that were prepared on a daily basis to use their power to hurt others; further, for most of the women, they worked in organizations, which facilitated a culture of fear. The complaints made to upper leadership and human resources did not result in changes in their work environments, which left them hurt, fearful and operating with no power.

The second research question investigated the communicative responses targets of bullying use in response? Two themes emerged from the data in response to this question: *hedging phrases* and *communication is shutdown*. First, the participants described how they hedged communication in order to try and open communication lines; they literally begged their supervisors to talk to them. Hence, their responses often included identifying themselves as nuisances with the bully in hopes of an opportunity to gain sufficient information to complete their tasks; rhetorically, they identified themselves as a bother, enacting the identity assigned to them by the bully. Thus, this suggests that the targets, as much as the rest of the organization, assisted the bullies in continuing their behavior; because they could not stop the bullies, they engaged in communicative behavior that enabled the bullies. In a sense, they enacted the powerless identity the abuser assigned to them by using a rhetorical tactic that signals the weaker position; the targets communicated in a manner that signaled their mistreatment. The targets clearly recognized their lack of power and rhetorical options; thus, the use of hedging phrases offered them the hope of reducing negative interactions.

The last theme, *communication is shutdown*, in response to the second research question emphasizes, again, the lack of rhetorical options for these women. When you are financially dependent on your abuser and the organization does not support your claims of cruelty, the response options are limited and rhetorically scarce. The women emphatically expressed that silencing themselves was not their first choice; however, at some point, they felt there were no other options, as most interactions with their supervisors were negative. As this 54 year old IT Project Manager expressed: "It limits the feeling of security. It limits the feeling of loyalty and, it just kind of leaves you with emptiness." As such, rhetorically, they chose to avoid communication, if at all possible. As mentioned earlier, one of the first lines of defenses for employees that are being treated poorly should be to talk to upper leadership or human resources; however, this tactic did not lead to a reduction in the attacks from the bully. Hence, the women found themselves attempting to manage the situation on their own via a rhetorical strategy that largely included silence; they chose to *withdraw* and *shutdown* as much as possible. *Avoidance* allowed them to circumvent some of the attacks by simply not engaging their supervisor.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Interestingly, while the women in this study represented a wide variety of professions and ranged in age from 25 to 62, their experiences were quite similar. During the interviews, many of them cried openly and the emotions were often raw and painful; however, despite the differences in their careers and ages, their rhetorical strategies were quite similar. As such, future studies should expand the scope to include men and a less homogenous racial sample. Further, future research should also consider quantifying the rhetorical responses of targets from a variety of demographics.

## CONCLUSION

*"You know up until that point I had never experienced anything like that and I guess I really thought that you are treated based on your work, so it was kind of a surprise." Librarian, age 28*

The majority of workplace bullying is perpetuated by supervisors and at least 40% of American workers will experience it in their lifetimes (Namie, 2007). People with power silence lower ranked employees and witnesses by discouraging resistance and building a culture of fear (Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2011). Further, the phenomenon impacts more than targets as the harmful effects of bullying send shockwaves throughout organizations, impacting targets, bystanders, and ultimately the American workforce and society. The targets have few options for rhetorically managing these situations, as they are rendered powerless by their abusive supervisors, complicit organizations and their need to stay employed; unlike other communicative interactions, there are limited rhetorical options when one is financially dependent on the abuser. As Namie (2007) notes, bullying is rarely discontinued by any means, except the individual leaving the organization. When there is no hope of discontinuing the abuse, unless one leaves the organization, rhetorical tactics are the only hope for minimizing the mistreatment. These women shared tactics that enacted a powerless identity and were aimed at minimizing abuse inside organizations that supported the behavior of bullies.

Given the data presented in this paper and in numerous other studies, alternative solutions to this type of destructive leadership must be identified. Organizations that wish to avoid an environment in which bullying occurs generally have three options. First and foremost, to create a culture that does not tolerate bullying actions and to ensure that human resource practices support actions that eliminate this destructive behavior. Although the legal framework does not yet exist, the best comparison might be similar to the steps taken to reduce or eliminate sexual harassment. Cowen's (2011) work found that few organizations have clear human resource policies that prohibit bullying; as such, rarely are the targets of bullying protected. She argues that the absence of such policies could communicate to targets that their experiences are not important and that organizations need to develop clear policies, so that human resources may

send a positive message that advocates for targets. In addition, it is important that the human resources policies and procedures be completely transparent; as such, periodic external audits and public reporting might also reduce the culture of fear that bullies are allowed to perpetuate. Organizations that allow an outside point of view by experts in the form of external audits create an environment where the entire onus is not on the target and bystanders to report such acts.

Second, upper management, with specific attention given to chief executives or their equivalent, must set standards that will not tolerate the destructive actions of bullies. More importantly, if that behavior is to be extinguished, egregious or repeat offenders as Sutton (2007) suggests must be separated from the organization regardless of their seeming importance at the time. It must be clear that such conduct will not be tolerated; essentially, procedures must be put in to place, which are enforced by top executives, communicating a no tolerance policy.

Third, in much the same manner that an organization seeks to ascertain possible ethical behavior prior to employment, employers need to develop screening techniques that preclude bullies from being hired. Organizational bullies can be responsible for targets' lost productivity, sick time, and other work related activity; as such, bullies represents a significant financial risk. In some cases, such loses could exceed those due to other avoidable risks, as a consequence of the effects of bullying behavior within the organization over time. Organizations cannot afford to allow bullies to affect profits, deadlines and innovation, and productivity. Even though the legal liability that may eventually stem from proposed laws is still hypothetical, as the women in these interviews shared, the cost of bullying behavior to an organization and to its employees is simply too great to be ignored.

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# EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES ON BUSINESS AIR TRAVEL

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## ABSTRACT

*The airline industry suffered a 6.1% decrease in air traffic during the 2008 recession. One of the speculated reasons for that decline has been the rise in computer-mediated technology, which has allowed people to meet virtually all across the globe. The availability of such computer-mediated technologies has resulted in the increased examination of their effectiveness as a substitution for airline travel. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of business travelers' use of commercial airlines versus use of computer-mediated technologies. Data were gathered from 60 business travelers in the Atlanta-Hartsfield Jackson International Airport in Atlanta, Georgia. The data were analyzed using the motivation-opportunity-ability framework and coded to identify themes. Findings showed business travelers prefer a combination of computer-mediated and face-to-face communication. Participants noted a heavy reliance on email for communication, with training as a common reason for travel. Smart phones were also stated as critical devices for business travelers, and laptop computers were identified as helpful tools when out of the office. Findings represented that business travelers still find business travel important augmented by computer-mediated communication. Findings suggest the need for airlines to support wi-fi technologies and plug-in stations supporting business travelers. Findings also suggest that organizations continue to develop video conferencing technologies when air travel is prohibitive. This study contributes to overall positive social change by helping tourism and hospitality industries target business professionals more effectively by providing business centers, offering wi-fi, and targeting training and large-scale meeting needs.*

## FOUNDATION OF THE STUDY

Business travel has changed in the years following the 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. Since this time, airlines have entered into bankruptcy and travel is substituted by emerging technologies, such as videoconferencing (Santra & Giri, 2009). In this study I assessed the needs of the business traveler to discover when they are still finding the need to travel via commercial airline versus using these emerging technologies for business meetings.

## **BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM**

September 11, 2001 was a devastating day in the United States; but, no one could have predicted the impact it would have on the future of commercial airlines (Chi & Baek, 2012). In the subsequent years, airlines began filing bankruptcy as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan began, and the rising cost of jet fuel began to become an industrial challenge (Bhadra & Kee, 2008). Consequently, management began to look to technology for less expensive ways to connect with clients, employees, and shareholders. Although these technologies can be an effective substitution for face-to-face meetings (Santra & Giri, 2009), there has to be a combination of both computer-assisted communication and face-to-face meetings (Celuch & Murphy, 2010). Technology has enabled work teams to become more dispersed geographically. However, the need for frequent communication among workers is still critical to the team's success (Reed & Knight, 2010).

There is a gap of literature regarding why business travelers conduct business using face-to-face meetings or through the use of computer-assisted technology. Aguilera (2009) explored the reasoning behind the choice for businesses to have workers travel via commercial airlines; but, this needs to be explored further. Aguilera stated that the more complex the issue, the more likely it will require a face-to-face meeting. I sought to fill the gap by asking why business travelers choose to travel instead of using emerging technologies. The research provided in this study will help contribute to an improved business practice for commercial airlines and other hospitality industries that focus on meeting the needs of the business traveler.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

According to Pearlman and Gates (2010), companies have to innovate with technology when it comes to business meetings. Emerging technology is allowing people to meet virtually all across the globe, and this is affecting companies with decreasing budgets and impacting the airline industry. The airline industry suffered a 6.1% decrease in air traffic during the 2008 recession and is still struggling to recover with gas prices continuing to rise and a significant drop in passengers (Franke & John, 2011). The general business problem is the decline in business travelers using air travel has caused a decline in other industries that are tied closely with commercial airlines (Pearlman & Gates, 2010). These industries include hospitality services, for example hotels and other meeting facilities. The specific business problem addressed in this study is the need to identify when business travelers are choosing air travel instead of using the many technology choices available.

## **PURPOSE STATEMENT**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived perceptions and experiences of business people who are choosing to travel by commercial airline versus using numerous available emerging technologies for business purposes. I interviewed 60 participants at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta, Georgia using a modified Van Kaam method (Moustakas, 1994). The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed. The resulting data was formatted in matrices to identify trends.

The population for this study was current business travelers in the United States, 18 years or older, who chose to travel via commercial airlines for specific business needs.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain insights into the reasons why business travelers choose to travel via commercial airliners rather than use computer-assisted communication technologies. The need to understand when business travelers choose to travel is an important aspect in understanding the underlying business needs in the United States (Aguilera, 2008). Literature exists on the airline industry's potentially decrease in profits through the use of computer-assisted communication (Aguilera, 2008; Berry, 2008; Gustafson, 2012; Lu & Peeta, 2009). The literature consists of communication theories and the necessity of face-to-face meetings and computer-assisted communication being used to complement one another, rather than substitute forms of communication (Carare & Chang, 2010; Celuch & Murphy, 2010; Gustafson, 2012; Lu & Peeta, 2009; Majumdar, 2010; Santra & Giri, 2009). The central research question proposed for this study is as follows: Why do business travelers choose to travel versus using emerging technologies?

### **Subquestions for this study are as follows:**

1. Why would an employee travel for business instead of using a number of emerging technologies for communicating?
2. What technologies do business travelers use when traveling, and which ones would help make them more productive?
3. What technologies do business travelers use instead of choosing to travel, and what are the reasons behind this?

## **ASSUMPTIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND DELIMITATIONS**

### **Assumptions**

It was assumed that the research was conducted in a natural setting. According to Creswell (2007), the importance of conducting the research in a natural setting is critical for the participant to feel at ease during the interview process. It was assumed that inductive analysis was the best method to interpret the data. Inductive analysis was used in this study to interpret the themes within the data. This analysis was used to accurately gain interpretation of the participants lived experience.

It was assumed that the participants answered the questions honestly and to the best of their ability and that the focus was on the participants' meanings and interpretations of the questions. I was there to facilitate the questions and record responses, and did not have any influence on the participant. Also, to insure this, the participants and I had no prior knowledge of each other.

The final assumption is that I conducted a thorough literature review prior to conducting analysis. This allowed me to know the multiple perspectives that participants might have to better interpret and analyze the data.

### **Limitations**

The limitations are: (a) the study was restricted to the population within Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, (b) I was seeking a cross-section of interviews that relate to jobs and industry, and (c) the data were captured over the course of 3 days.

The population is a concern with any qualitative phenomenological study (Bernard, 2000) and the main limitation is that the study was limited to the Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport. This could be a possible limitation due to the population traveling to certain locations that the Hartsfield-Jackson Airport services. Even though it is a major airport hub in the United States, it is not inclusive to every possible destination.

Another limitation is the fact that the research is broken down into several industries and types of jobs of participants. This includes industry types that are classified as service, product or retail/distribution. The job categories are broken down within the industry as: sales/marketing, operations/manufacturing, consulting/outsourcing services, and company-based support services. While this list is not comprehensive of every possible business traveler, this could be considered a limitation within the study.

The time period of data collection is another limitation to the study. The data were collected over a 3-day period. This is a short time of data collection and the participants might have had certain biases that occur out of my control during that time frame. Possible outside influences include: airport travel delays, weather or other possible unforeseen events.

## **Delimitations**

The scope of the study is that certain factors that are included which have significant influence on the direction of the outcome. These delimitations are the: (a) population, (b) the sample size, and (c) the location of the study. The population interviewed was business travelers that had lived experiences about what they need to be effective in their business while they travel. The sample size of 60 interviews is due to the desire to get experiences from a cross-section of industries and job types. The choice of location is Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, due my ability to gain access to the population at this location.

## **A REVIEW OF THE PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC LITERATURE**

The review of the academic and professional literature of this study is focused on three general areas: how airlines have affected business travelers, how businesses use technology to communicate, and how motivation-opportunity-ability theory applies to this study.

### **Airlines and Business Travelers**

According to Lu and Peeta (2009), business travelers are still the primary targets of commercial airline industry, consisting of the majority of full-fare sales. However, this number has declined from 2001 to 2009, due primarily to terror threats, rising costs, and the introduction of teleconferencing (Lu & Peeta, 2009). Denstadli (2004) predicted that in the United States 7% of air travel for business purposes would be replaced by emerging technologies, like videoconferencing. Roy and Filiatrault (1998) stated that some of the larger risks to business travel included new business practices and emerging technology. Roy and Filiatrault believed that videoconferencing in lieu of travel would create a large negative impact to the airline industry if the technology was widely adopted and used. However, Lu and Peeta believed that there is a relationship between videoconferencing and air travel, and that they are not mutually exclusive. Lu and Peeta (2009) discovered that the use of air travel is for creating and establishing business relationships, and technology is used to enhance and maintain relationships.

Lu and Peeta (2009) found that the likelihood of videoconferencing to replace travel was higher than the opposite, for travel to substitute videoconferencing. They perceived that the meeting's context was the critical decision factor on choosing the mode of communication, but did not get into specific contexts (Lu & Peeta, 2009). This substantiates Berry's (2011) claim that there is still a need for face-to-face communication in businesses, and that the reasons behind the meeting drives the choices of spending money to travel.

Gustafson (2012) stated that many factors are actually causing business travelers to increase air travel. Some of the reasons for more frequent travel include disbursement of work team, the increase of using consultants, increased project management, and growth of globalization (Gustafson, 2012). Another reason for an increase in business travel is the mobility of conducting business. Gustafson stated that technological advancements on making employees more mobile are a reason for increased air travel and not a limitation for business travelers. The business traveler is not there just to travel, but to conduct business as efficiently as possible for their organization (Gustafson, 2012). This is one of the reasons to assess the needs of the business traveler.

Aguilera (2009) identified the need for the business traveler as a critical role in business. The strategic nature of organizations creates the fiber of the business traveler (Aguilera, 2009). Organizations are more global and meetings with partners involved with the business create a critical role for face-to-face communication, in addition to computer-assisted communication. Aguilera stated that the needs of the organization, which have made the worker more independent, have contributed to a flattening of the hierarchical organization.

According to Bhadra and Kee (2008), many factors affected air travel throughout 2001-2011. These factors began with the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, which was followed by the concern of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), then came the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Bhadra & Kee, 2008). The authors noted that another element that reduced air travel was the adoption of videoconferencing.

Bhadra and Kee (2008) stated that the losses in air travel due to these events have totaled somewhere around \$50 billion, and has forced major legacy carriers into bankruptcy. At the time that they conducted their study, commercial airlines had only begun to assess fees for luggage and other services. They predicted that with the state that the airlines were in at the time of their writing, these fees would continue to increase with the rising costs of jet fuel (Bhadra & Kee, 2008). Bhadra and Kee called for the airlines to become more strategic. This contributed to the current study to gain insight into business traveler's needs.

Beaverstock, Derudder, Faulconbridge, and Witlox (2009) shed light on the fact that despite the rise of videoconferencing and real-time communication, business travel has actually grown. The authors argued that the need for face-to-face communication in business is still essential to building trust within relationships; many of the emerging technologies allow for more frequent communications, but do not eliminate the need for face-to-face encounters (Beaverstock et al., 2009). Beaverstock et al. argued that the need for seamless communication in the digital age has actually created the demand for more frequent face-to-face encounters as a more personal and meaningful forms of communication. The authors also described some reasons that require business travel: sales, training, trade fairs and attending conventions (Beaverstock et al., 2009).

Beaverstock et al. (2009) observed that most business travelers do suffer in their workload from being away from the office, despite the mobility of today's office space. Even



though the airline and hotels have tried to give the business traveler the tools to maintain productivity, there is still a loss of this productivity when traveling. Beaverstock et al. praised the mobility of the office space. Due to wireless hot spots, work environments can be located in airports, hotels, coffee shops, aircraft cabins, and even the back of a limousine.

Millar and Salt (2008) defined a variety of business travel due to length of travel time. Most people that are business travelers (30 day travel rotation or less) have increasing pressure of maintaining a stricter budget (Millar & Salt, 2008). During the time that they published this study in 2008, the United States was suffering an economic downturn. According to Business Travel Trends (2009), many organizations cut back their business travel expenses in response to the 2008 economic crisis. This caused an increase in alternate forms of real-time communication for business to be conducted (Business Travel Trends, 2009). Business travelers anticipated budgets to only slightly increase when the economy recovered, due to the ability to get work achieved by other communication methods. The needs of the business traveler must be met during the travel experience, and this study seeks to discover if that is being accomplished.

Boetsch, Bieger, and Wittmer (2011) conducted a study on the importance of the customer-value framework on how it applies to business travelers who are choosing an airline. The findings showed that airline brand loyalty is the major factor for choice, but other factors including journey time, price, service and features were all considered to play a role in the business traveler's decision-making process (Boetsch et al., 2011). The emotional factors at play in decision-making for an airline relies heavily on brand image and past experience (Boetsch et al., 2011). This contributes to this study because some airlines have already adopted in-flight technology to help make business travelers more productive. This could have a significant impact on choice of airline for business travel, but needs to be further studied.

Wickham and Vecchi (2009) sought to reveal a gap in the literature by describing the need for business travel and information technology to be studied as drivers of globalization. The authors identified several clusters of individuals in the work environment. Among these clusters of people were those who sought out the socialization of face-to-face interaction, which meant air travel for business professionals (Wickham & Vecchi, 2009). Results indicated that a number of people traveling for business did have a high level of mobility support from the use of technology, which kept them connected to their offices and homes (Wickham & Vecchi, 2009). Based on number of business travelers, face-to-face communication is a priority for certain organizations (Wickham & Vecchi, 2009). This study took place in Dublin and further consideration needs to be applied to the United States. With budget constraints and the rising costs of flying in the United States, business travelers need to describe when travel is a necessity of the job.

Haynes (2010) showed the interdependencies of communication-assisted technology and business travel. Hayes evaluated international business travel based out of Dublin, Ireland. Hayes showed that despite the predictions that communication-assisted technology would decrease business travel, the opposite was shown.

In an attempt to find the reason behind the growing business travel trend, Hayes (2010) felt that data were insufficient to gather exact reasons and implications of the rise in mobile workers. However, Hayes cited the need for face-to-face communication as a contributing factor. The author also discovered that with the growth of the Internet, more relationships and partnerships were possible, thus creating the need for more business travel (Hayes, 2010).

Hayes (2010) mentioned that one result of computer-assisted technology is that it has influenced changes in business travel patterns. Business executives are beginning to use computer-assisted communication for certain daily functions, and travel is used for growth, partnerships, or new market opportunities. Hayes also discovered in the research that within the company surveyed, teleconferencing was more preferred than videoconferencing. This could be another reason why participants of this study did not see communication-assisted technology as a good substitute or alternative to face-to-face communication.

Hayes (2010) noted that the respondents felt as though videoconferencing was more difficult to set up and manage than teleconferencing. Echoing a finding earlier in the literature, Hayes stated that workers viewed travel as less productive, resulting in more work upon their return to the office. Hayes added a significant foundation to this study. There seems to be a lack of clarity on when United States business professionals travel or use communication-assisted technology. I sought to reduce that gap.

### **Using Technology to Communicate in Business**

Communication is seen as one of the most important parts of a successful business (Bardia, 2010). A person that can communicate effectively in the fast-paced business culture is an asset to the organization (Bardia, 2010). An employee has to be able to use all forms of communication to good effect. Advances in communication technology have created a necessity for employees to be able to communicate anywhere, especially while traveling.

According to Neera, Anjanee, and Shoma (2010), the three major challenges facing leaders in business today are globalization, liberalization, and technology. Technology is changing the way that people work. Palakeel (2011) suggested that this shift of communication technology has influenced the nature of communication in such a drastic way, that it has become a language in itself. The influence technology has had on communication has shifted culture, society and language (Palakeel, 2011).

Majumdar et al. (2010) observed that the variety of technologies in communication is increasing dramatically while costs are relatively low. Businesses are taking advantage of these technologies to harness the knowledge of their employees throughout the world (Neera et al., 2010). Celuch and Murphy (2010) stated that the power of technology as a communications medium for both internal and external organizational use helps organizations to gain competitive advantage. Technology-based communication has become one of the most powerful market-sensing tools that an organization can have (Celuch & Murphy, 2010).

The nature of business has become diffused from the workplace and has spread to the mobile office. Businesses currently rely heavily on mobile email and other web-based collaborative software to make workers more productive in the field (Basole, 2008). Companies are rapidly adopting these technological advances, helping both the business traveler and the company itself. Outfitting workers with a laptop and smart phone are commonplace, and seen as positive in the work environment (Basole, 2008).

People find comfort in working in their own surroundings, as well as feeling more trusted and empowered by their employers (Boule, 2008). Work teams are dispersed across geography, time zones, and cultures in the business environment, creating the necessity for virtual teams (Berry, 2011). Technology-based communications help organizations to be productive despite this disbursement. Gone are the days where people are required to sit face-to-face to conduct business. Although there are still advantages to meeting physically, it is no longer a necessity.

Connors (2009) argued that businesses are losing a personal connection from the lack of face-to-face communication, as people are moving toward using more technology such as email, SMS, texting, instant messaging, videoconferencing and social networks. But as organizations keep moving forward with global efforts, these communication channels are becoming ingrained into everyday business. Berry (2011) observed that workers do not even have to be displaced from one another to be a virtual team. Workers can choose to participate in a virtual team when in the same building, as they may not need or want to meet face-to face.

With advances in the communication technology, many workers have found that they feel more comfortable creating relationships and communicating openly using computer-based communication. Santra and Giri (2009) discovered that individuals who used computer-based, or asynchronous, communication were more productive. The debate between using synchronous and asynchronous communication in the business place has been going on since the debut of computer-based communication technology. Synchronous communication occurs face-to-face, while asynchronous occurs through email, texting, or videoconferencing (Santra & Giri, 2009). Communication technology has helped businesses become more productive, communicate more frequently, and make stronger working relationships (Santra & Giri, 2009).

Teams throughout the world are dispersed and asked to work together on what is considered a virtual team. These teams work toward a common goal but are displaced from each other, either through choice, skill-set, outsourcing, or contracting. These virtual teams typically operate without ever meeting face-to-face, but rather through asynchronous, computer-facilitated communication. In a study conducted by Schweitzer and Duxbury (2010), these virtual teams were found to be very productive, with only some minor indicators that they could be more productive face-to-face.

For small businesses, with smaller budgets, it is becoming more common for teams to work as part of a virtual team, so it is critical that they still see themselves to be effective in their work. Berry (2011) warned that with any team, expectations and outcomes must be made clear.

The danger of this occurring with virtual teams is just as likely as with any team communication, but with virtual teams it could take longer for misunderstandings to surface (Berry, 2011).

Trust is built on communicating information (Thomas, Zolin, & Hartman, 2009). The communication of this information can be facilitated either through face-to-face or technology-assisted encounters. Thomas et al. concluded that it is a matter of the frequency and quality of information, rather than the medium. Through Chen and Wellman's (2009) research, a group of entrepreneurs sought to discover which means of communication was most valued. In the conclusion, Chen and Wellman realized that both forms help maintain strong relationships and keep them strong. An interesting find of their research did conclude however, that the majority of business is still considered local, where face-to-face communication is more possible (Chen & Wellman, 2009).

Anderson and Patterson (2010) also studied the difference in computer-assisted and face-to-face communication to see if there was an impact on fairness judgment and levels of trust. They concluded that there were factors that were not included to accurately predict an overall trend. A person's personal preference in communications was a large factor (Anderson & Patterson, 2010). It was noted that negative feedback through face-to-face communication could sometimes be more appropriate than through computer-assisted communication (Anderson & Patterson, 2010). This is worth noting, due to the fact that some business travelers may find it important to engage in face-to-face communication when a negative outcome is at risk.

Lassen (2009) suggested that the ability of knowledge workers to use video-conferencing more effectively should eliminate the need for most business travel. However, in Lassen's findings, social perspective and preference were two large factors that play into the firm's choice for business travel. The need for knowledge workers to form networks and share knowledge between one another to help facilitate work and resolve problems is a primary motivator to travel (Lassen, 2009). This created a substantial meaning around face-to-face meetings to be able to broaden the employee's network and facilitate networking (Lassen, 2009).

In Lassen's (2009) study, the need for employees to socialize was a clear motivating factor for business travel. Lassen also described the importance of virtual or technology-assisted communication as a tool to maintain networks. The author stated that these tools are useful in addition to travel, because it alleviates stress from the worker (Lassen, 2009). Lassen showed however, that workers usually prefer face-to-face communication for assurance and a better response. Lassen stated that workers often have personal reasons for travel, especially when the destination is international. For example, workers enjoy the experience of international travel for a break in the routine from life, or to experience another culture.

Lassen (2009) concluded that video-conferencing and technology communication is more applicable when tasks are straightforward and there is little room for interpretation. This finding contributes to this study by assessing when Americans feel that business travel is necessary or can be facilitated by technological communication. Lassen completed this study in Denmark,

and the need for workers in the United States to be assessed for these needs is critical to eliminate gaps in the field.

Millar and Salt (2008) also wrote about the adaptation of virtual mobility, or computer-assisted communication, having an impact on business travel. They found that cost reduction was not a primary factor in choosing a virtual collaboration tool, but rather the main reasons for using them included virtual communications as a tool that could be used for weekly progress reports, or simple tasks (Millar & Salt, 2008). The authors also considered the reasons for virtual meeting spaces as a way to help others feel involved in the decision making process, and as a substitution for travel when meeting face-to-face was not seen as a necessity (Millar & Salt, 2008). Millar and Salt outlined that business travel was a cross-functional organizational undertaking. Professions of the people who travel, and their reasons, vary widely.

The examples that Millar and Salt (2008) described give a basis for the breakdown of the selection of participants to this study. Millar and Salt mentioned that marketing and sales, operations and production, and company supported roles, like information technology individuals, might all have reasons to become business travelers. This adds value to this study by outlining the cross-organizational mix that has been selected for study.

Technology-assisted communications, such as group emails, could bring everyone on the same ground to where they felt as though their voices could be heard equally (Bathelt & Turi, 2011). They stated that decisions reached via technology-assisted communication were at times riskier for the organization (Bathelt & Turi, 2011). The authors concluded that there were strengths and weaknesses to both sides of communicating and more exploration might be needed (Bathelt & Turi, 2011). This contributes to this study by illustrating another reason to find out from business travelers when they feel that face-to-face communications is a necessity.

Daim et al. (2012) conducted a study in which they noted problem areas for virtual teams. The authors identified five problem areas that could hinder group communications. These areas were trust, interpersonal relations, cultural differences, leadership, and technology (Daim et al., 2012). Daim et al. stated that a face-to-face meeting in the beginning was crucial to establish trust and relationships. After that, the work group was then geographically dispersed throughout the rest of the study. The authors noted that as time went on trust began to deteriorate and interpersonal relations were not fostered within work groups (Daim et al., 2012).

Another barrier to effective communication was the team's culturally diverse group. There were several instances of miscommunication or a lack of understanding due to cultural differences from the research that was collected (Daim et al., 2012). Leadership was another factor that the authors noted could be an issue. If the leader did not manage communication, like asking for feedback and acknowledgement of understanding, the work group suffered (Daim et al., 2012). Technology was the last communication weakness that was studied. It was noted that the choice of technology-assisted communication had a large impact on the success of the team (Daim et al., 2012). The authors recommended using multiple methods to communicate to insure that everyone had opportunities to have input to the situation (Daim et al., 2012). Overall,

the authors concluded that if these factors were properly managed, then technology-assisted communication could be very effective for virtual teams. This is pertinent to this study to gain insight that computer-assisted technology for some work is a viable and often used alternative to air travel.

Lowden and Hostetter (2012) conducted a study to determine if videoconferencing had the same effect on social presence as face-to-face communication has. The authors determined that many of the participants did feel satisfied with the experience of videoconferencing, but admitted that there were certain situations that it might be too impersonal (Lowden & Hostetter, 2012). One of their recommendations for further study included a qualitative analysis to identify these situations and factors. This information is one of the desired outcomes of this study.

Räsänen, Moberg, Picha, and Borggren (2010) studied the reasons why videoconferencing can and does work for business purposes. Even though the researchers admitted that there are occasions that a meeting should be held in person, they also state that discovering these occasions were not among their objectives (Räsänen et al., 2010). However, they did shed light on the need to use computer-assisted communication instead of traveling. The authors expressed a high concern for the environment and stress on the employee as factors to reduce business travel (Räsänen et al., 2010). The authors claimed that employee training and technology support could be factors in better preparing employees for technology-assisted communication practices (Räsänen et al., 2010). While Räsänen et al.'s perspective on the use of computer-assisted communication is a different perspective on the effects of business travel, the authors conclude that they hope to just impact the literature by bringing the case that companies should consider alternatives over travel.

Okdie, Guadagno, Bernieri, Geers, and Mclarney-Vesotski (2011) asked if people preferred face-to-face communication instead of computer-mediated communication. The researchers discovered that overall; the face-to-face experience was more pleasant and led to an increased likeability of the other person (Okdie et al., 2011). In a study by Michinov and Michinov (2008) about online collaboration in distance education, the researchers also wanted to discover the need for face-to-face communication. The researchers discovered that the less face-to-face communication that the learners had with one another, the more likelihood there would be problems and miscommunication (Michinov & Michinov, 2008). When the researchers increased the amount of face-to-face communication among the groups, there were better learning results from the participants involved (Michinov & Michinov, 2008). This supports the need for business travelers to communicate face-to-face for business relationship development.

An important distinction to be made is that one form of communication does not eliminate the use of another (Lo & Lie, 2008). Through the adoption of new technologies, old technology has not ceased to be used however there is a choice on channels of communication (Lo & Lie, 2008). Lo and Lie proposed that the choice of communication relied on the factors of trust in the other party and the extent of how media rich the information needed to be for understanding. They discovered that when trust with the other party was lower, if it was a newer

relationship or there was a past communication failure, the richness of the media had to be more intensive (Lo & Lie, 2008). This caused more business partners to choose to use the telephone, opt for a face-to-face meeting or use videoconferencing. This could be applied to this study as a potential theme that could be explored in the reasons why business travelers might opt to travel, as opposed to using computer assisted communication. The authors also noted, however, that email was seen as very low on the media richness scale (Lo & Lie, 2008). This could be a significant finding due to the fact that the perceptions of email might change according to the user. When business professionals experience a large number of emails, the chances of clear communication could dissolve.

Hill, Bartol, Tesluk, and Langa (2009) conducted a study to also gain insight into trust and collaboration through face-to-face and computer-mediated interactions. Hill et al. discovered that when placed in either a competitive or a collaborative situation, people responded differently in face-to-face or computer-mediated communication. They discovered that trust and collaboration were higher in the collaborative face-to-face environment (Hill et al., 2008). They also noted a decline in collaboration and competitiveness in the computer-mediated environment (Hill et al., 2009). Hill et al. concluded that, even in a competitive setting, a face-to-face interaction is important. This is an interesting discovery on the dynamics of competitive human behavior. This study contributes to furthering the concept that business travelers might need to travel for other reasons than collaboration, which could be an emerging trend in the data. Due to innovative technologies, the physical workplace has changed (Mackenzie, 2010). An employee might arrive at an office to work, but most of their work is communicated through use of computer technologies. This change has led to the concern of virtual teams and employee satisfaction to become every organization's concern, not those that communicate strictly in a virtual environment (Mackenzie, 2010).

Mackenzie (2010) revealed several perception gaps between the employees and the managers of organizations pertaining to developing good working relationships. The data revealed that the manager's knew that communicating face-to-face was important for building work relationships and trust with employees, but communicated more digitally (Mackenzie, 2010). Employees stated that they desired more face-to-face interaction with their managers, but felt that the expectations to communicate digitally were higher (Mackenzie, 2010). This research could lead to potential themes that could emerge as to why business travelers might consider travel for certain reasons versus computer mediated communication. The travelers could be visiting employees or employees could be meeting with their managers.

### **Motivation-Opportunity-Ability Framework**

The MOA framework related to how consumers interact with product purchase decisions through the motivation the consumers felt, the opportunity to obtain the item and the ability of the consumer to purchase (MacInnis & Jaworski, 1989). MacInnis, Moorman, and Jaworski

(1991) gave the framework attributes that companies could use in execution strategies. One of the elements that applied to this study is the ability for commercial airlines to effectively communicate services by educating the consumer on what they have to offer (cognition processing). This could be communicated by advertisements or by word-of-mouth strategies.

Through the MOA, commercial airlines must create a motivation for business travelers to be interested in what services they have to offer. Through communicating these services effectively, opportunity for the business traveler to become educated or realize the benefits in these services must occur. This is difficult when the target audience is in a high state of mobility. The ability for the business traveler to realize these benefits is high, due to the frequent amount of travel that the person experiences. Applying this framework to the business traveler is a crucial element for airlines to communicate the benefits that they offer.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

The participants were business travelers that were in the process of traveling for work by commercial airline transportation. This was to capture the participants in the phenomenon, to better assess their lived experiences (Creswell, 2008). The interviews took place in the airport, while participants were waiting on a flight or upon arrival to the area. Even though the population was located at the Atlanta-Jackson International Airport for the interview process, this did not fully limit the study to that geographical location. The participants could have been based anywhere in the world, as it is an international airport, and a main hub for many airline connections.

The purposive sampling technique was the research design for this study. For this study, the population was separated into four categories of those that might travel for business: sales/marketing, operations/manufacturing, consulting/outsourcing, and company based support (human resources, information technology, purchasing, finance and training). Five participants were interviewed in each category, as well as divided up to represent three industries: product, service, or retail/distribution. This required 60 interviews total to obtain the sample size that was needed. Bernard (2000) defined the qualitative sample size to be between 15-60 participants to establish themes and an accurate reflection of the phenomenon.

## **RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

### **Reliability**

With any qualitative study, monitoring the data for reliability is critical. Creswell (2008) identified areas to watch for mistakes with data collection and analysis. First, Creswell recommended that the transcriptions of the data be checked for errors that could have occurred during the transcription process. Next, the researcher must make sure that participant codes are



consistent (Creswell, 2008). Creswell also stated that the importance of the researcher being consistent to each participant creates reliability. I was reviewed prior to conducting the interviews by three doctoral business professors who had expertise in gathering, interpreting, and overseeing data for reliability and validity.

## **Validity**

This study was validated using several qualitative techniques. The first was my own admission of any bias prior to the study. Another was the use of the software NVivo 9 to maintain that data were interpreted with a computer-assisted formula, as well as researcher interpretation. Another form of validity that was used was the strict adherence to the steps described in the modified Van Kaam method for data analysis (Moustakas, 1994). These steps included: listing and preliminary grouping of the data, reduction and elimination of inapplicable data, clustering and thematizing the data into core themes that emerge, final identification and application of the data, creating individualized experiences for the participants, analyzing based on individual description and imaginative variation, and finally, constructing an analysis of the themes and essences to capture an analysis of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

## **RESULTS**

There is an ongoing debate in the literature and by professional practitioners on the best way to communicate in the business world. While people are still traveling for business needs, the purposes have changed and communication methods have been altered after the economic downturn in 2008. While many people still argue that face-to-face communication is preferred in the business world (Santra & Giri, 2009), others believe that there is now a combination of both face-to-face and using computer mediated technology (Celuch & Murphy, 2010). This study provided an exploration in to why business travelers are still traveling via commercial airline, how they communicate when they travel, and how they communicate when they are not traveling. The findings were significant in giving insight to why business workers are traveling and how they are communicating.

The research findings indicated that travel via commercial airlines was still deemed a necessity in the business world. The main purposes for travel were training and face-to-face meetings with clients or coworkers. The findings also indicated that business professionals still see communication as a vital process through the use of email and smart phones. Email was identified as the preferred method for communication when traveling, and when remaining in the home office. Other trends were identified for communication purposes, but to a lesser degree.

Fifty-eight participants expressed the need to be connected to the office, and the expectation of being productive in the workplace while traveling. Computer-assisted communication, paired with face-to-face communication, represented the last major finding.

Business people indicated that a combination of methods allowed for successful communication in the workplace, while traveling and not.

### PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

The research question that was used to guide this study was: Why do business travelers choose to travel versus using emerging technologies? I investigated the motivations behind business travel from business people via commercial airlines. The subquestions used to explore further were:

1. Why would an employee travel for business instead of using a number of emerging technologies for communicating?
2. What technologies do business travelers use when traveling, and which ones would help make them more productive?
3. What technologies do business travelers use instead of choosing to travel, and what are the reasons behind this?

Sixty participants were selected to participate based on their occupation and job industry, as noted in the table below.

**Table 1**

Participant Data			
Job Type	Product Company	Service Company	Retail/Distribution
sales/marketing	5	5	5
operations/manufacturing	5	5	5
consulting/outsourcing services	5	5	5
company-based support: Information technology/human resources/purchasing/finance/training	5	5	5

The data that was gathered were audio-recorded and then transcribed. These transcribed interviews were then imported into NVivo 9 software and analyzed for potential themes. These themes were then cross-referenced with Moustakas's (1994) modified van Kaam method of deduction for emerging themes.

The data, after reduction and clustering themes, revealed five major themes: (a) the reliance on email for communication, (b) the necessity of traveling for training, (c) the importance of having a smart phone when traveling, (d) the use of technologies to communicate, coupled with face-to-face communication, and (e) the use of computers to facilitate work and communication when traveling and when not.

### **Theme 1: The Reliance on Email for Communication**

Email was the most frequently brought up mode of communication. This is an example of computer-mediated communication. Participants made several supporting statements from using the method of email in both positive and negative ways. One of the primary needs for email was that there was a record of what was discussed. The following are some supporting statements made by participants.

- Email. Record, mostly that I have a record. Bad thing in management these days is you get into a style of managing with email. (P415)
- I like email. Fast and easy and there is always something concrete you can go back and look at. (P215)
- My computer, Email, Just leaves an electronic trail of what you have done. (P224)
- To document things, to have it in writing. (P422)
- Faster and efficient and you get document proof of everything that has happened. (P424)
- Other participants made a case for email, just stating its practicality. The following are supporting statements to document the practicality of email.
- Email is quicker. (P122)
- Email. It's just easier, faster, wastes less time. (P115)
- I have everyone's contact information saved on my phone for email so I can easily reach out to them. (P124)

### **Theme 2: The Necessity of Traveling for Training**

A majority of the participants indicated that they were traveling for training purposes for their company. This was a major finding due to the discovery of when companies are still finding a reason for people to travel for business purposes. Some participants stated that they could not perform the training through computer-mediated technology and that it needed to be hands on. Here are some statements that gave an insight for traveling for training purposes.

- It's more efficient to be in person due to multiple meetings and the need to observe people training other individuals and provide feedback. (P121)
- Well, for this particular case, for my business travel is basically for some business training and the training is conducted in a group environment, that isn't necessarily conducive to any of the technologies that are out there. (P131)
- I'm traveling with a surgeon that actually needs to do the hands on training with the technology. (P132)

- For training, I was traveling to a location for using simulators for work. Those are multimillion dollar machines so you have to travel to them. (P225)
- It was a, we were traveling for training. And for this training it really, it helped to be in person doing the training. (P314)

### **Theme 3: The Importance of Having a Smart Phone When Traveling**

The major tool of choice for today's business traveler seemed to be their smart phone. Smart phones are web-enabled for Internet and email delivery through cell phone providers. The portability of the smart phone seemed to make this device a travel necessity for today's business professionals. Here are some statements that supported the need for having a smart phone with them when traveling.

- I certainly use my phone; I do use the Internet quite a bit for email. I have a smart phone, so I have a Blackberry. So I do use email on my phone, and then when I can get to a club or to an airport where there's Internet service I'll usually follow up with my laptop. I have a GPS, so I use, I rely on that frequently because I'm usually travelling to meet customers. And within the laptop I often use Skype, • I use WebEx, so video conferencing, and plain old telephones. (P111)
- I'd have to say the iPhone right now. Because I don't have a portable computer. This trip it was mostly texting. (P114)
- Mainly my iPhone and my laptop, but mainly my iPhone. (P223)
- When I'm on the road? Definitely the iPhone. Mostly email, email for sure, and WebEx. The WebEx app. (P235)
- Basically my iPhone, that is all I have. I don't really need anything else. (P423)

### **Theme 4: The use of Technologies to Communicate, Coupled With Face-to-Face Communication**

Another major finding was that business travelers used a variety of methods to communicate with their clients and coworkers. This finding supported the theme from the literature review that business people see the value in choosing which technology to communicate with, depending on the need or desired outcome (Santra & Giri, 2009). The following statements from participants indicate that they use several different modes of communication.

- We had a face-to-face meeting with our rep agency, so it was something that required a face-to-face contact versus, you know, we use technology a lot actually. Day to day, but

certain times of the year, we find it very beneficial to just still have that human contact. (P112)

- We usually do all of those things, but I have to go look at a physical site. So I have to travel to the site. (P232)
- Um, in most cases the company that I work for encourages other uses of technology besides travel in most instances, this one just happened to be not really much of a choice to go for the training. (P231)
- Obviously face-to-face is important to establish if you're a team, kind of thing. But it's nice to, you know when you're in these virtual groups now you always work with people that aren't necessarily in the same city so being able to be on the phone can be very effective. Especially with webcasts and stuff. (P312)
- Yes, most of it is done through email. Because I'm dealing with, I guess, owners throughout the country. So the easiest form is usually email, on occasion phones but most of it is done through email or web conferencing. (P425)

#### **Theme 5: The use of Computers to Facilitate Work and Communication When Traveling and When not**

When asked about the need to be productive when traveling and when not, the participants indicated that having a laptop computer with them was a vital staple when traveling. Many participants indicated that they were traveling with laptop computers and used them frequently for communication purposes and to continue working while traveling. Here are some statements to support this finding.

- It is nice to have everything here together in one spot, but when I am home, I am on the computer and the iPhone is secondary at that time. (P133)
- I would definitely say my computer. I think the, yeah I think the iPhones, the iPhones are great to keep in touch with, email flows. But I think productivity tends to lack because you can get distracted from apps and other things and I know if I'm on my work computer I'm going to stay focused and not worry about other things. (P234)
- It would make it more... we have a lot of security on our software for our computers and phones and so I don't actually have like a company phone where I can do work on my phone. So that would be something that could make it more productive when I travel. It's a lot easier than pulling out a laptop and looking it up in the airport or, you know in the hotel room. (P411)

The first theme was the reliance on email for communication in today's business world. This finding supports that employees must have competent written communication skills to be successful in today's business environment (Jones, 2011). Through the findings of this study,

email is the method of choice when it comes to business communication for a number of reasons that the participants gave. Employers should gain examples of an employee's written communication skills prior to offering them a job.

The next finding was the necessity of traveling for training. This finding is applicable for the business world that invests a great deal of money into maintaining the education level of their employees. According to Mohamed, Rasli, and Mansor (2012) the amount of funds that companies place on training in the business environment is expected to generate a return on investment for the organization. This investment into the employee's training is still viewed by organizations as being an imperative investment. This finding supports that organizations are still viewing training of employees as being a critical element for employee success and will help grow the organization.

The next finding is that employees find that having a smart phone when traveling is highly important. Many participants expressed that they could have access to email, calling features, text features, and internet data in the palm of their hands. This finding supports that workers are becoming better equipped and proficient in a mobile environment. Organizations should view this finding in a positive way, and in a negative one.

While the worker is maintaining productivity while out of the office, the temptation for work to invade the employee's personal time is a threat. This could impact employee work performance and job satisfaction if they feel that they are always at work. However, the positives of having a smart phone while traveling seemed to please the participants that had one and used it often. They cited that they used applications for directions and other productivity tools that smart phones have to offer.

The next major finding was the use of technologies to communicate, coupled with face-to-face communication. Participants seemed to agree that they use a variety of ways to communicate for business. They use email, video-conferencing, instant messaging, group messaging, conference calls and face-to-face communication. This finding supported Celuch and Murphy's (2010) ideas that there is rational that one must look at when deciding how the communication method must rely on the message being conveyed. Several participants supported this finding that some messages are better conveyed face-to-face or through a phone conversation than through computer-mediated communication tactics. This could benefit employers by helping employees better understand their company culture when messages might be used for certain communication methods.

The final finding was the use of computers to facilitate work and communication when traveling and when not. Participants described that they are still expected to have a level of productivity of their workload while traveling. For many participants, this meant carrying a laptop computer with them to stay connected to the work environment. This finding shows that the mobility of workers is important to the employer, as well as the employees.

A few participants stated that they had to stay productive, because upon returning to the office they would have too much of a workload to handle. Many participants also expressed that

the laptops they were using were purchased and issued by the company. This should help employers better strategize toward a mobile workforce and future purchasing of technological capabilities for the worker.

### **APPLICATIONS TO PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE**

The applications for these findings for professional practice are significant. The specific problem addressed in this study was to seek when business travelers were still traveling via commercial airlines for business purposes. Traveling for training purposes was a significant finding that relates back to the problem statement. This application helps support the reasons behind business travel via commercial airlines. This could, in turn, help the airline and hospitality industries target business travel for training purposes.

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the lived experiences of how business people are communicating when they are traveling and when they are not. The findings support the modes of communication that are used are face-to-face and computer-mediated communication. This is an application to the professional practice because business people must be flexible to communicate in both written and oral communication.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The findings of this study are important for all organizations. Human Resource personnel should pay particular attention to the need for training within the organization. Organizations with sales forces or contractors should pay particular attention to the results of having a fully mobile-equipped work force. Computer-mediated communication is critical for today's business personnel and human resources should look at effective writing skills as being a critical hiring factor. When it comes to better equipping business travelers, businesses should look at engaging in contracts for smart phones and laptops to help their employees remain effective while on business traveling purposes. These results should be published in a variety of trade journals, for example business and human resource focused journals, to help organizations gain an insight to today's mobile traveler.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

There were some issues that came up that could use closer examination and further study. The need to look at the personal habit of worker's with smart phones was one that should be looked into for further study. Business professionals that have access to their email and work at all times could have issues of maintaining a work-life balance. This should be explored for employee satisfaction and employee retention purposes.

Another point for further study is the use of video-conferencing and computer-mediated communication effectiveness in organizations where their workforce is not able to travel for business purposes. Measuring the effectiveness and knowledge base against a comparable company that uses frequent business travel would be interesting in discovering similarities and differences in productivity.

## Summary and Study Conclusions

I identified the lived experiences in how business travelers via commercial airlines are using computer-mediated communication. The themes discovered by the data were the uses of both computer-mediated communication for business and face-to-face communication. Through the use of the Moustakas (1994) modified Van Kaam method and NVivo 9 qualitative software the major themes identified were: (a) the reliance on email for communication, (b) the necessity of traveling for training, (c) the importance of having a smart phone when traveling, (d) the use of technologies to communicate, coupled with face-to-face communication, and (e) the use of computers to facilitate work and communication when traveling and when not.

The insight of these themes on business travelers can help guide businesses in human resource planning and employee training investments. Human capital in organizations is often seen as one of the strategic factors of the business firm. This study helped support that belief, and helped solidify the reasons behind employee travel via commercial airlines.

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# **TAKING THE GOOD WITH THE BAD: MEASURING CIVILITY AND INCIVILITY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This qualitative research study examines the concept of incivility as a sanctionable act in the workplace. We propose that while there is much discussion by both practitioners and researchers concerning the topics of such behaviors as incivility, mutual respect, and collegiality, seldom do we find the issue of incivility included as part of performance reviews. We address the legal aspects of performance reviews, including several cases where tenure was denied in academic settings due to a lack of collegiality, which indicates a pattern of incivil behavior. We suggest that until specific measures of incivility in “traditional” workplace performance assessments parallel the specific measures of collegiality in academe, incivil behavior will continue to be ambiguous and unsanctionable for many industries. We offer recommendations for future directions in the continued exploration of incivility in the workplace.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Incivility in the workplace is more than bad manners or boorish behavior. It affects the bottom line of the business. Incivility is one of the factors causing stress in the workplace, and stress in the workplace costs U.S. businesses an estimated \$300 billion per year (Porath and Pearson, 2012). Despite a growing body of evidence showing the impact of incivility in the workplace and its impact on morale and performance, current performance appraisal measurements typically do not measure incivil behavior. Performance management systems are designed to encourage, and thus to increase, specific behaviors which lead to completion of organizational objectives. It can be contended that these behaviors are actually behavioral norms directly embedded in the culture. The majority of organizations measure these behaviors through the use of performance appraisals. It has been noted that the ratings on performance appraisals are directly linked to both organizational reward systems and to the imposition of sanctions or acts of discipline, even to the point of failed promotion and dismissal. However, if incivil behavior is typically not measured, one must question the validity of an organization's performance appraisals.

The goal of this paper is to shed light on the types of behaviors that are being included in contemporary performance appraisals. We will examine the types of behavior, civil and incivil, being measured as part of performance management systems. The incivility construct has gained

a great deal of traction. Given its high prevalence and the undesirable outcomes with which it is associated, organizations need to assess this behavior and address the problems presented by incivility. Researchers have attempted to expose the topic through outcomes, antecedents, construct parameters and distinction; however no research known to date has addressed the issue of sanctionability of incivility. This research does a review of extant performance appraisals to show that there are some concerns in the measurement of undesirable incivil behavior in organizations, as opposed to the inclusion of civil behaviors. A framework was developed upon which to analyze and review the various performance appraisals. It is the authors' belief that despite the clear organizational impact of incivil behaviors, many organizations do not include these as part of their performance appraisals. Ramifications of such an omission will be discussed, along with some exciting possibilities for future research.

### **PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS**

There are clear benefits from managing individual performance and behavior to achieve organizational goals. Performance management processes focus on a more integrated approach to the management of employee behavior that is connected to performance that leads to organization success. Performance management can be defined as a strategic and integrated approach to delivering sustained success to organizations by improving the performance of the people who work in them and by developing the capabilities of teams and individual contributors (M. Armstrong, 2006, p. 142). The purpose of performance management can be viewed generally as a means of sustaining competitive advantage through the behavior of its people (Hartle, 1997; Weiss & Hartle, 1997). De Waal (2002) believes that the main purpose of a performance management system is to alter the behavior of people. Armstrong (2000), Brown and Armstrong (1999), Engelmann and Roesch (1997), and Newton (1998) all agree that the result of performance management is specific behavior improvement.

Performance management involves the development of processes for establishing a shared understanding of what is to be achieved in the organization, and more specifically which behaviors will increase the chances of goal accomplishment. Periodically evaluating the human resources within organizations allows individuals to have a formal assessment of their behavior and how it helps or impedes goal accomplishment. Performance management is focused on the individual and his/her behavior for performance. To that end, performance management systems through performance appraisals measure outputs such as performance versus objectives. Perhaps more importantly the performance appraisal provides an assessment of individual inputs such as knowledge, skills, and abilities, derived from an individual's displayed behavior.

Performance appraisal can be defined as the appraisal rating of individuals' work performance and their behaviors by management, covering a specific time period, applied to all employees or specific groups of employees whose participation is typically mandatory or alternatively motivated by access to extrinsic reward, and where results in the form of ratings are



stored by the organization to be used for purposes that require differentiation of employees (Coens & Jenkins, 2002). Evaluation of employee behavior in the form of performance appraisals is directly tied to the Management By Objectives movement (MBO) (Drucker, 2007). While other types of management frameworks have taken favor over MBO, the process of appraising employee behavior became a familiar system within organizations today. Coens and Jenkins (2002) have shown that more than three out of four US businesses have implemented a formal performance appraisal system. These appraisal systems are designed to show what specific behavior is desired in the workplace from the employees. The idea that these systems stretch across jobs and levels within organizations allows us to assume that there are certain behaviors that are more acceptable and other behaviors that are not acceptable within the organization as a whole.

Performance appraisals have become such a fundamental part of life in organizations that consulting firms, HRIT solution organizations, and “best practices” are all available to leaders supporting the improvement of performance appraisal processes. It is clear that the performance appraisal is a very important to both practitioners and academicians. In one organization studied by Whitford and Coestee (2006) the authors found that when overall organizational performance was low, leadership of the company felt that a culture of better measures of behavior and feedback had to be put in place. The behavior desired within a performance management system and measured through a performance appraisal can become part of the culture and therefore institutionalized as expected behavior from employees.

The system of performance management itself should be aligned and linked with all aspects of human resource planning (staffing, talent management, succession planning, and leadership development). In addition, and most important to our study, is the idea that performance management, based on the measures of performance appraisals are directly connected to the reward and remuneration systems within an organization (Armstrong, 2000; Phelps, 2005; Spangenberg & Theron, 2001; Williams, 2002), as well as the development and discipline systems. Studies also show that managers make promotion decisions based on the results of their subordinate’s performance appraisal to avoid legal repercussions and promote workplace equality (Castilla & Bernard, 2010; Greenhaus, Parasuraman & Wormley, 1990; Kleiman & Durham, 1981; Lyness & Heilman, 2006). For the purpose of this paper, not only should it be noted that performance appraisals are related to these kinds of decisions, but also factors such as friendliness have been studied for decades and found to have a greater impact on overall performance ratings, than task-related behavior (Beatty, 1973). This leads the authors to believe that performance appraisal behavior criterion that represent contextual and social behavior, such as friendliness, rather than task behavior, may be truly measuring the impact of civil or incivil behaviors in the workplace. If it is the case that performance appraisals do in fact include behavior characteristics representative of incivility, then it can be said that incivil behavior is, or should be, sanctionable.

## TASK AND CONTEXTUAL PERFORMANCE

The effects of task and contextual performance on the ratings of performance appraisals are well documented (Arvey & Murphy, 1998; Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, & Blume, 2009; Rotundo & Sackett, 2002). As defined by Motowidlo, Borman, and Schmit (2009), behavior is what employees do at work. With a more evaluative nature, performance is simply behavior that can be measured as positive or negative, that is helpful or a hindrance for individual and organizational effectiveness. It is clear that performance management systems and performance appraisals should focus on the element of behavior (Motowidlo, Borman, & Schmit, 2009). These authors suggest that behavior which can be measured as more or less organizationally desirable is possible to identify. They further contend that many behaviors can be *lumped* together, but that it is more helpful in terms of analyzing appropriate behaviors for the accomplishment of organizational objectives, to parcel out behaviors into more helpful categories. Following the work of Borman and Motowidlo (1993) the focus on behavior is task and contextual performance. Task performance is defined as “the effectiveness with which job incumbents perform activities that contribute to the organization’s technical core” (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997, p.99). Contextual performance is defined as performance that is not formally required as part of the job, but that helps shape the social and psychological context of the organization (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993).

Task performance can be divided into two types. One consists of the behaviors necessary to transform raw materials into goods and services. The other suggests task behaviors are related to servicing and maintaining the organization’s core functions. Contextual, however, does not focus the organization’s process, but rather, the creation of a social and psychological environment. The contextual category consists of behaviors that enhance the social and psychological climate for the organization. These consist of behaviors such as helping others; cooperating; following rules even when inconvenient; displaying strong enthusiasm to complete tasks; and volunteering for tasks that are outside of the formal job (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993). Each behavior has a contribution value for the organization. Task behaviors contribute positively or negatively to the organization’s primary function. These behaviors are known to add value by contributing to the organization’s ability to produce. Contextual behaviors show value by maintaining or improving the organization’s environment and climate desired for core functioning.

These authors further develop that employees maintain work habits which they learn over time. Habit performance has the ability to either facilitate or interfere with the performance of behaviors that contribute to successful organizational objective completion (Motowidlo, Borman, & Schmit, 2009). Task work habits are behavioral responses to situations that either facilitate or interfere with task behaviors. These include the use of technical information, the display of highly technical performance, and making decisions about technical work. Contextual work habits are those patterns of responses that either facilitate or interfere with the performance in

contextual situations. These include the tendency to approach or avoid certain interpersonal experiences, different ways of conflict management, the display of political styles, and communication behavior. Ultimately the display of (or lack thereof) task and/or contextual behavior will have an effect on the successful completion of organizational goals.

Much has been written about the outcomes expected for successful display of contextual behavior. Behaviors involving persistence, self-discipline, effort and compliance are likely to increase individual worker effectiveness (Motowidlo, Borman, & Schmit, 1997; Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997). Displays of helpfulness, consideration, and cooperation are expected to increase group effectiveness and reduce friction among organizational members (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Smith et al., 1983). Motowidlo et al. (1997) also noted that on the aggregate the display of contextual behaviors should improve organization efficiency by freeing up resources that would normally be used to handle disciplinary problems, displays of miscommunication, and conflicting demands from individuals. Van Scotter (2000) showed that contextual performance explained a significant amount of variance in promotion eligibility, and actual turnover. Van Scotter (2000) also demonstrated that employees who choose to display contextual behaviors are more likely to report higher job satisfaction and stronger organizational commitment.

The bridge between contextual behaviors and civil behaviors is a theoretically short one. This can be seen when we examine the contextual performance instrument. Borman and Motowidlo (1993) originally measured contextual performance with a 16-item scale designed for their military sample: "While performing his or her job, how likely is it that this person would: (a) comply with instructions even when supervisors are not present; (b) cooperate with others in the team; (c) persist in overcoming obstacles to complete a task; (d) display proper military appearance and bearing; (e) volunteer for additional duty; (f) follow proper procedures and avoid unauthorized shortcuts; (g) look for a challenging assignment; (h) offer to help others accomplish their work; (i) pay close attention to important details; (j) defend the supervisor's decision; (k) render proper military courtesy; (l) support and encourage a co-worker with a problem; (m) take the initiative to solve a work problem; (n) exercise personal discipline and self-control; (o) tackle a difficult work assignment; (p) voluntarily do more than the job requires to help others or contribute to unit effectiveness." In this scale are represented several behaviors that can be considered civil: (1) cooperation, (2) volunteering to help, (3) supporting and encouraging coworkers, behaving with courtesy, (4) exercising self-control, and (5) doing more for effectiveness. Examples of this type of behavior are often included in human resource measures such as selection, promotion and performance management systems. It has been noted that when behaviors are included in these types of organizational documents, they become part of the culture and institutionalized as expectations for employee behavior. Expectations met can lead to reward; expectations missed can lead to sanctions.

We further extend this line of thinking by including a discussion of incivil behavior and its impact on organizations. Following are several court cases in which the promotion decisions

were based on what can be considered absence of civil behavior, and in some instances, incivil behaviors.

## **BACKGROUND ON INCIVILITY**

Workplace incivility is a subset of deviant behavior identified by Andersson and Pearson (2001) as “*Low intensity, deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect (p. 457).*” Authors give examples of behaviors such as speaking to others in a disrespectful or demeaning manner, exclusion from workplace camaraderie, ignoring others, cutting people off while speaking, making snide remarks about others, or other rude behaviors. This definition of workplace incivility has been widely adopted by researchers (Blau & Andersson, 2005; Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2000; Caza & Cortina, 2007; Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001; Lim, Cortina, & Magley, 2008; Penney & Spector, 2005). In a similar vein, rudeness, according to Porath and Erez (2007), is “insensitive or disrespectful behavior enacted by a person that displays a lack of regard for others” (p. 1181). Giacalone and Greenberg (1997) frame workplace incivility as a subset of antisocial employee behavior.

Workplace incivility is defined in part as deviant behaviors that are low in intensity (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Low intensity, however, does not mean that incivility is of minor consequence and can safely be overlooked in organizations. Andersson and Pearson (1999) theorize that uncivil experiences in the workplace are like an accumulation of minor stresses. These may be more damaging than a single, major stressful event and spiral to a point where incivility transitions to overt aggression (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina, Langhout, Magley, & Williams, 2001). Andersson and Pearson’s (1999) model of a conflict spiral from incivility to coercive behaviors that lead to workplace aggression is consistent with the “popcorn” model of aggression where repeated minor offenses or injustice eventually lead to an explosion of aggression (Folger & Skarlicki, 1998; Schat & Kelloway, 2005).

Examples of incivil behaviors include writing nasty and demeaning notes or emails, undermining a colleague’s credibility, treating another like a child, berating one for an action in which he or she played no part, giving people the silent treatment, publicly reprimanding someone, making unfounded accusations, and spreading gossip (Johnson & Indvik, 2001; Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2000). Being uncivil also includes excluding someone from a meeting, neglecting to greet someone, cutting people off while they are speaking, not turning mobile phones off during meetings; listening in on another’s phone call, ignoring a colleague’s request, using demeaning language or voice tone, making inflammatory remarks; and writing rude or unnecessarily incendiary emails (Johnson & Indvik, 2001; Pearson, Andersson, & Wegner, 2001). Workplace incivility manifests itself in the work environment through a wide assortment of behaviors such as rude remarks, verbal attacks, wrongful blame, preferential treatment, and unfavorable work assignments (Carter, 1988; Marks, 1996; Neuman & Baron,

1997). Workplace incivility is generally verbal, passive, indirect and subtle as opposed to physical, active, direct, and overt (Baron & Neuman, 1996). Physical, active, direct, and/or overt behavior is more easily recognized as bullying and is more easily sanctioned by the organization. The very nature of incivility makes it less obvious, more difficult to recognize, and therefore more difficult to sanction or even to address.

What is considered acceptable workplace behaviors depends on organizational norms and legal frameworks. For instance, less formal organizational cultures may accept conduct that would be unacceptable in a more formal organization. However, even these less formal organizations may find their “acceptable” conduct restricted by changes in the legal environment. New statutes or regulations may require changes in an organization’s acceptable workplace standards and behaviors. Before sexual harassment laws came into effect, sexual harassment in the workplace did not constitute cause for complaint and legal action. Today it is acknowledged and accepted that sexual harassment creates a hostile work environment, and that a failure to address the issue can result in penalties imposed on the organization. Johnson and Indvik (2001) suggested that workplace incivility may cause the development of a hostile work environment increasing the likelihood of harassment, intimidation and violence, which may lead to serious legal and economic ramifications.

Sherif (1936) defined norms as acceptable or desirable prescribed behaviors and attitudes within a given social unit. Consequently, anyone whose behaviors fall outside of such prescribed boundaries will be perceived as violating behavioral norms. Workplace norms are shared behavioral standards developed from the traditions, policies and culture of a workplace (Pearson, Andersson, and Porath, 2000). Every organization has a universal set of norms for mutual respect, enabling cooperation between organizational members (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). It follows that incivil acts violate workplace norms for appropriate behavior. Pearson et al. (2000) asserted that organizational norms of civility may be eroded over time if incivil behaviors are left unchecked. This assertion appears to be supported by Skarlicki, Folger, and Tesluk (1999) who suggested that retaliatory behaviors may be representative of an organizational norm.

Due to the low intensity of incivil behavior, as well as the ambiguous intent to harm, very little attention has been given to how to reduce incivility in the workplace. Since, by definition, any intent to harm is ambiguous, instigators are able to rationalize complaints of incivil behaviors by claiming that the victim of the alleged incivil behavior misinterpreted or was overly sensitive. While the low intensity and the ambiguity of any intent to harm are likely to have lessened concern about the effect of workplace incivility, the issue should no longer be ignored or downplayed. Research establishes that workplace incivility is a widespread problem impacting work processes and workplace performance (Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2000). A recent study of a university employee sample by Cortina and Magley (2007) revealed that 75% of those employees experienced uncivil behavior.

Incivil behavior is displayed as low intensity rude behaviors and disrespect that may be overlooked as an instance, but with frequency such behaviors could have detrimental effects at

individual, group, and organizational levels. Cortina et al. (2001) likened the escalation of incivil behaviors to those everyday hassles, which induce stressors that may in fact impair an individual's well-being. Workplace incivility is damaging to organizations in the form of increased turnover intention (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001; Lim, Cortina & Magley, 2008; Giumetti, McKibben, Hatfield, Schroder, Kowalski, 2012), decreased job satisfaction (Cortina et al., 2001; Cortina and Magley, 2003; Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2004; Penney & Spector, 2005; Lim, et al., 2008; Lim & Lee, 2011; Morrow, McElroy & Scheibe, 2011), decreased performance (Porath & Erez, 2007; 2009; Estes & Wang, 2008), decreased organizational commitment (Blau & Andersson, 2005), and decreased organizational citizenship behavior (Porath & Erez, 2007). Additionally, Andersson and Pearson (1999) discuss the spiraling effect of incivility. The spiraling effect states that in the presence of incivility a retaliation of sorts occurs, possibly leading to much higher intensity aggressive behaviors.

One of the challenges with sanctioning workplace incivility is determining at what point such behavior become sanctionable. A second challenge is determining how often such conduct occurs before management needs to address the issue. Should the organization wait for a complaint, or should it be proactive in searching for such conduct? Perhaps most important, would the behavior be addressed and prevented if it were included as a behavioral characteristic on a performance appraisal?

## LEGAL ISSUES

It has been shown that workplace incivility is connected to many negative workplace outcomes. However, given the definition of incivility as "low-intensity deviant behavior" that is intended to harm the victim in "violation of workplace norms for mutual respect," it is surprising that many organizations do not sanction these behaviors. Perhaps the reason for this is the ambiguity in the definition, which makes it difficult to describe in an organization's code of ethics or employee handbook. Or perhaps the reason is the innocuousness of the definition put forward by Andersson and Pearson. Merriam-Webster defines incivility as "the quality or state of being uncivil," and as "a rude or discourteous act." These definitions are also ambiguous, but the commission of a rude or discourteous act moves the conduct closer to bullying, and bullying is increasingly being addressed in organizational policies and in legislation. For example, New Jersey recently enacted the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights, which applies to New Jersey schools, and forty-five U.S. states have anti-bullying statutes, although none address bullying in the workplace.

There are statutory provisions in the European Union to protect workers from bullying in the workplace, and other nations (Canada, Australia, Sweden, France, Denmark, and Serbia) have enacted legislation addressing workplace bullying. Going a step farther, the German Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs mandates that "employers are obliged to protect their employees' right of privacy and health. They must therefore prevent mobbing, act against

employees who mob others and take all possible measures to prevent mobbing in their companies.” (Dobb, 2011) “Mobbing,” which is defined as causing emotional abuse by ganging up against a coworker, seems to be somewhat low-intensity deviant behavior, or incivility, at least under the definition of that work by Andersson and Pearson.

Curtin and Belak observed that “[h]ealthcare organizations often exhibit a ‘3 Tribe’ mentality that becomes a breeding ground for workplace incivility and fosters workplace bullying.” They recognize that conflicts in the workplace are unavoidable, and they recommend the use of an Ombuds to help resolve issues that arise from such conflicts. They also recommend reporting incidents of incivility to the Ombuds, who can then initiate steps to promote compassion and kindness to relieve the additional stress caused to healthcare employees due to the incivility of co-workers.

In a traditional employment “at will” setting, either the employer or the employee can terminate the employment at any time and for any reason. This means that an employer does not even need a good reason to dismiss an employee. It is obvious in such a setting that incivility can be a valid ground for dismissal. Since any reason will suffice, even civility might be grounds for dismissal (That employee was just too nice to people. I hate that.).

Some states have modified the traditional “at will” doctrine, finding that an employee has a “property interest” in retaining his or her job, usually after completing some probationary period. In these states, the employee can still resign at any time and for any reason, but the employer cannot dismiss the employee without good cause. In such a setting, once an employee completes his or her probationary period it is highly unlikely that incivility would be deemed a valid ground for dismissal unless there is such a provision in an employee handbook or in the employment contract. Of course, it would probably be valid during the probationary period.

In an employment where the employee has a contract for a stated time period, dismissal without cause can result in a breach of contract lawsuit against the employer. If the employer can justify the dismissal “for cause,” he or she can avoid liability. A dismissal for incivility is unlikely to be deemed “for cause” in the current environment, which means an employer who dismissed an employee for his or her incivility would likely be found in breach of contract. However, if the employment contract and/or the employee handbook made civility – or incivility – a significant factor in any evaluations of the employee’s performance, a display of incivility or lack of civility could provide adequate cause to uphold a dismissal.

Thus, if an organization would like to make civility a significant factor in the employment setting, it might be well advised to review the model followed in academe: specifically the tenure model.

In a university setting, collegiality is often a factor in tenure and promotion decisions. A faculty member who regularly acts in an uncivil manner is likely to be viewed as non-collegial, which may result in a denial of tenure and dismissal from the institution. A few cases illustrate this point.

In *Mayberry v. Dees* a Spanish professor at East Carolina University was denied tenure. The faculty member insisted that the denial was a violation of his First Amendment right to free expression, alleging that he was denied tenure because of comments he had made that were critical of the department chair. However, the court found that the linkage between the alleged animus of the chair and the chair's recommendation against tenure was tenuous at best. After briefly examining the history of the tenure system, the court found that:

"In the real world, a probationary period is necessary, and tenured status must rest upon explicit judgment... The commission recommends that the award of tenure always be based on an explicit judgment of qualifications, resulting from continuous evaluation of the faculty member during the probationary period, in the light of the institution's stated criteria.

Demonstration of factors well beyond the mere passage of time in service, namely (a) credible scholarship, (b) accomplished pedagogy, (c) able service to the university in matters associated with its maintenance, operation, growth, and continued endurance, and (d) developed collegiality – the capacity to relate well and constructively to the comparatively small bank of scholars on whom the ultimate fate of the university rests – is required by the university, and should be established before a candidate is granted tenure.

Faculty members in universities in general who had proven their own worth appreciated the possibility of pollution of the academic atmosphere, in which their own lives were conducted, through indiscriminate admission of insufficiently tested candidates who might prove to be unproductive, uncollegial, or both."

The decision to deny tenure was upheld by the court. The basis for the denial was a lack of collegiality, included a refusal to adhere to departmental policies and procedures, a feeling within the faculty that Mayberry was "given to complaining," was "adolescent" and "lazy," and refused to compromise.

In *Bresnick v. Manhattanville College* a faculty member in the Dance and Theater department filed suit when denied tenure. Bresnick argued that the college had breached its contract with him and had acted in bad faith in denying his application for tenure. The trial court granted summary judgment to the college, and Bresnick moved for reconsideration. Upon reconsideration the court upheld its prior decision.

According to the court's opinion, "Tenure was denied, based upon what the College considered to be a deficiency in ability to work with other faculty members in an atmosphere of cooperation and collegiality so that dance and drama could be integrated with other activities. There is nothing in any contractual agreement preventing the institution from considering such matters in evaluating 'service to the College.' It is predictable and appropriate that in evaluating service to an institution, the ability to cooperate would be deemed particularly relevant where a permanent difficult-to-revoke long-term job commitment is being made to the applicant for tenure." It went on to state that "[a] tenured position necessarily required collaboration with colleagues – specifically those who are in the institution from which the applicant seeks a long-term job commitment."



In *University of Baltimore v. Iz*, a case of first impression in Maryland, the court quoted a number of sources citing the importance of collegiality in the tenure decision before ruling in favor the University and upholding its denial of tenure. Among the quotations were the following:

*Levi v. University of Texas*, “We must recognize... that the future of the academic institution and the education received by its students turn in large part on the collective abilities and collegiality of the school’s tenured faculty.”

*Mabey v. Reagan*, “An essential element of the probationary process is periodic assessment of the teacher’s performance, including the person’s ability and willingness to work effectively with his colleagues.”

*Schalow v. Loyola University*, Holding that the faculty handbook’s provision that spoke of “evaluating the suitability of the faculty member as a professional colleague” was “certainly broad enough to include collegiality.”

## METHODS

In this qualitative analysis we selected employee performance appraisal forms from multiple industries. These forms were coded for inclusion of incivility and in what capacity.

We limited our search to actual employee performance appraisal forms, rather than appraisal guidelines, or sample documents. Key words were used to search published performance review forms across diverse industries. These key words included employee performance review, performance appraisal forms, employee evaluation forms, employee appraisal forms. We limited our coding to performance appraisal forms in which we were able to indicate an organization and position where it was being utilized. This resulted in a final sample size of 132 appraisal forms. The sample represented three industries: education, government, and private industry. Five appraisal forms were included from private industry, 18 from government agencies, and 109 from educational institutions.

On each review form we classified and coded the behavioral items on whether civility or incivility was measured; how it was measured; and how it was weighted by number of questions. We were able to analyze each question for examples of civility and incivility. Two researchers coded each employee appraisal form for these examples. There was a 90% agreement rate between researchers. Where there was a disagreement, further discussion was had concerning examples from previous research and recoding of the employee appraisal forms, until agreement was met. When 100% agreement was met by the researchers, they were able to analyze question content. In doing so, questions that did contain examples of civility and incivility were divided

into five broad themes: (1) communication, (2) interpersonal relationships, (3) attitudes, (4) teamwork, and (5) cooperation. Each of these themes was analyzed overall and by industry.

## RESULTS

The number of articles addressing how incivility is handled in organizations has been scant. Incivility has been examined from antecedents and outcomes, however, to date there are no known studies that examine how organizations address this behavior displayed by its employees. This review of employee performance appraisal forms will illustrate the current state of evaluations from a variety of organizations for the inclusion of both civility and incivility.

### Inclusion of Civility and Incivility

Figure 1 addresses the number of organizations that have included questions regarding the themes we coded, and the number of questions overall representing civility or incivility. Of all educational institutions, only 73 include questions representing civil or incivil behavior. A total of 98 questions are used across those 73 organizations. Six government agencies included questions of civility or incivility. Across those six organizations, a total of seven questions were used. In our analysis of private industry five organizations asked a total of 9 questions representing the coded behavior.

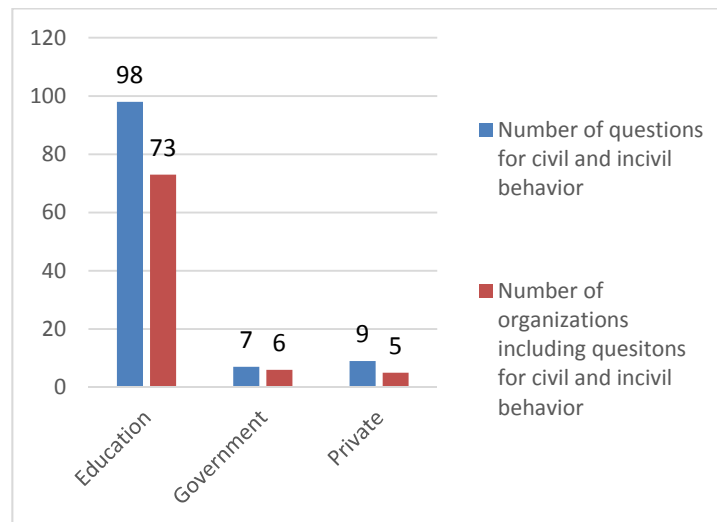


Figure 1. Number of Organizations and Number of Questions Regarding Civil and Incivil Behavior By Industry.

Perhaps most interesting in these findings is the weight of importance for this type of behavior across industries. We note that in this sample only 66% of the educational institutions ask questions concerning civil or incivil behavior. And of those there are only 1.34 questions asked addressing the behavior of the employee. Only a third of the government agencies included this kind of behavior on their employee performance appraisals. And of those, only 1.16 questions were used. However, in our private industry sample, 100% of the employee appraisal forms included questions regarding civil or incivil behavior. And the private industry asked 1.8 questions per employee appraisal form to assess civil and incivil behaviors.

Figure 2 shows the number of questions representing each category of behavior by industry. In education, the most questions were asked concerning cooperation, with interpersonal relationships also high. The least amount of questions concerning these behaviors in all education employee appraisal forms was asked about employee attitude. While all these behaviors included would be considered important, it seems as if the education industry looks for employees to display strong cooperation, representing civil behavior. Across government agencies, teamwork and cooperation were asked most often with four questions each, while attitude and communication were asked about least with only one question each. Finally, when we look at private industry, we see that the behavior asked about most often on an employee appraisal form is interpersonal relationships, while communication is non-existent in our sample. It is most interesting to note that each industry finds a different civil behavior to be most important and includes more questions on an appraisal. While attitude and communication are consistently the lowest behaviors in terms of numbers of questions asked across our sample of employee appraisal forms.

Finally, we looked at the inclusion of questions that were specifically designed to address incivil behavior. Our findings were disappointing, albeit expected. Out of a sample of 132, only 2 performance appraisal forms included questions assessing incivility. This represents only .015 of the organizations in the sample. Both of these organizations were educational institutions. One organization had questions assessing cooperation and attitude. The other organization included questions that assessed an employee's teamwork, attitude and communication. Examples of questions from each include, "Has a very few problems interacting with other," "Consistently causes friction and is uncooperative," and "Often tactless and quarrelsome."

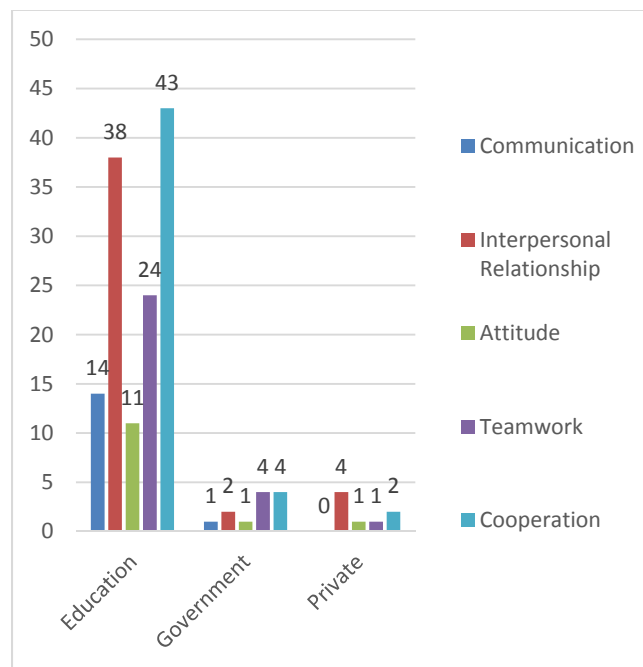


Figure 2

Number of Questions Representing Each Category of Behavior by Industry

## CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Incivility has been proven in the literature to cause detrimental work outcomes. However these behaviors have not been found to be included in sanctionable forms within organizations, specifically in performance reviews. While the lack of civil behaviors in the forms of teamwork, cooperation, communication, attitude and interpersonal work relationships are often examined, the presence of incivility is not. It is important to understand that the lack of civility does not indicate a presence of incivility. A person can have behaviors that are not cooperative behaviors and yet they are not exhibiting incivil behaviors. Moreover, the presence of civility does not indicate an absence of incivility. Individuals can be team players and cooperative in their behaviors and still exhibit incivility as well. These two constructs are not opposite of each other, but rather independent.

Based on this research, the authors believe opportunities for future research could be identified in codifying other behavior in organizations to see where incivility is being discussed. By examining codes of conduct, employee handbooks, behavioral creeds, and the like, researchers would be able to detail the codification of the acceptance of incivil behavior in an organization's culture. If one was to find an increase in stated norms for incivil behavior, it is likely that we would also see more sanctions around the display of incivil behavior. Researchers

could also examine not only the sanctioning of incivility, but the level at which incivility is displayed when it is codified in organizational documents as a norm.

In a similar vein, future research should examine the incremental impact incivil behavior has on overall performance. Making a unique contribution to overall performance is a key issue in distinguishing aspects of performance. Practitioners should understand better the impact on individual and team performance when continuous low-level rude behavior and other incivil displays are allowed to exist. As scientists we want to encourage practitioners to include these uncivil behaviors in their evaluations. The absence of one behavior does not necessarily denote the presence of another. For this reason, we suggest inclusion of specific incivility items on the performance reviews. It is likely that civil behavior has an incremental positive impact on individual and team performance, while displays of incivility actually incrementally deter individuals and teams from reaching organizational objectives. To what extent we do not know. This line of research would allow us to understand the complexity of actual behaviors contributing to and inhibiting organizations reaching their objectives.

Additionally, authors find organizational opportunities in the area of multi-rater feedback as well as in traditional employee performance reviews. Because the display of incivility is not always seen by managers or leaders, and incivility is witnessed by many, the 360° methodology may be a better indicator of the level at which incivil behavior is displayed when managers are not present. Multi-rater feedback consists of feedback gathered from multiple constituencies in the employee's immediate work circle. 360° evaluations are one example of this type of feedback structure. These evaluations often include feedback from the employee's peers, subordinates, supervisor, self, and often outside constituents such as customers. This allows for a more complete feedback opportunity from all aspects of the employee's performance.

Finally, because appraisal behaviors become norms and institutional expectations for employee actions, we suggest including incivility in performance reviews. By doing so, leaders will be able to develop these behaviors through the organizational systems of discipline and reward.

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# REQUIRED SCRIPTING AND WORK STRESS IN THE CALL CENTER ENVIRONMENT: A PRELIMINARY EXPLORATION

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## ABSTRACT

*Much research has focused on the work stress related to call centers. Previous research has indicated that a source of this stress may be a lack of job control that is characteristic of the job function. Many areas of job control have been researched; however, one relatively unexplored area is the use of required scripting in the call center environment. This study begins to explore scripting by developing items and scales to measure the impact on job performance of four components of scripting: verbatim scripting, emotional scripting, computerized scripting, and flexibility of scripting. Employees at two call centers responded to a questionnaire using these items and measuring the levels of work stress these employees reported. An overall measure of scripting was positively related to work stress as was verbatim scripting. Emotional scripting and computerized scripting were not related to work stress. Flexibility in scripting was negatively related to work stress. These findings begin to allow us to understand in more detail the relationship between scripting and stress, and provide the early development of a tool to help further the study of this aspect of job control in call centers. The results can also be used by managers to alter practices regarding scripting within their call centers.*

## INTRODUCTION

In the past several decades, the growth of call centers has significantly impacted the work force in the United States. It is estimated that there are over 50,000 call centers operating in the U.S. alone, constituting 3% of the workforce (Batt, Doellgast, & Kwon, 2005). Call center sizes in the U.S. range from very small (with under 20) to large-scale operations (over 300). The average size of a call center in the U.S. is 289 employees (Batt, et al., 2005). Desai (2010) cites a report stating that all companies on the Fortune 500 have call centers and over \$300 billion are spent on call centers annually. Globally, call centers are growing at a rate of 40% (Sprigg & Jackson, 2006). As one example, the number of Canadian call centers grew 27.7% from 2001 to 2006 (Echchakoui & Naji, 2013). With call centers representing such a significant portion of the work force, their impact on business operations is obviously significant (Batt, 2002).

One reason for the widespread growth of call centers in the past several decades is technology. Technology, in general, has enabled companies to conduct business on a much larger

scale, often globally. Services that were once provided through regional markets, have now become centralized global operations, with much of the work being completed via a call center (Batt & Moynihan, 2002). Call centers can be an effective tool for reaching the masses and when managed efficiently, they can become competitive advantages for companies. These centralization processes through the use call centers have allowed firms to create economies of scale by reducing offices, automating processes and simplifying its processes (Batt & Moynihan, 2002).

With the vast growth of the call center industry and increased technology, companies have also increased the job expectations for Customer Service Representatives (CSRs). Jobs that were once known for simplified tasks such as collections or the handling of minor customer service issues now entail much more. In the U.S., 43% of call centers handle both service and sales functions (Batt, et al., 2005). This statistic implies that companies are utilizing their call centers for not only the traditional functions, such as customer service and collections (Bedics, Jack & McCary, 2006), but also as a source of revenue generation. Call centers are also being used as a channel for companies to engage in Customer Relationship Management (CRM) practices (Kantsperger & Kunz, 2005; Bedics, Jack & McCary, 2006) and the representatives are expected to build relationships with the patrons. Therefore, call centers are not only being used as service centers, but also as strategic pieces of business that are used to build revenue and build service relationships.

These added expectations of the business have also led to added expectations of the service representatives who are completing the tasks. Traditionally, call center work has been characterized as low-skilled work, with its employees deemed as easily replaceable (Batt & Moynihan, 2002). Work within call centers has been compared to that of manufacturing, primarily because of the limited work discretion, task replication, and stringent work schedules (Hillmer, Hillmer, & McRoberts, 2004). These job characteristics have led call centers to be dubbed as “white-collar” production lines (Batt & Moynihan, 2002; Rose & Wright, 2005). This is primarily due to the technologies that are employed in call centers. The technologies allow business leaders to create a work environment for call centers that mirror assembly line work. The pace is controlled for the employee and there is limited job discretion (Varca, 2001). However, management prefers this work dynamic, as this provides efficiency to achieve those economies of scale that can add to profits.

However, as companies move to generate revenue and use the centers as CRM tools, the job demands facing the front-line employees have elevated. They are expected to navigate through sophisticated computer systems, follow regulatory requirements, and give thorough explanations of complicated products and services. (Hillmer, et al., 2004). All of these tasks are accomplished while meeting sales objectives, time objectives, customer service expectations and adhering to stringent time schedules (Hillmer, et al., 2004).

The typical call center agent of the past was expected to answer calls and answer the customer’s questions. However, as mentioned above, the evolution from customer service center

to strategic business unit, has led to the increased importance of the call center employee, and thus, has added responsibilities to the daily routines of call center agents. Call center employment, which was once deemed as a low-skilled workplace, has become much more detailed. This can be seen in the migration of call centers from outsourced countries, such as India, back into the U.S. As the job expectations elevated, language barriers contributed to offshore call centers not being able to handle the job as efficiently or as productively (Amble, 2007). Agents must possess computer skills, social skills (to build relationships with customer, superiors, and peers), active listening skills, critical thinking skills and the ability to express emotions to the customers (Rose & Wright, 2005).

### **THE DYNAMIC OF CALL CENTERS**

Although the goals of the call center and the roles of the agents are evolving, the dynamics of the call center have not. Call center work in the past, was generically classified as clerical. Standard “office” jobs were the category in which call center work fell. During this time, tasks were varied and non-standardized (Batt & Moynihan, 2002). However, with the explosion of call centers as a major center for carrying work loads, firms shifted from varied tasks to more be more standardized in regards to task replication. Call centers today continue to be managed and streamlined in a standardized form, much as production lines (Batt & Moynihan, 2002; Zapf et al., 2003). Management seeks to increase efficiency, production and revenue through the use of technology to insure that its customer base is not only touched, but also that the most calls are answered as efficiently as possible. Because of this demand for production and the replicating of tasks, the similarities to factories are a real comparison. However, call center employees are differentiated from typical factory workers in that in addition to the task replication and low job discretion, as service workers, CSRs are also expected to perform a high level of emotional labor as part of their tasks (Wallace, Eagleson, & Waldersee, 2000).

All of these job demands have led to high turnover rates (Batt, 2002; Echchakoui & Naji, 2013; Hillmer et al., 2004; Holdsworth & Cartwright, 2003; Holman et al., 2009); and high levels of absenteeism (Deery, Iverson & Walsh, 2006; Frenkel, Orlitzky, & Wallace, 2005; Holman, 2003; Schlak & van Rijckevorsel, 2007) in the call center environment. In addition, workforce tenure is fairly low with approximately one-third of employees with less than one year of tenure at work (Holman, Batt & Holtgrewe, 2007). Therefore, this had resulted in a accumulation of research surrounding work related stress and call centers.

### **WORK STRESS IN CALL CENTERS**

Service work in general has been deemed as stressful (Varca, 2006; Holman, 2002). In addition to the stress of service work, call center representatives also have added job demands

that are lead to stressful work conditions. Call center representatives have limited task control (Holman, 2003), limited control over the timing of which they need to answer calls (Zapf et al., 2003) and are faced with routine tasks that become monotonous for the employee (Zapf et al., 2003). Research has indicated that call center employees experience more stress than social workers, law enforcement agents, and mental health workers (Singh, Goolsby, & Rhoads, 1994). As the call center industry grows, so does the research on call centers. Much of this research has been dedicated to the stress associated with the job demands of the CSR job function.

Much of the research that has been conducted in regards to work-related stress in call centers has focused on role stressors. Stressors such as role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload, and work pressures (Witt, Andrews, & Carleson, 2004). These stressors have been found to produce a number of stress-related consequences including employee burnout, high rates of absenteeism, high rates of turnover and poor service quality (Hillmer, et al., 2004; Ruyter, Wetzels, & Feinberg, 2001; Varca, 2006).

Of these areas, job control (or lack of) in call centers continues to be a stand out predictor of work-related stress in call centers. The low levels of job control and lack of job discretion is a key driver to employee dissatisfaction in call center (Holman & Fernie, 2000; Holman, 2003; Varca, 2006; Varca, 2001).

### **JOB CONTROL IN CALL CENTERS**

The term “job control” when used to examine work stress refers to the amount of discretion that an employee has while carrying out their assigned job duties (Newton & Jimmieson, 2008). Low levels of job control indicate that employees have very little discretion in their daily job duties. Job control as a cause of work-related stress is a well-examined topic. Karasek (1979) was a pioneer in the examination of this topic. He summarized that when employees feel that they have low levels of discretion in completed work tasks and high job demand is present, there are likely to be high levels exhaustion, job dissatisfaction and overall life dissatisfaction (Karasek, 1979).

The work of Karasek (1979) has been reinforced by several studies. There have been many studies to test this hypothesis and nearly all conclusions noting a negative relationship between job control and work place stress, or essentially, a lower level of job control (limited discretion on daily work tasks) indicates a higher level of work-related stress (Dwyer & Ganster, 1991; Holman, 2002; Zapf et al., 1999; Deery, Iverson, & Walsh, 2002).

Just as limited employee control in the workplace has been found to be a predictor of stress in work places, in general, the theory has been supported for the call center industry as well. Numerous studies have examined this topic specifically in call centers, and the conclusions all tend to lead to a central theme: Call center employees experience high levels of stress due to low levels of job control (Batt & Applebaum, 1995; Holdsworth & Cartwright, 2003; Holman, 2002; Varca, 2006).

To emphasize the low levels of job control that call center employees have as customer service representatives, it is important to understand the job function itself. CSRs have very little flexibility in several aspects of their job. This is in the form of a physical limitation (as they are confined to their desk with their computer) and therefore, the CSRs have very limited mobility. There is also very little flexibility in regards to determine work schedule or the amount of time the representative spends on the phone.

Workers also have very little discretion in how the calls are going to be handled. Typically, the representatives have prescribed methods for handling specific situations. Therefore, representatives are often unable to use their own judgments in handling the customers' requests. (Hillmer, et. al, 2004). Call center agents also have very little task control. Representatives often have little discretion in the speed of the calls, the number of calls, and typically do not have control over the type of call that they are about to answer.

The agents' work is also monitored, either by superiors or by the technology itself. Monitoring can include activities such as call review by their superiors, but also, metric assessments of call length, number of calls answered and the speed in which the calls were answered (Holman, Chissick, & Totterdell, 2002).

Many of the elements of job control within the call center environment have been examined to assist in alleviating some of these constraints. While many cannot be eliminated altogether because of the business implications, understanding the source of the stress can serve to alter policies that may contribute to the lack of control, hence the higher stress levels (Tuten & Neidermeyer, 2002). Doing so could prove to reduce some the negative behaviors that often accompany the stress: high turnover rates, higher rates of absenteeism and lower levels of service.

Because of the work design of call centers, it is unlikely that giving employees more discretion and ultimately higher levels of employee control will become a habitual practice. The cost savings and maximization of volume that the automation has brought to the call center will most likely outweigh the idea of empowering employees (Batt & Moynihan, 2002). However, researchers have begun to dive into the factors that cause limited work discretion and have examined these components, in hopes to alleviate some of the symptoms of work related stress in call centers. For example, Varca (2006), found that the work stress associated with call monitoring in call centers was reduced when the employees felt more empowered (Varca, 2006). Taking Varca's (2006) research of the relationship of job control and one of its elements as an example, further research can be explored into other areas of job control at a call center. This study examines one of the causes of limited discretion and determines its role in work-related stress in call centers. The component that causes limited job control and is the focus of this study is required scripting.

## REQUIRED SCRIPTING IN CALL CENTERS

Limited job control as a characteristic in call centers encompasses many of the decision making limitations that the service representatives experience. Limited mobility (Zapf et al., 2003), job monitoring (Varca, 2006) and limited task or time discretion (Holman, 2003; Zapf et al., 2003) are all contributors to customer service representatives' low levels of job control. Many researchers have also mentioned that the required scripting in call centers is another contributor to low levels of job control. Deery and colleagues (2002) indicated that employees are required to follow specific instructions in regards to scripting. Varca (2006) also indicated that not only was scripted dialogue a contributor to job control, but the "steps" in call handling were also a factor. Required scripting in call centers is a job characteristic that, much like limited mobility and job monitoring, limits the amount of job control that the employee has. While required scripting is a job characteristic common to call centers, depending on job function, company, or the dynamic of the specific call center, the term "required scripting" or "required dialogue" may have varying definitions.

Some centers may require certain components to be read verbatim, such as legal scripting (Zapf et al., 2003) or questions that may be used for technical support. Other centers may not require items verbatim, but rather a specific order or "flow" for the duration of the call. Another factor to consider is the manner in which these requirements are shared with the representative. In some cases, there is literally a printed "script" detailing the flow of the call (Sprigg & Jackson, 2006). Other companies may utilize software that will prompt the representative to say specific verbiage based on the customer's responses (Sprigg & Jackson, 2006). In addition to all of these forms of scripting, specific centers also have specific demands for the tone and demeanor in which the message is delivered (Deery et al., 2002; Morris and Feldman, 1997; Zapf et al., 2003).

For the purpose of this study, all items mentioned will be encompassed in the definition of required scripting. This research is intended to capture the employees' viewpoints of required scripting, specifically its relationship to work stress. Many of these specific areas will be examined to determine if any of these components have a significant impact on work-related stress.

## PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Although researchers have indicated that required scripting in call centers can be a contributor to low levels of job control (Deery et al., 2002; Varca, 2001), there has been very little research conducted regarding scripting. Many have indicated required dialog as a "sidebar" when discussing job control – typically as a job constraint that adds to the low levels of job control customer service representatives have. Deery and colleagues (2002) concluded that required scripting was a factor that did indeed have an impact on emotional exhaustion.

However, in this study, the use of required scripting was measured by a one-item question asking the employee if they liked speaking in a scripted manner.

Sprigg and Jackson (2006) concluded that the research indicated that prescribed scripting attributed to job stress, and they argued that scripting should be minimized. However, they stated that this was unlikely to happen because of benefits gained by the organization through standardized scripting. These include cost savings, streamlining and legal compliance. From the perspective of managers, these benefits likely outweigh the stress imposed on employees. Therefore, it is important to determine the components of scripting that provide the most job-related strain. Managers may not be able to eliminate the scripting, but may be able to alleviate some of the stressful points associated with work stress related to scripting.

Both of these studies simply used the presence of required scripting and did not break it up into its components. Whether or not required scripting was utilized was the item of interest. The purpose of this study is to begin an examination into the relationship between required scripting and work stress, by attempting to determine if higher levels of varying aspects of required scripting are associated with higher levels of work stress.

## HYPOTHESES

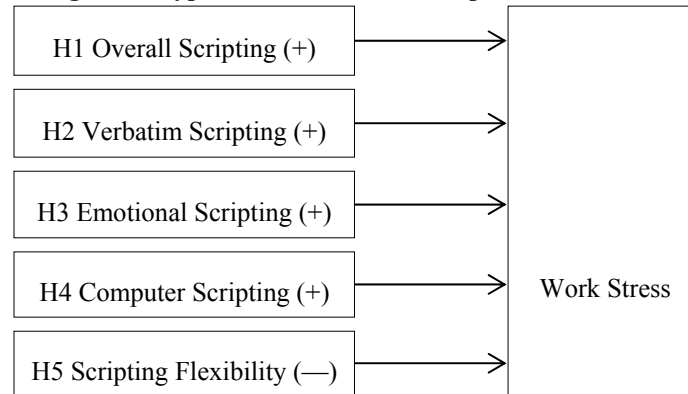
Because required scripting is an element that limits job control for call center employees, determining whether or not it has a significant relationship to work stress could prove to be beneficial. As mentioned, previous studies have confirmed that required scripting can have an impact on emotional exhaustion, as be a source of stress (i.e. Deery et al., 2002; Sprigg & Jackson, 2006). However, previous research did not seek to determine the components of required scripting that may have an impact on worker stress. This study seeks to capture aspects of scripting such as the use of verbatim scripting (requirements of word-for-word recitation), emotional scripting (demands that a specific tone or feeling be conveyed), or computerized scripting (using computers for prompting the representative for dialogue). These areas, as well as overall scripting and the impact of flexibility in the scripting are compared to work stress. Figure 1 summarizes the hypotheses and indicates their relationship to work stress in parentheses.

### **Required scripting and work stress**

Because required scripting is an element that limits job control for call center employees, determining whether or not it has a significant relationship to work stress could prove to be beneficial. Deery and colleagues (2002) concluded that required scripting had a significant impact on emotional exhaustion. Sprigg and Jackson (2006), found a positive relationship between work-stress and required dialogs. The previous studies merely asked whether or not scripting was present (Sprigg & Jackson, 2006) or if the employees liked using scripting (Deery

et al., 2002). This research captures the employee perception of several types of scripting and the levels of work stress experienced by employees.

**Figure 1. Hypotheses and Relationships to Work Stress**



In addition, the previous research merely identified whether or not scripting was present as a job requirement. The present study measures specifics of required scripting, including, the employees' perceptions of the impact on their job performance based on required scripting. We argue that employees who report that scripting reduces their job performance will report higher levels of stress.

*H1 Employees report a positive relationship between their perceptions of the negative impact on job performance of overall scripting and work stress.*

### **Verbatim scripting**

Scripting encompasses several practices. One of these is the use of word-for-word scripting. Asking employees to recite items verbatim is one component of required scripting in call centers that in some cases may be essential, for example, disclosing information for legal or liability purposes (Sprigg & Jackson, 2006). However, many centers may ask their representatives to reply to aspects of customer requests with prescribed verbiage in a word-for-word manner for conformity purposes. This type of scripting may decrease employee engagement. Verbatim repetition is typically uncomfortable for the representative and contributes to a "robot-like" experience on the phone (Witthaus, 2002). An employee's perception that verbatim scripting reduces job performance increases work stress.

*H2 Employees report a positive relationship between their perceptions of the negative impact of verbatim scripting on job performance and work stress.*



### **Emotionally-based scripting**

As mentioned, call-center work has become structured so that the business is stream-lined to achieve maximum efficiency. However, the difference from traditional structured work environments is that call centers introduce customer interaction into the job function. This interaction adds an additional piece that may make the structured work setting more challenging.

Because the customer-service piece is imperative to the success of the business, companies set forth expectations for customer service, and thus often require specific emotional responses from the employees. This may include expressing regret, empathy, congratulatory expressions, and concern. This is often done by requiring the agent to make remarks throughout the contact (Witt et al., 2004; Zapf et al., 2003). This job demand mixes the lack of job control via the scripting and the highly-stressful customer interaction, which can lead to more work stress (Hingst, 2006).

*H3 Employees report a positive relationship between their perceptions of the negative impact of emotionally based scripting on their job performance and work stress.*

### **Computerized scripting**

The use of information systems has brought standardization to call center work that allows the business to achieve maximum efficiency from their employees in regards to scheduling, call time and performance monitoring (see Giao, Borini, and Oliveira, 2010 for one study of the influence of technology on performance; Stanton, 2000). This type of technology has been referred to as the “contemporary analog to the classic assembly line” (Varca, 2001). The information systems used in call centers can now assist in the required scripting within the call centers, adding to the repetition that serves to compare call centers to manufacturing. Computer systems often prompt the representative of what to say given a customer response (Sprigg & Jackson, 2006), as well as indicate products to offer or emotions to demonstrate. This type of computer interaction can limit the job control of the employee, and thus, lead to increased work stress (Carayon, 1992).

*H4 Employees report a positive relationship between their perceptions of the negative impact of computerized scripting on their job performance and work stress.*

### **Required scripting & flexibility**

Because one predictor of work stress in call centers is limited control, this study also explores how alleviating some of the lack of control contributes to this work stress. Previous research supports that empowering employees by giving them more job discretion can aid in the alleviation of work-related stress (Holdsworth & Cartwright, 2003; Hutchinson, Purcell, &

Kinnie, 2000). Using this previous research as an example, subsequent research has suggested that based on research in the area of job control, scripting in call centers should be flexible to improve the levels of work-related stress (Varca, 2001; Sprigg & Jackson, 2006). An employee's perception of flexibility improving job performance should be related to lower reported work stress.

*H5 Employees report a negative relationship between their perceptions of the positive impact of scripting flexibility on their job performance and work stress.*

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Questionnaire and Data Collection**

Research was conducted using two, U.S. based call centers. These were two call centers operated within two different companies, both within the telecommunications field. Interviews held with managers verified that both companies required representatives to handle both customer service issues, such as billing and general information, and selling to the customer by offering products and services.

The tool used to collect the data was a questionnaire that was hand-delivered to the customer service representatives. The representatives were asked to complete the questionnaire and return by mail or by drop box located within their center. It was made clear to the participants that participation was entirely voluntary and in no way affiliated with their company of employment. Confidentiality was ensured, as the participants were asked not to identify themselves, nor were the individual questionnaires labeled with any identifying information. No information on the survey could be used to identify the individual survey participant. Between the two call centers, 322 employee questionnaires were distributed. Usable data were obtained from 122 returned surveys, for a response rate of 37.88%.

### **Dependent Variable: Work Stress**

To measure the employee's work stress, the Job-Related Tension Index, developed by Kahn and colleagues (1964) was utilized. This tool is a fifteen-item questionnaire that measures responses on a Likert scale. The stem "how frequently do you feel bothered by each of these?" preceded the answering of the items. Responses were measured on a scale ranging from "never," to "nearly all the time." Reliability for this study, as measured by Cronbach's alpha was .90.

## Independent Variables

### Development of Dimensions of Scripting Measures

Since the components of scripting have not been adequately measured by previous research, we developed original items. Thus, a significant goal of this research was to develop useable items. Questions such as “I am given leeway in the order of the call in regards to problem-solving” and “During my contacts, I am required to say specific items in a specific way,” were measured on a five-point Likert scale. A complete list of items is listed in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. Survey Items for Subscale Generation of Scripting Dimensions**

(all items developed for this study, \*denotes questions used in data analysis)

#### H1 Overall Scripting

1. During my contacts, I am required to say specific items in a specific way.
2. \*When I am required to follow a specific call order, my job performance is reduced.
3. \*Overall, the scripting that is expected of me helps me to do a better job. (R)
4. If I were provided with more required scripting, I would be able to complete my job better. (R)
5. \*I could complete my job better if I used my own words instead of the provided scripting.
6. When I follow my call flow in a certain order, it helps me to do a better job. (R)

#### H2 Verbatim Scripting

1. There are too many times throughout my contact that I have to say items verbatim.
2. \*My job performance would be better if I did not have to read items verbatim (word-for-word).
3. When I am presented with items to say word-for-word, I am more effective in my job performance. (R)
4. If I were provided with more items that could be said verbatim, I would be able to do my job better. (R)

#### H3 Emotional Scripting

1. There are too many times during my contact that I am required to inject emotion into the contact.
2. \*When I am required to demonstrate certain feelings during my contacts, (i.e., regret, sympathy, happiness), I am more effective at work. (R)
3. \*When I am required to show emotions during a contact my work improves. (R)
4. \*My customer service is better because I am required to demonstrate specific feelings toward the customer (sorrow, regret, happiness, etc.). (R)

#### H4 Computerized Scripting

1. \*It makes my job easier when the computer prompts me by telling me what to say or how to say it to my customers. (R)
2. \*I perform my job better when the computer prompts me during the contact (what to say, when to inject emotions, what products to offer). (R)
3. When the computer prompts me with suggestions on how to handle my call, it makes my job more difficult.
4. \*I am more effective at work when I use the computer prompts (when the computer suggests what to say, or what order to handle the call). (R)

#### H5 Flexibility in Scripting

1. I am often given leeway in the order of the call in regards to problem-solving.
2. \*I am given leeway to deviate from the order or flow of the contact if I believe it will best suit the customer.
3. If I were provided with more leeway in the manner in which I handle my calls, I would be able to complete my job better.
4. My customers have a better experience when I do deviate from the required order of the call or when I use my own wording.
5. When I deviate from the order of the call, I am not as effective because I may miss items. (R)

A related goal of the research was to develop an instrument that could be used to measure the impact of required scripting in call centers. Thus, we designed and pre-tested a large portion of the questionnaire. Initially, a pilot survey of ten recipients was conducted. Some of the components were not reliable in this first pilot. Therefore, the questionnaire was re-designed in hopes to achieve more reliable data. The re-designed survey was utilized in a sample study of eleven participants, prior to launching the survey to the larger sample. This version was then used with our larger sample. Unfortunately some of the components were not reliable with the larger sample. Reliability and item selection are covered for each component below.

### **Overall Scripting**

Six items were collected for overall scripting. Once the data were gathered, we determined that three of these items met the .70 or higher reliability cutoff we selected as acceptable and were included in the scale for data analysis. In Figure 2, all items that were collected are listed and the items that were used for data analysis are marked with an asterisk at the beginning of the item. This annotation to indicate items retained for the study was used for all components. The items for the overall scripting scale related to the scripting utilized in the call center. For each component, all questions were measured on a five-point scale. One of the three items retained was reverse coded. Reverse coded items are indicated with a (R) after the item in Figure 2. The reliability of this scale using Cronbach's alpha was .71. For future studies that want to measure scripting with more than one item but are not interested in detail on the separate types of scripting, this scale could be modified and included in place of the individual components listed below.

### **Verbatim Scripting**

Four items were collected during data collection for perceptions of the use of verbatim scripting on job performance. A Cronbach's alpha reliability of .77 was calculated for items three and four in Figure 2. However, when they were included in the data analysis the result was not significant. Since part of the purpose of this study was to explore the use of items for future studies, other items were included in the analysis. When doing so, the second item was found to be highly significant and included in the final data analysis. It may be that since this item was not reverse coded and included both the term verbatim and its definition that it measured more accurately the construct we were attempting to measure. However, this is only speculation at this point and future studies are recommended. This preliminary exploration is designed to help in future development of scales and items for scripting in the call center, and so different subsets from the items developed were tested when the initial set was not satisfactory. This process was completed for all dimensions.

### **Emotional Scripting**

Four items were collected to measure emotional scripting. These items were designed to measure the perceptions of the impact of the emotions that representatives are required to inject into their contacts on their job performance. After reliability analysis, we retained three reverse coded items. All three questions were reverse coded. A Cronbach's alpha of .76 was calculated for items two, three, and four.

### **Computerized Scripting**

Four items were also collected to measure computerized scripting. Reliability analysis led to the removal of one item and only three were used in the data analysis. Cronbach's alpha for items one, two, and four was .83. All three questions were reverse coded.

### **Flexible scripting**

Flexibility of scripting was measured using five questions asking respondents to report their perception of how the level of flexibility allowed by their employer impacted their job performance. None of these items was found to form a reliable scale. As noted in the section on verbatim scripting, exploratory analysis was undertaken and item two was found to be highly significant and thus was included in the data analysis. In a post hoc review of the items, it was difficult to determine how item two was significantly different from the other items used for this scale. Again, as a preliminary exploration in developing potential items, the use of this item is instructive, but more research is needed in this area to determine how flexibility of scripting may or may not influence work stress in a call center.

### **Control Variables**

The respondent's age was collected directly from survey respondents. Since all surveys were anonymous, we decided that respondents would be willing to put their age on the survey. Only two of the 122 returned surveys used in data analysis did not contain the respondent's age. The average age of respondents was 32 years old with a range from 20 years old to 57 years old.

Respondents were asked on the questionnaire to provide their sex. Females were coded as "1" and represented 69% of those who completed the survey. All respondents included their sex on the survey.

The survey allowed the respondent to select the highest level of education attained. Choices were less than 12 years, GED, high school diploma, some college, but no degree, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, and master's degree or higher. Less than 2% selected

GED, and 14% of respondents selected high school diploma. The largest group (41% of the sample) was those who selected some college, but no degree. The next largest group (31% of the sample) selected bachelor's degree. The remaining respondents either selected associate's degree (just under 10%) or master's degree or higher (2.5%).

Respondents were asked whether their employment status with the call center was temporary or permanent with 65% of the sample reporting permanent employment status.

The survey also requested that respondents include the number of years and months they worked for the call center. Organizational tenures ranged from only one month to fifteen years and ten months. The average time working for the company was three years and nine months.

## RESULTS

Hypotheses were tested using SPSS and OLS regression analysis. Table 1 includes a summary of the outcomes of these tests for all hypotheses. Table 2 presents the correlation matrix for all variables, and Table 3 presents the OLS regression results. Model 1 includes only the control variables to allow for a comparison between this model and the model with the independent variables added. Model 2 includes all the independent variables to test the hypotheses in this study. The dependent variable for all hypothesis tests is work stress.

<b>Table 1</b> <b>SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESES</b>		
<b>Number</b>	<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Results</b>
H1	Employees report a positive relationship between their perceptions of the negative impact on job performance of overall scripting and work stress.	Supported
H2	Employees report a positive relationship between their perceptions of the negative impact of verbatim scripting on job performance and work stress.	Supported
H3	Employees report a positive relationship between their perceptions of the negative impact of emotionally based scripting on their job performance and work stress.	Not supported
H4	Employees report a positive relationship between their perceptions of the negative impact of computerized scripting on their job performance and work stress.	Not supported
H5	Employees report a negative relationship between their perceptions of the positive impact of scripting flexibility on their job performance and work stress.	Supported

From the results in Table 3, Model 1, it is clear that that control variables did not have much explanatory power related to work stress. Only sex was partially significant in this first model and had a negative coefficient suggesting a potential relationship in which male employees reported more stress than female employees. However, this effect disappeared once the independent variables were added and the overall model for control variables was not significant. This lack of significance of the control variables was surprising.

**Table 2**  
**CORRELATION MATRIX**

Variables	N	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5
1. Overall scripting	122	3.43	.83	(.71)				
2. Verbatim scripting	122	3.59	1.18	.51**				
3. Emotional scripting	122	2.61	.86	.32**	.22*	(.76)		
4. Computer scripting	122	3.42	.92	.17	-.07	.21*	(.83)	
5. Flexibility scripting	122	3.18	1.27	-.14	-.14	-.19*	.01	
6. Age (yrs.)	120	32.28	8.49	.03	.15	.05	-.07	-.05
7. Sex (female=1)	122	.69	.47	-.21*	-.15	-.12	-.05	.10
8. Education	122	4.62	1.18	.06	-.08	-.03	.07	-.03
9. Perm Employee	120	.65	.48	.13	.25**	.17	.07	.12
10. Tenure in months	122	44.77	44.38	.24**	.34**	.18*	.10	-.01
11. Work Stress	122	2.81	.74	.41**	.51**	.12	-.07	-.30**

**Table 2 Continued**  
**CORRELATION MATRIX**

Variables	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Overall scripting						
2. Verbatim scripting						
3. Emotional scripting						
4. Computer scripting						
5. Flexibility scripting						
6. Age (yrs.)						
7. Sex (female=1)	.04					
8. Education	.03	-.07				
9. Perm Employee	.24**	.15	-.19*			
10. Tenure in months	.45**	.15	.01	.53**		
11. Work Stress	.11	-.12	-.07	.08	.15	(.90)

\*Correlation is significant at .05 level (2-tailed). \*\*Correlation is significant at .01 level (2-tailed).  
Cronbach's Alpha is on the diagonal.

Model 2 contains the regression analysis with all independent variables. The overall model for this analysis was significant ( $F = 5.886$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and the adjusted R-square was .295. This was an increase from Model 1 which had an adjusted R-square of .020. Hypothesis 1 predicted that employees who reported a negative impact on their jobs from overall scripting would report higher work stress. This hypothesis was supported, since the overall scripting variable was significant at the  $p < .05$  level and positive. As with all of these results it is important to highlight that data are cross-sectional and so causality cannot be determined. This result and all other results should be interpreted as showing association of these variables. In this case, that a perception of a negative impact on call center employees through overall scripting is related to work stress. This study uses the perceptions of the employees of the impact of required scripting on job performance instead of the whether or not required scripting is used as previously studied

(Deery et al., 2002; Sprigg & Jackson, 2006). As previously mentioned, this scale could be used in future studies in which the desire is to measure scripting in more detail, but not to measure the individual components of scripting. Thus, this scale has the ability to stand alone in future studies and improve the data collected beyond a single item as used in previous research.

<b>Table 3</b>		
<b>SUMMARY OF OLS REGRESSION ANALYSIS WITH WORK STRESS DEPENDENT VARIABLE</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>
Overall Scripting		.223* (.087)
Verbatim Scripting		.375*** (.062)
Emotional Scripting		-.061 (.074)
Computerized Scripting		-.041 (.066)
Flexibility in Scripting		-.235** (.048)
Age	.073 (.009)	.045 (.008)
Sex (female = 1)	-.174† (.149)	-.013 (.134)
Education	-.115 (.060)	-.076 (.052)
Temporary or Permanent (Perm = 1)	-.013 (.173)	-.006 (.150)
Tenure with Company	.133 (.002)	-.031 (.002)
N	117	117
F-Test	1.472	5.886***
Adjusted R Square	.020	.295
† $p < .10$ , * $p < .05$ , ** $p < .01$ , *** $p < .001$ . Beta coefficients are standardized. Standard errors are given in parentheses.		

Hypothesis 2 stated that the perception that verbatim scripting had a negative impact on job performance would be related to higher work stress. This was the first of the components of scripting to be tested. This hypothesis was supported with verbatim scripting being significant at the  $p < .001$  level and in the predicted direction. Hypothesis 3 stated that the perception that emotional scripting had a negative impact on job performance would be related to reports of higher work stress. This hypothesis was not supported since the variable was not significant in the regression analysis. It is interesting to note that of the four components, this variable had the lowest mean: only 2.61 on a five point scale. All other means were above three on a five point scale with the highest being verbatim scripting at 3.59. Thus it may be that this lack of significance was because call center employees reported not feeling that the emotional scripting was negatively impacting their job performance. Future research may want to verify if this same result occurs when higher levels of negative impact from emotional scripting are present.

Hypothesis 4 stated that the perception that computerized scripting, in which the computer prompts the employee how to respond or what to say to a customer, had a negative impact on job performance would be related to higher work stress. This hypothesis was not supported. Unlike emotional scripting, the mean for this variable (3.42 on a five point scale) was similar to others in the study that were significant. This means that employees did feel that there



was as much of a negative impact but did not feel that it was related to higher levels of work stress. This finding is unexpected and future research may want to look into different types of computer prompted scripting, since this study only asked employees to respond to their overall perception of how computer scripting impacted their job performance. Hypothesis 5 stated that employees would report lower levels of work stress when they perceived that flexibility in scripting improved their job performance through their ability to meet the needs of the customer. This hypothesis was also supported with the variable for flexibility being significant at the  $p < .01$  level and in the predicted direction.

## DISCUSSION

The negative impact of required scripting on job performance was associated with work stress. Essentially, this indicates that employees felt as if they would perform their jobs with less stress if they could use their own words and own call order. Using a scale to measure the perception of overall scripting on job performance is a new approach to understanding the relationship between scripting and stress. Previous studies focused more on the presence of scripting or whether the employee liked repeating scripted words through the use of one item (Deery et al., 2002; Sprigg & Jackson, 2006). This study introduced a short scale and also the perception of the employee on job performance, which increases our understanding of the impact of scripting on job performance. Since the reliability of these items are in an acceptable range, although at the low end, there is opportunity for future research to take the findings of this preliminary exploration and improve upon our early items to increase the understanding of this relationship.

This study also contributes to the understanding of the effects of scripting on work stress through the introduction of four components of scripting. The impact of two of these components on job performance was found to be significantly related to work stress: verbatim scripting and flexibility in scripting. The impact of two of these components on job performance was not found to be significantly related to work stress: emotional scripting and computerized scripting. This indicates that verbatim scripting is the most likely to be related to higher stress in our sample from two call centers and that flexibility in scripting is one way to reduce the stress associated with scripting. Whether the results from our sample are generalizable to other settings is an opportunity for future research. This study is an early example of the effort to try to understand what parts or types of scripting are more likely to lead to stress among employees and how that stress might be reduced. Future studies can further explore these components or additional components to increase the understanding of this relationship and to equip managers with knowledge and tools to reduce stress in these work settings.

After reviewing our results, we recognize that there were likely additional variables that might have been measured to improve our understanding of these relationships. We suggest that future studies consider some of the types of items described below when measuring this

relationship. For example, a different type of call center or industry, such as technical support or the banking industry might find different results and provide opportunities for future research.

Another area for future inquiries would be to assess individual variables such as the comfort level the employee has with technology, the impact of individual work ethic, or personality differences. These types of individual difference variables would be valuable sources to expand our knowledge in this area. For example, one might suggest that employees who feel more comfortable with computerized technology will not view this form of scripting as a source of stress. On the other hand, those who are uncomfortable with technology might have excessive stress levels from scripting.

The effects of company culture, level and quality of training, and rate of pay could also have bearing on the level of stress from scripting. These and other organizational variables would be another source of increased knowledge in this area. For example in a company that emphasizes the emotional nature of the product or service, employees may assume that demonstrating emotions are a central part of work, and thus, the requirement of demonstrating emotions during the contact would not be associated with work-related stress. Understanding how organizational variables impact work stress and scripting in a call center could also lead to processes by which organizations designed call center training or work to reduce the stress felt by their employees. Attempts to decrease stress in the call center may be beneficial to organizations. Echchakoui and Naji (2013) reported that in call centers “up to 70% of the customers lost can be explained by turnover” (p. 576), and turnover can be highly related to work stress (Hillmer, et al., 2004; Ruyter, Wetzels, & Feinberg, 2001; Varca, 2006).

As another example, the impact on job performance of verbatim dialogue was found to affect the work-stress of employees, but this study did not address the reason for verbatim scripting. As mentioned in previous studies, verbatim scripting may be used for legal disclosures (Zapf et al., 2003). If the employee understood this as a job requirement, it may not have acted as a cause to work-stress and thus training could have an impact on the stress of employees.

The flexibility hypothesis was significant and represents one method that organizations might use to reduce the stress of scripting. This finding supports past research that argues that employees seek to have more job control in this area. Many researchers argue that empowering employees decreases work stress (Varca, 2006; Holdsworth & Cartwright, 2003), and flexibility and the increase in autonomy that comes from flexibility is a part of empowerment. Using the model of psychological empowerment described by Spreitzer (1995), two of the cognitions of psychological empowerment, self-determination and impact, are highly related to flexibility in scripting in call centers. Additional study might seek to study the impact of scripting on psychological empowerment in addition to the current dependent variable of work stress. There are many studies related to these dimensions of psychological empowerment conducted in different settings (Carless, 2004; Dickson & Lorenz, 2009; Liden, Lucas & Sparrowe, 2000; Seibert, Silver & Randolph, 2004; Spreitzer, Kizilos & Nason, 1997).

## Research Limitations

There were several limitations to this study, and thus the results should be interpreted cautiously. The most significant of these was the development of the scales for the components of scripting. Although reliability scores were acceptable for those items that were used, the items were designed for this study and have not been tested with other samples. Reflection on the items developed and especially the lack of reliability for the original items in the flexibility component leads us to recommend that these items be used as a starting point and that they be refined in future studies. To facilitate this effort, all questions incorporated into the final questionnaire for scripting are included in Figure 2, including those that were not utilized in the data analysis.

In addition to the limitations of the tool, the research design had limitations. The design of the study did not capture other factors that may influence the employees' perceptions of scripting. Factors such as job performance, job knowledge, or the level of comfort with technology of participants were not accounted for and may have an impact on the employees' perception of the required scripting. Other such items are included above in the discussion and provide opportunities for future research.

The cross-sectional nature of the research also serves as a limitation to the study. This is a limitation, since employees' perceptions may change over time and causality of the tested relationship cannot be tested. In addition, the participants were all from the same type of call center: telecommunications. Results may be different in another type of call center, such as banking, technical support, or hotel services.

The research also suffers from mono-method bias. All the data collected were from the employees of the call centers. Work-related metrics may have served to correlate the opinion of the scripting. For example, customer service metrics, sales metrics or attendance could be used to determine the usefulness of scripting in future research. For this study, this limitation is somewhat attenuated by the nature of the questions involving perceptions of the impact of scripting on job performance and perceptions of the level of work stress.

## Manager Implications

Using previous research as a baseline, call center managers should seek to increase perceived job control of the service representatives, in an effort to alleviate work stress (Sprigg & Jackson, 2006, Varca, 2006). Using the implications of the current research, making adjustments to required scripting could be a method by which this could be accomplished. Because of the cost-effectiveness and efficiency benefits that required scripting and other lower involvement work practices contribute to a call center, it is unlikely they will be eliminated (Batt & Moynihan, 2002). However, building on previous research regarding job control, empowering employees can decrease stress levels, and reduced stress levels can lead to better customer service and better attendance (Batt, 2002; Varca 2001; Varca 2006; Sprigg & Jackson, 2006).

Regarding scripting, managers could implement informal activities to insure that the employee feels empowered. Barring legal scripting requirements, call center managers can offer flexibility to the representative regarding portions of the scripting. This may be efficacious since this study found that employees feel that the overall scripting requirements placed on them are related to lower performance and higher work stress and flexibility in scripting is related to lower work stress. An example of this may be on product offerings. While the company may require certain products to be offered to generate revenue, managers may choose to offer flexibility in the manner in which they are offered. To align with business needs, this flexibility could be assessed with sales performance (i.e., an employee who is successful with sales may have the flexibility in regards to how the products are offered). The same principle could be assessed with service or call order requirements. Employees that obtain satisfactory service scores could be allowed to alter the script, should they feel it is necessary. This may reduce the stress that an employee feels due to overall scripting. As mentioned in this example, scripting might be reduced as employees gain experience or show the ability to meet goals set by management. Adjustments could be gradually introduced over time and based on individual improvement. Then flexibility could be perceived as a reward for good performance.

Although the data did not support the hypotheses for emotional scripting and computerized scripting, this outcome provides potentially useful implications. Because there was not a direct link to work stress, management may want to continue to use these particular strategies to seek conformity, as well as efficiency. The computerized prompts or emotional scripting could be provided to the representative as a tool for success. In conjunction with trying to improve the overall scripting, flexibility could be applied in these areas. As mentioned above, management may seek to use computerized prompts or emotional scripting as coaching and development tools, rather than as requirements. However, we emphasize that additional research should be completed to determine that these components are not in fact contributors to work stress.

## CONCLUSION

We explore the relationship between components of scripting and work stress in this study. Since overall scripting and verbatim scripting are related to higher levels of work stress, it is important to seek ways to gain the benefits of these tools while controlling the stress generated by their usage. This study adds to our understanding by introducing a more detailed look at the impact of scripting and beginning the process of generating items that measure different components related to scripting. Since the work done in call centers is an important part of the economy and used by most large companies (Abdullateef, Mokhtar, & Yusoff, 2011; Desai, 2010), this is an important area for additional study. In addition, the opportunity to reduce work stress and improve efficiency and effectiveness of call center employees is an important goal to work toward through greater understanding of these relationships.

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# THE EMOTIONS AND COGNITIONS DURING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EMOTIONAL WORK FOR LEADERS

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## ABSTRACT

*This study looked longitudinally at both the emotional and cognitive reactions of the hospital executive during organizational change. The study examined the cognitive and affective experiences of ten hospital executives leading and implementing organizational change initiatives over a twelve year period. Our study demonstrates that management is not a purely rational activity, and explores the emotional experience of the leader through rich empirical accounts in a change context. The results indicate that not only employees have feelings that must be expressed and not suppressed during change initiative, but also the top leaders. The findings illustrate how top leaders experience significant emotional reactions as a part of their role leading change.*

*This research answered a call to examine emotions during an organizational change process. This research illustrates the importance of recognizing and addressing the emotional work of the leader, particularly during times of organizational change. The research offers important considerations for those facing significant transformations. The study suggests that acknowledging and supporting the emotion work undertaken by leaders is important for the successful execution of the change initiatives. This study indicates that it is the leader who needs to be given support to express and acknowledge emotional reactions, both in terms of formal management development and organizational change training. The support is vital to retain long term commitment and motivation when implementing successive rounds of change initiatives*

*This study illustrates how emotion work is an integral part of the role at this level, and that the demands of performing emotion work are heightened during particular stages of the organizational change process. Understanding the impact of emotions can improve leadership during times of transition which translates into less resistance, quicker engagement, and higher commitment.*

## INTRODUCTION

In many arenas change is becoming a constant. McKinsey and Company reported that approximately 70% of organizational change initiatives fail (Maurer, 2010). This suggests that due to the myriad of very public changes in the field of healthcare it provides a fertile setting for studying change efforts.

Changes in healthcare are occurring both externally in the form of broad sweeping laws such as the Affordable Health Care Act, payment structures and focused public debate while internal pressures include budget constraints, new technologies, changing ownership and staffing issues. As one healthcare executive involved in this study stated, “*Turbulence has been the norm rather than the exception over the years*”. Hospital leaders today are in a unique predicament, responsible for designing, implementing, as well as, leading their employees through organizational change initiatives. The hospital industry has been struggling to keep up with the rapid-fire changes (CPP, Inc., 2004). It has been very difficult to lead a hospital and pressures on hospitals have worsened over time with no light at the end of the tunnel (2004). Legislative, demographic, and economic pressures have changed the way hospitals do business (2004). Altman and Gurvis (2006) of the Center for Creative Leadership suggested in the case of healthcare:

...leadership is the process by which groups, communities, and organizations accomplish three tasks: setting direction, creating alignment, and gaining commitment. The processes by which these leadership tasks are accomplished take many forms, ranging from individuals stepping into traditional leadership roles to leadership arising as a collective. (p. 21).

William Bridges (1980), author of *Managing Transitions*, says, “It isn’t the changes that do you in, it’s the transitions” (p. 3). While change is an event (a death, birth, merger, reorganization, new job, or downsizing), the human response to change is a process. Human reactions to change may include excitement, heightened emotions such as anxiety, fear and anger, as well as psychological trauma and confusion. The psychological response is a process of transition over time. People do not typically change their attitudes, beliefs, feelings and allegiances overnight; it happens gradually (Bridges, 1991).

For successful change management, emotions associated with organizational life during times of change must be emphasized rather than the “overly rational portrayal of both change management and managerial activity” (Clarke, Hope-Hailey, & Kelliher, 2007, p. 92). The consequence of ignoring the emotions during change is a “one size fits all” management style that really does not facilitate effective change. Understanding the relationship between emotions and the transition can improve leadership during times of transition which translates into less resistance, quicker engagement, and higher commitment. “Implications for successful change management depend as much on the management of the transition period as its strategic formulation” (Clarke et al., 2007, p. 92).

The setting of this study is a hospital that has won many awards during this time period despite the fact that much of this time they were involved in a major change initiative while dealing with a turbulent external environment. This setting identifies the cognitions and emotions of the leaders throughout the change initiatives. Cognitions and emotions are studied through two levels of leaders, executives and directors. Their emotional perspectives during the change initiatives are very important to understand in terms of the impact on the change process and outcomes (Klarner, By, & Diefenbach, 2011). The study captures leader reactions and reflections regarding the organizational change process: beginning, midpoint, and at the twelve

year point in time. This longitudinal view of data frames the change as a process “that unfolds repeatedly over time” (Klarner et al., 2011, p. 335). This phase analysis of organizational change may identify emotional patterns different from those obtained in response to a single change initiative (2011).

While significant literature exists on the level of the employees who are actually implementing the changes we were unable to locate a body of literature that deals with the emotions of the leaders of organizations during the change efforts. An over-rational view of both change management and leadership activity exists with little research on the emotional work of the leader within the change context (Clarke et al., 2007). This leads to the following research question:

Research Question: *What were the emotions and cognitions that high level healthcare leaders experienced during repeated changes in a turbulent internal and external environment?*

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Brief History of the Human Aspects of Change

For many years, academics, management and organizational practitioners have hypothesized that organizational transitions follow a series of predictable patterns or stages, which, if understood, could enable leaders to more effectively and efficiently manage organizational change. There are striking similarities in the change models of the past half-century. Each model proposes predictable and sequential stages and phase and cognitive and emotional reactions. There is overlap among the theories regardless of the number of stages described. The stages in each of the models present a common and predictable pattern. Yet successful change management includes the human side, the feelings and emotions, not simply a series of linear and logical processes and activities (Clarke et al., 2007).

Lewin (1951) described the process of change as occurring in three stages: Unfreezing, Moving, and Refreezing, a sequential process through which existing systems are undone rearranged and reconstituted. Lewin’s model describes an individual’s cognitive and emotional response to change. Initially, individuals must recognize that the old system or “state” is history and reduce their attachment to doing things in a familiar way. This Unfreezing Stage challenges the status quo with different and possibly discomfoting information. In the Moving Stage, new ideas, structures and systems are created, tested, and installed to replace those that existed previously. In the Refreezing Stage, new systems are accepted, refined, and operated to produce results.

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross (1969), a Swiss born psychiatrist, published her seminal work on the topic, *On Death and Dying*, in which she outlined five commonly experienced stages for those facing death or experiencing the death of a loved one. Kubler-Ross’s grief model focuses on significant individual loss; it has been applied extensively to work-place losses. These stages include Denial and Isolation, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance. Denial involves activities and rituals that are reflective of life before the change occurred. People in denial refuse to believe what has happened. In Stage Two, anger, denial is replaced by feelings of anger, rage, envy, and resentment. A common question is: “Why me?” In the Bargaining stage, bargains are

typically made with God and are attempts to postpone the inevitable. The fourth Stage, Depression, has two aspects; one related to losses in the past and one related to losses in the future. In the final stage of grief, people accept the inevitable. Kubler-Ross describes acceptance by a dying person not as a happy time, but as a time that is almost devoid of feeling. For a survivor, this is the stage in which they realize that life must go on; loss is accepted and attention is turned toward the future.

<b>Table 1.1</b> <b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b> <b>Brief History of the Human-Side of Change</b>				
<b>1947</b>	<b>1 Unfreezing</b>	<b>2 Moving</b>		<b>3 Refreezing</b>
<b>Lewin</b>	Triggered by social problem or conflict Anxiety Fear Unconscious behaviors	Changing values, attitudes, structure, feelings, behaviors Uncertainty Excitement		New support mechanisms New perspectives New status quo New identity
<b>1969</b>	<b>1 Denial &amp; Isolation</b>	<b>2 Anger 3 Bargaining 4 Depression</b>	<b>5 Acceptance</b>	
<b>Kubler-Ross</b>	Believe life is as it was before loss Reenact rituals Flash-back to past experiences	Blame others or ourselves for our loss Easily agitated, emotional outbursts Making deals with ourselves or with God Feeling listless and tired Feeling guilty Feelings of being punished		For dying: Resignation, withdrawal, lack of emotion For survivors: Realization that life has to go on, acceptance of loss, new focus on future goals and activities, renewed energy
<b>1980</b>	<b>1 Letting Go</b>	<b>2 Neutral Zone</b>		<b>3 New Beginnings</b>
<b>Bridges</b>	Sadness Fright Depression Grief	High anxiety Lowered motivation Self-doubt Lowered energy Disorientation Polarization Confusion Uncertainty		New understanding New values New attitudes New identities Finality of past Risk Pressure Accountability Stress
<b>2003</b>	<b>Stage 1</b> Acknowledging →	<b>Stage 2</b> Reacting →	<b>Stage 3</b> Investigating →	<b>Stage 4</b> Implementing
<b>Musselwhite &amp; Ingram</b>	Primarily a cognitive process. Denial, both cognitive and emotional. Show they are aware of the change, but demonstrate no emotional response.	Includes strong emotions such as anger, withdrawal, depression, and resistance. Active attempt to regain or retain past policies, duties and relationships.	Transition from a past to a future orientation Accept change on an emotional level and become more open to future possibilities. Willingness to consider future opportunities Mixture of emotions from excitement to anxiety and fear of the unknown.	Settle into a new routine Develop a level of comfort and familiarity with responsibilities. Begin the process of improvement and refinement. Transition from a more emotional orientation to a more cognitive orientation. Less emotion visible as people adjust to the change

Bridges (1980) developed a three-stage transition model similar to Lewin's change model. Bridges' stages include Letting Go, the Neutral Zone, and New Beginning. Letting Go recognizes an ending and acknowledges the experience of loss. The Neutral Zone, is described as a "no man's land" that exists between the old and new realities. The Neutral Zone is a broad category incorporating the negative emotions of resistance and the more positive emotions associated with exploration and new possibilities. People operating in this zone feel uncomfortable and emotionally awkward as they confront the unfamiliar and unknown. In this stage both danger and opportunity exist. Some people may persevere and others may abandon the situation. Only after organizations experience Letting Go and the Neutral Zone can they begin the third stage, New Beginnings. Leaders of change seem to forget that through the planning process they have already experienced their own denial and resistance and thus are ahead of the followers in the transition curve. Commitment to new beginnings comes only after they have traveled the transitory path from denial to confusion and resistance, and then to exploration and renewal.

More recently, Musselwhite and Ingram (2003) introduced a four stage model represented as: 1) Acknowledging, 2) Reacting, 3) Investigating, and 4) Implementing. Requirements for effective leadership change as people progress through the stages of transition.

<b>STAGE 1: ACKNOWLEDGING</b>	<p>People are shocked and feel threatened.</p> <p>People deny that a change has happened.</p> <p>People appear slower in their thinking, distracted, and forgetful. :</p> <p>Productivity is low.</p>
<b>STAGE 2: REACTING</b>	<p>People express various reactions - anger, depression, withdrawal, etc.</p> <p>People try to "bargain" to do things the "old" way.</p> <p>People believe they can "wait out" the change and everything will return to normal.</p> <p>People recycle back to Stage 1 when their emotions are denied or ignored.</p>
<b>STAGE 3: INVESTIGATING</b>	<p>People may express grief/sadness over loss, but they begin to explore the possibility of future options.</p> <p>People may mix a willingness to explore new options with reservation.</p> <p>Emotions can range from excitement to anxiety.</p>
<b>STAGE 4: IMPLEMENTING</b>	<p>People appear ready to establish new routines, adapt to new systems, and help others learn new ways.</p> <p>Comfort with the change engenders more flexibility, creativity, and risk taking on the job.</p> <p>The change is not viewed as a "change" but "the way we do things around here."</p>

To acknowledge change, people need information. Reacting to change, people need support. Emotions should be acknowledged, accepted and respected. When people begin to enter the Investigative stage of transition, the leadership imperative becomes to provide information. As people enter the last stage of transition, Implementing, the leadership imperative becomes reinforcement. People are actively implementing new ideas, systems and projects and need reinforcement for their initiative and successes. It is common for leaders to expect people to jump in at the stages of investigating and implementing, and to avoid the emotional negative part of transition – reacting. Reacting is viewed as not accepting or supporting the change. In reality, change efforts are often disrupted and delayed by uninformed efforts to move right to the latter stages of transition. Leaders of change seem to forget that through the development and planning process they have already experienced their own denial and resistance and thus are ahead of the troops in the transition curve (Musselwhite & Ingram, 2003). To obtain commitment to new beginnings arrives after the journey through the stages from denial to confusion and resistance, and then to exploration and renewal.

### **Healthcare Change --Environmental Turbulence**

Significant changes are occurring in the healthcare industry. Hospitals are clustering into multi-institutional groupings, the population is aging, and Americans are spending more on healthcare (Berman, Naik, & Winslow, 2006). Hospitals are experiencing dramatically increasing debt and expense at the same time that inpatient admissions and government and private insurance reimbursement are declining (2006). Healthcare leaders face major internal and external demands for change complicated by the structure of the healthcare industry itself (Fairfield & Wagner, 2004). Leadership in healthcare demands a response to these rapidly changing conditions. Society expects hospital executives to develop new strategies for growing admissions, achieving higher patient care standards, and reducing expenditures in the midst of financial and insurance coverage declines (Berman et al., 2006).

The U.S. health care delivery system is on the verge of reform yet again. Reimbursement and care delivery models are poised for significant overhaul with the goal of improving the quality, safety and efficiency of care. Healthcare organizations are preparing for changes under health care reform, meaningful use requirements and awaiting the decision of the Supreme Court regarding the Affordable Healthcare Act. Healthcare leaders know all about dealing with change, they must adapt on the individual, organizational, and industry levels just to survive. Is this becoming a class six rapid—one that is unnavigable?

Altman and Gurvis (2006) remark, “One does not have to be a medical expert to know that the healthcare system in the United States is unequivocally broken and broke” (p. 19). Issues of access and affordability place the industry directly in the midst of the current political debate. The healthcare system is likely to remain broken without leaders who are courageous, visionary, charismatic, and skilled in dealing with complex organizational change (2006). Altman and Gurvis (2006) suggest the following:

*The system will not be healed without excellent individual and collective leadership. Strong, capable individual leaders who are courageous, visionary, charismatic, and skilled will be needed. However, it will take a lot more than heroic individual efforts to make significant headway with this vexing and complex challenge. Our belief is that the development of leadership talent and of processes that support collective leadership is part of the solution. (p. 20)*

Healthcare organizations are experiencing a demand to transform to meet the expectations of society, consumers, and governmental agencies, and to incorporate the latest advances in technology (Berman et al., 2006). Intense competition, reductions in reimbursement, mergers, and requirements to restructure and re-engineer for cost efficiency have exerted enormous pressure on healthcare organizations (Cunningham, 2002). As the magnitude and rate of change are predicted to accelerate, organizations must be able to successfully anticipate and manage their approach and process to change (Greiner, Cummings, & Bhambri, 2003). Attempting radical change is a complex endeavor as it involves the “transformation of the organization” (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996, p. 1023), much like the one undertaken in this study.

In the case of the hospital that is the subject of this longitudinal action research study, the CEO and his team was attempting a radical planned change by moving from private ownership to public then to investor owned and then returned to publicly owned during the twelve year period of this study. These changes were brought about by both internal forces and by external market conditions. As a part of an annual review process the management team participated in a survey which in part questioned their perception of the external environment. The tables below are the result of that survey with a 76% response rate of hospital executives and managers concerning the external healthcare environment. The results suggest that the executives feel the future holds increasing difficulty arising from the external environment. Over twice as many respondents expect the difficulty to be extreme in the next 5 years versus the past five years.

**Over the past five years, the external healthcare market in your area has been:**

Executive Level	Very Easy (1)	Easy (2)	Normal (3)	Difficult (4)	Very Difficult (5)
Senior leader			2	4	1
Physician			2	3	
Director			3	11	3
Manager	1		2	5	4
Total	1	0	7	18	8

**Over the next five years, the external healthcare market in your areas will be:**

<b>Executive Level</b>	<b>Very easy (1)</b>	<b>Easy (2)</b>	<b>Normal (3)</b>	<b>Difficult (4)</b>	<b>Very Difficult (5)</b>
<b>Senior leader</b>				2	5
<b>Physician</b>				4	1
<b>Director</b>			2	5	11
<b>Manager</b>			1	5	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>19</b>

## METHODOLOGY

### Instruments

“Action research provides rich opportunity to bridge the gap between theory and practice”(Mathiassen, Chiasson, & Germonprez, 2012, p. 347). The data were collected from an open ended semi structured survey comprised of nine questions that was part of one of the researchers working with the organization to learn from the change experience. The questions were designed to solicit cognitive and emotional responses to sequential and continuous change at the beginning, midpoint, and ten year phases. Participation was voluntary and was solicited by and returned to one of the researchers.

A copy of the survey questions can be found in Appendix A. In addition, the Change Style Indicator (CSI) assessment results, identifying each participant’s preference for approaching change, were also made available to the researchers to further validate the findings. The Change Style Preferences of the executives studied can be found in Appendix B.

### Sample

The survey was administered to ten hospital executives to obtain their perspective as stakeholders during a change initiative that occurring over a twelve year period.

**Table 1.2.**  
**METHODOLOGY**  
**Sample Demographics**

Participants:	10			
Gender:	Male (4)	Female (6)		
Education Level:	Bachelors (3)	Masters (5)	Doctoral (2)	
Years of Service	<5 (0)	6-10 (4)	11-20 (3)	>20 (3)



## Data Analysis

Content analysis was used to analyze the survey responses to identify the stages of change based on the affective and cognitive comments. Content analysis provides insight into complex models of human thought and language (Krippendorff, 1980). Content analysis is suited to describe attitudinal and behavioral response and to determine psychological or emotional state of persons or groups (1980). Musslewhite and Ingram's (2003) Model of Change was the primary framework utilized to examine the affective and cognitive responses to the survey questions. Appendix D contains the content analysis for each participant. A frequency count was performed to further categorize the type of affective and cognitive responses contained in Appendix E.

Organizational change causes individuals to experience a reaction process consisting of four phases, namely: initial denial, resistance, gradual exploration, and eventual commitment. Resistance is a natural and normal response to change because change often involves going from the known to the unknown. Not only do individuals experience change in different ways, they also differ in their ability and willingness to adapt to change (Bovey & Hede, 2001). The executives reflected on their expectations and fears when embarking on the change initiative 12 years before. This is the environment that the CEO walked into when he began his job which involved a massive change effort.

## DISCUSSION

The model to code the survey responses of the participants demonstrates the range of emotional and cognitive reactions over the longitudinal study. Both the Musslewhite and Ingram 2003 model of change reactions as shown in Table 1.1 and the results of the coding of the numbered quotations below the table can be found in Table 1.3 which is shown below.

<b>Table 1.3</b> <b>RESULTS</b> <b>Applying Musslewhite &amp; Ingram Model (2003) Change Reactions</b>				
<b>2003</b>	<b>Stage 1</b> → <b>Acknowledging</b>	<b>Stage 2</b> → <b>Reacting</b>	<b>Stage 3</b> → <b>Investigating</b>	<b>Stage 4</b> <b>Implementing</b>
<b>Musslewhite &amp; Ingram</b>	Primarily a cognitive process. Denial, both cognitive and emotional. Show they are aware of the change, but demonstrate no emotional response.	Includes strong emotions such as anger, withdrawal, depression, and resistance. Active attempt to regain or retain past policies, duties and relationships.	Transition from a past to a future orientation Accept change on an emotional level and become more open to future possibilities. Willingness to consider future opportunities Mixture of emotions from excitement to anxiety and fear of the unknown.	Settle into a new routine Develop a level of comfort and familiarity with responsibilities. Begin the process of improvement and refinement. Transition from a more emotional orientation to a more cognitive orientation. Less emotion visible as people adjust to the change

Coding Frequency Verbatim	by Behaviors	People are shocked and feel threatened. People deny that a change has happened. People appear slower in their thinking, distracted, and forgetful. Productivity is low.	People express various reactions - anger, depression, withdrawal, etc. People try to “bargain” to do things the “old” way. People believe they can “wait out” the change and everything will return to normal. People recycle back to Stage 1 when their emotions are denied or ignored.	People may express grief/sadness over loss, but they begin to explore the possibility of future options. People may mix a willingness to explore new options with reservation. Emotions may range from excitement to sadness	People appear ready to establish new routines, adapt to new systems, and help others learn new ways. Comfort with the change engenders more flexibility, creativity, and risk taking on the job. The change is not viewed as a “change” but “the way we do things around her
		1 2 4 7	3 5 6 8 9 10 11	12 17 18 19 20	13 14 15 16 22 23 24 25
					26 27 28 29 30 31

This survey qualitative data draws on a series of survey questions answered by the leaders (Appendix A), which was carried out as part of an in-depth, longitudinal study of an organization undergoing major change. The data reflects the stages associated with organizational change. Research involving longitudinal data in the area of work emotion is not common, and we proffer that this aspect of our study is of great value. Executives were held accountable for the delivery of organizational change and performance outcomes at the same time expected to lead their teams through the psychological process of transitioning, and potentially experiencing the pain of personal change themselves (Clarke et al., 2007).

1. *The change initiative actually goes back even longer than 10 years. The process started in 1997 when [the CEO came to the hospital]. The climate within the hospital was a chaotic one. There was a lot of nervousness among the management group. A consultant was brought in during the year prior to [CEO's] arrival and had administered some kind of standardized tool with the leadership group to look at leadership effectiveness. Paranoia existed in that some individuals felt that this was an attempt at profiling and that the results would be used to determine who should stay and who should go.*

Beginning his tenure at CEO with this environment would naturally raise the level of emotion when embarking on these changes. As the CEO reflected upon the beginning of his tenure he recalls:

- 
2. *There was a whole lot of personal second guessing. ... I was concerned I would be embarrassed by my peers; boss, etc. that they would order me to stop, perhaps terminate me based on doing this. (CEO)*

The emotions of the existing top management people reflected a mixture of the fears expressed earlier as well as those that they experienced when the change initiative was announced as well as the team-based design of the change initiative. When asked what their greatest fears were they suggested the following:

3. *I think at first we thought (CEO) was crazy. I was excited and felt empowered. I was afraid of anything new, and afraid of putting myself "out there" into new roles and responsibilities. (CNO)*
4. *I was overwhelmed. I was frustrated with my team mates and inability to drive decisions and action. (Ethics and Compliance Officer)*
5. *That I might fail or be unable to meet the challenges ahead. The fact that my colleagues supported the change was motivating. (former COO promoted to corporate)*
6. *My biggest fear during this time was a fear of failure and a fear that I was not prepared. Being new in my position and on a steep learning curve, my worries were more for my own performance than for changes on the horizon.*
7. *I was afraid to be directive, give feedback or consistently challenge dysfunctional behaviors. I wasn't sure that our leaders were willing to invest the energy and time that would be necessary to achieve the vision. (AVP-Operations)*
8. *Actually I did not understand just how powerful this was going to be. I felt uncomfortable with some of this but forged ahead and glad I did. I am so proud of what have accomplished thus far and looking forward to what we will accomplish in the future. (CFO)*
9. *Was told to join a team [and] that was the biggest stretch for me. Also would be working with leaders that I didn't necessarily know very well. (AVP-Nursing)*
10. *I think my fear is that – and continues to be – that it is seen as a burden rather than an opportunity. I have those private thoughts and emotions sometimes too. (current COO)*
11. *My biggest fear during this time was a fear of failure and a fear that I was not prepared. Being new in my position and on a steep learning curve, my worries were more for my own performance than for changes on the horizon. (Director-Rehab)*

These top executives were asked to reflect on their expectations and feelings five years into the change process and the executives recalled having the following thoughts and emotions. It appears they can reflect on the cognitive lessons learned more than their emotions at the time:

12. *There were moments of immense pride, and certainly times are tremendous anxiety. Organization change could use a better PR firm! (CEO)*
13. *...my expectations changed. I understood more about the importance of culture, vision, and values. Of always doing what is "right". Experience is the greatest teacher and doing things wrong under the guidance of someone like our CEO is powerful. Getting it right is sweeter after you get it wrong. (CNO)*
14. *So my perspective changed a lot, and so too my expectations. I was pushing harder. In a position where I could challenge my peers more. I felt a lot more personal responsibility for forward movement not only of the teams by of the functioning of the leadership team as a whole. (Ethics and Compliance Officer)*
15. *My expectations for the timing and progression changed. This would be a marathon, not a sprint. We would need to learn how to train differently, pace differently and sustain differently. The expectations for end result remained the same. ((AVP Operations)*
16. *[CEO] could accurately perceive when the troops were not aligned and was very skilled at getting the team back on track.*
17. *When we were stressed and quit talking about the vision, I was concerned that we would lose sight of the vision.*
18. *Taking two steps forward and one step back can be unsettling at best.*
19. *Team meetings and preparation for the Advance all seemed a little over kill to me and then after I saw some of the progress we were making that all went away. (AVP-Ops)*
20. *For me personally being on a team and especially in a leadership role was empowering... Many have viewed (and some still do) team membership as a second job they don't have time for.(AVP- Nursing)*
21. *I have not had doubts of the success of the project but have had doubts about whether or not "the right people are on the bus".*
22. *Creating an atmosphere where people are not afraid to make mistakes, take risks, offer an honest opinion, or provide feedback.*

Because of the constant change experienced by this organization, the leaders we asked to discuss what sustained them during the process.

23. *It was incredibly lonely at times... helped me understand humility and truly challenged me to be someone that I am proud to be. I felt that the process was truly a gift for me...the feedback is a gift that has truly been special. To know that you can influence others in a positive way has been an incredible gift. (CEO)*
24. *I have always been given opportunities to learn something new, expand my horizons, take risks, and make a difference. I am proud of our hospital, our staff, our physicians, and the care we give to our community (CNO).*
25. *My sense of the community that is [the hospital] (employees, physicians, volunteers) is something that I value greatly. (Ethics and Compliance Officer)*
26. *I became emotional reading the M&V statement quoted in your article... I remember sitting in the [name omitted] with [name omitted] when he wrote this on a napkin. It was the foundation for my actions every single day. (COO)*
27. *[The CEO's] commitment, feedback and challenges along with his belief in me and my potential for change personally and within the organization.(AVP-Ops)*
28. *One of the things that sustained me is that I believe in the organization and in our mission and values. But I stay because I love the organization and what I do. I love to see the successes and truly believe that I am a contributor to those successes.(VPHR)*
29. *My values and that of my team were aligned---do the right thing for the patient...I could not go anywhere else and do more for my patients (CFO)*
30. *Mostly there is great satisfaction when you perform well in the eyes of your customer (AVP-Nursing)*
31. *The factors that have sustained me over time include: the support of the executive team and the collegiality with medical staff and peer group, the culture, history and values of the institution, the emphasis on learning and improving performance, the focus on quality patient care, the idea that we will always take the high road, the opportunity to be creative, the opportunity to make a difference. (Director, Rehabilitation Services)*

## PROJECT SUCCESSES

We were able to validate the perception of success of the change effort we studied both internally and external validation includes recently being selected as one of the 25 best hospitals to work for by HealthCareExecutive.com as well as one of the top 100 hospitals by Thomson Reuters in 2010. In September 2012 the hospital was named as one of the nation's top performers on key quality metrics in 2011 by The Joint Commission, a leading accreditor of healthcare organizations in the United States ([www.jointcommision.org](http://www.jointcommision.org)). This hospital is one of

only 244 hospitals that achieved this distinction two years in a row. This accomplishment is impressive given that “The Joint Commission accredits and certifies more than 19,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States.” ([http://www.jointcommission.org/about\\_us/about\\_the\\_joint\\_commission\\_main.aspx](http://www.jointcommission.org/about_us/about_the_joint_commission_main.aspx))

Internally we asked the top level leaders whether they perceived the project as a success. The CIO responded, *There were some parts of the change that are continuing in ways I never dreamed of.* Interestingly, another top level executive stated: *I don’t think I pictured a “change project” at all. For a long time, it felt like it was just how things were done at [hospital name].* This suggests that it has been very successful in that it has changed the culture at this point. This building of a culture to support the hospital vision was echoed by another top executive. Two of the executives were proud of the improvement and the external recognition; however it appears the continuous improvement focus remains as they responded;

*I do think it continues to be a work in progress because the definition of success is ever-changing and in some ways a moving target. This makes it hard to say that we have exceeded expectations because there is always something more to be done. Overall, I believe we have done a good job of holding to our vision and staying focused on the model that we believe will bring the success.*

Two of the remaining respondents indicated that the effort had exceeded expectations while one reported that it had met expectations and again noted that the changes had now become part of the culture. This suggests that the refreezing step has been accomplished successfully by the top managers we studied. Therefore we consider this a successful project as measured both internally and externally and an appropriate setting in which to study this successful change initiative.

## **Limitations**

This research has limitations in that the data was collected at one point in time and we asked the respondents to reflect on how they felt at different points during the 12 year change process. There is the possibility that they are not remembering specific time points accurately. The results may not be generalizable beyond a similar service organization in that this highly educated leadership team recognized felt a higher calling and responsibility to the patient and their well-being. Given the limitations, it would still appear from this action research study that recognizing that not only employees have feeling that must be dealt with during change, but also the top leaders, who are designing and implementing the change, have emotions and cognitions that should be recognized and addressed.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH**

Further, exploring a leader’s change style type and preference for approaching change may contribute to a more precise understanding one’s natural approach in these circumstances.

Further research could also include the ways that emotion work can add to the organizational toolbox in terms of facilitating change.

## CONCLUSIONS

This research answered a call by Klarner, By, and Diefenbach (2011) to “examine the unfolding and outcomes of emotions during an organizational change process” (p. 336). The reflections offered by the top management team about their cognitions and emotions during a 12 year change initiative demonstrated that though this team was charged with designing and leading a massive change effort, they had very real doubts and fears throughout. This change process felt, to at least one leader, like “*a slog through the mud*” at times and they found it was emotionally charged. Most respondents noted that the mission, vision and the higher calling of their profession, that of providing excellent care for their patients, sustained them and kept them moving forward. Many noted that the leadership from the top was critical in keeping the management team motivated and focused and that seeing real progress and improvement further fueled their efforts.

The research offers important considerations for those facing significant transformations. The study suggests that acknowledging and supporting the emotion work undertaken by leaders is important for the successful execution of the change initiatives. This study indicates that it is the leader who needs to be given support to express and acknowledge emotional reactions, both in terms of formal management development and organizational change training. The support is vital to retain long term commitment and motivation when implementing successive rounds of change initiatives.

This study illustrates how emotion work is an integral part of the role at this level, and that the demands of performing emotion work are heightened during particular stages of the organizational change process.

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### Appendix A Relevant Survey Questions

1. As you remember, when you embarked on this change initiative 10 years ago, what were your expectations? What were your fears? Your hopes for the change? What were your private thoughts and emotions regarding the change?
2. Once again, thinking back to the midpoint in the process (5 years in to the change effort), had your expectations changed from those you started with? How? Why?
3. At any point in time did you have doubts or questions about the success of the project? When? Why? What issues arose? How were they resolved?
4. When you initially pictured a “successful change project”, have you fallen short of that picture? Met it? Or exceeded expectations? Why? What were key factors?
5. What personally sustained you during the change effort and facilitated your decision to stay in the organization?

### Appendix B Change Style Indicator Type: Survey Participants

CSI -2008 Initials	CSI TYPE			
		CONSERVER C	PRAGMATIST P	ORIGINATOR O
KFA	O			Mod O
LWB	P		Slight	
EFC	C	Slight C		
IMD	C	Mod C		
RCE	C	Slight C		
CMF	P		Slight	
JMG	C	Mod C		
LJH	C	Mod C		
SHI	P		Slight	
BHJ	O			Slight
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>



# **DO THEY THINK THEY CAN COMMUNICATE? GRADUATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Research studies, journal articles, and job postings have emphasized communication competency for many years. Prospective employers as well as communication and business professors have emphasized the importance of these competencies, also. Many studies concentrate on what prospective employers are looking for in business college graduates, how to present these skills to business students to emphasize their importance in the workplace, and how students perceive the relevance of these communication skills.

Our study, however, compared how business graduate students rated their own level of competency at the onset of a required managerial communication course with their self-ratings at the conclusion of the course. These students, from two public universities, were asked to rate themselves on 35 communication skills that are addressed in the course. The skills included interpersonal relations, listening, speaking, asking and answering questions, team communication, interviewing, meeting management, and writing routine documents, reports, and proposals. The assessment instrument consisted of 5-point Likert-type scales.

Pre-post comparisons were made for each of the 35 skills in an attempt to determine the extent to which self-perceptions changed as a result of taking the course. Findings indicate that students felt their level of competency had changed positively for all the skills.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Assessment of learning has received much attention in recent years. Parents, students, and policy makers are interested in determining the extent to which colleges and universities are meeting expectations. However, measuring what students have learned is a complex, controversial task. Several kinds of national assessments of learning are currently in use, including standardized tests (Perez-Pena, 2012). In addition, while such assessment tools may have value in that they indicate what students know upon graduating, they do not tell how much they have improved along the way. Indirect metrics, such as the number of hours students spend studying and how much they interact with professors, may be more difficult to determine than

scores on a standardized test, but they may also be important indicators of achievement in such competencies as critical thinking and problem solving.

In addition to standardized tests, student GPA is often considered an easily computed, valid indicator of student learning. For example, potential employers often use GPA as a screen when deciding whether to interview a student applicant. They also tend to believe that a student who successfully completes a course has mastered the course topics. They see a student's final grade in the course as a valid descriptor of the student's learning (Hynes & Sigmar, 2009). However, a final grade does not indicate whether the student perceives the relevance or importance of the course material. Nor does a final grade indicate the extent to which students agree with the instructor's assessment of the student's achievement.

If standardized test scores, course grades, and GPA are insufficient assessments of learning, one might ask, what else should be measured? The concept that learning "must be measured by institutions on a 'value added' basis that takes into account students' academic baseline" gained prominence in 2006, when a commission of the U.S. Department of Education issued its report on higher education (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). This concept provides the theoretical framework for the current study, in that it attempts to assess student learning by considering the distance from the baseline to the finish line. Sanchez and Hynes (2001) found in their online communication skill study that students' perceptions of their entering and exiting skills levels provided much more detail on the nature of the learning that actually took place. This theoretical framework also assumes that students are the best determinants of what and how much they learned.

As can be seen in Table 1, various methods have been used to evaluate student achievement.

**Table 1**  
**Methods for Assessing Learning Objectives**

Learning Objective	Method
Knowledge	Standardized tests
Attitudes	Retention rates
Competencies	Pre-post measures

In our College of Business Administration, students are asked to complete a course evaluation form at the end of every course. The Individual Development and Education Assessment (IDEA) form was developed at Kansas State University and has been used in our College since 2005. The form includes a section where students are asked to rate their progress on the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies ([www.idea.ksu.edu](http://www.idea.ksu.edu)). One item asks the extent to which students perceive progress on "developing specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course" (IDEA

item #24). This item stimulated our thinking about students' ability to critically evaluate their own competencies. We hypothesized that, when presented with a list of skills addressed in a managerial communication course, they could more accurately analyze their level of competency after completing the course than at its onset. That is, after taking the course, they had a better understanding of what they knew and what they did not know, what they could do well, and what they could not do well.

This study attempts to capture students' self-assessments of their learning in a graduate managerial communication course. We as managerial communication professors wanted to know how the students perceived their communication skills before being introduced to these skills in a semester course and after they finished the course. We wanted to know how business graduate students would rate their own level of competency at the onset of a required managerial communication course and at the conclusion of the course. These students, from two public universities, were asked to rate themselves on 35 communication skills that are addressed in the course. The skills included interpersonal relations, listening, speaking, asking and answering questions, team communication, interviewing, meeting management, writing routine documents, reports, and proposals. The assessment instrument consisted of 5-point Likert-type scales.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

English, Manton, and Walker (2007) surveyed 200 of the largest firms in Dallas and found that the most highly rated traits these managers looked for in business college graduates were "integrity and recognition of appropriate confidentiality in communication" (p. 414). The next highest-rated trait they wanted the business college graduate to possess was "the ability to produce neat and well organized documents that use correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling" (p. 414); plus, "the ability to proofread documents and understand the principle of effective communication" (p. 414). In light of the recent corporate scandals, it is understandable that the human resource managers would rate "integrity and recognition of confidentiality in communication" very high. In fact, the second highest traits they are looking for in business graduates align with what we, as business communication professors, have been emphasizing for years.

Kirmer and Sellers (2009) analyzed survey responses from 94 campus recruiters in an attempt to clarify which communication skills recruiters valued most highly. They found that oral communications skills—formal speaking, teamwork, interpersonal communication, and listening—rated highest. Hynes and Sigmar (2009) surveyed approximately 100 campus recruiters representing 45 businesses and government agencies to find the importance of various communication skills. The recruiters ranked courses in "daily workplace relationships" and team communication as more important for success than business writing, presentations, office technology, and intercultural business communication. Koc (2011) found that the "ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside of the organization" was ranked higher

than the ability to write reports by recruiters in a survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers. Hynes' (2012) research agrees with the studies above. She found that "interpersonal communication appeared to be just as important, if not more so, than business writing or making professional presentations" (p. 7).

Hartman and McCambridge (2011) bring some insights into how to present key communication skills to the Millennials. Millennials are individuals born between 1980 and 2000. They are described as "technologically sophisticated multitaskers, capable of significant contributions to tomorrow's organizations, yet deficient in communication skills" (p. 22). According to Hartman and McCambridge (2011), the Millennials are the largest majority of college students in the United States, and, apparently, we need to find new ways to emphasize the importance of communication skills in the workforce.

Ameen, Bruns, and Jackson (2010) surveyed 576 students in a principles of accounting course in 1998 and 322 in 2006 from four universities. Their results indicate, "students continue to regard the accounting profession as one that requires few oral communication skills even though the profession and academia have demonstrated the importance of these skills" (p. 65).

Many business leaders complain that recent college graduates lack the fundamental communication skills, especially writing, necessary to gain success in the business world. The leaders place this problem on the universities' professors and administrators. However, the problem goes beyond the professors and administrators (Hines & Basso, 2008).

Business communication professors, as well as other writing professors, have to review basic writing rules briefly and move on to other topics such as presentations, research, writing emails, letters, reports, etc. that have to be covered in the course. The limited classroom instruction time mixed with the need to introduce students to a variety of written communication in different media leave little time to actually "teach" a business student how to write effectively and efficiently in a semester. If students do not have the use of basic grammar, then they are not going to have fundamental communication skills (Hines & Basso, 2008). Most students "perceive" themselves as good "communicators". Once they are introduced again to the rules of core writing skills such as proper sentence structure, punctuation, subject-verb agreement, etc., they often realize that they may not be as competent as they thought (Hines & Basso, 2008).

Hines and Basso (2008) also found that a significant number of communication professionals report relatively low scores when rating the writing proficiency of entry-level employees. Their data seems to suggest that communication professionals think higher education does an inadequate job of preparing these workers for writing-intensive careers. The study does support the idea that higher-ranked communication practitioners reported lower perceptions of good writing skills among entry-level communication workers than lesser-ranked practitioners.

Students need to be able to apply the skills and competencies they are learning in the college classroom to the "actual workplace". It seems the college professors and business employers should work together to prepare the students for the actual workplace. Not only does that mean that college professors should teach the skills and competencies that they and the

employers think are necessary, but also incorporate practical application of these skills and competencies so students can perceive their competency in these skills and global competencies (Weisblat & Bresciani, 2012).

Maes, Weldy, and Icenogle (1997) report the results of two studies done in 1995 that identify the competencies, characteristics, and skills that managers consider when selecting graduates for entry-level positions. The first study clearly identified oral communication as the most important competency for entry-level positions. It was even more important than written communication. In the second study, managers rated the importance of 13 oral communication skills. The top four oral communication skills were: (1) following instructions, (2) listening, (3) conversing, and (4) giving feedback. These oral communication skills were consistently rated as most important, regardless of industry or size of organization (Maes, Weldy, & Icenogle, 1997).

“In the dynamic and evolving world of project management, communication remains constant as a desirable and critical competency for managing projects” (Henderson, 2008). Henderson (2004 & 2008) found that managers’ decoding competency positively influences their teams’ satisfaction and productivity. Also, their encoding competency positively influences their teams’ productivity and, unexpectedly, their team’s satisfaction. For geographically dispersed teams, managers’ competency in decoding and encoding positively influences their teams, also (Henderson, 2008).

This is just a sampling of the studies that are published on business communication competencies. They mainly concentrate on what prospective employers are looking for in business college graduates, how to present these skills to business students to emphasize their importance in the workforce, and how students perceive the relevance of these communication skills.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of this study was to measure student growth and learning in a managerial communication course from the students’ perspective, not from the instructors’ grades.

### Subjects

The subjects in this study were graduate business students enrolled in a required managerial communication course in two public universities. One hundred and forty-three (143) student subjects were used in this study. As you can see from Table 2 below, the largest percentage of students were Professional MBA students (45.7%) or MBA students (28.2%). About half of the students were part-time students (42.7%) and half were full-time students (57.3%). A majority of the students was employed full-time (72%). Only 8.1% were employed part-time, and 19.9% were not employed. The students’ undergraduate majors were Business

Administration (24.1%), Liberal Arts (10.7%), Computer Science (4.5%), Science/Engineering (37.5%), Education (1.8%), and other (21.4%).

**Table 2**  
**Student Demographics**

<b>Graduate Program</b>	
MBA	28.2%
MS in MIS	12.7%
M. Acct.	13.4%
Professional MBA	45.7%
<b>Part-time or Full-time student</b>	
Part-time Students	42.7%
Full-time Students	57.3%
<b>Employed</b>	
No	19.9%
Yes, Part-time	8.1%
Yes, Full-Time	72.0%
<b>Undergraduate Major</b>	
Business Administration	24.1%
Liberal Arts	10.7%
Computer Science	4.5%
Science/Engineering	37.5%
Education	1.8%
Other	21.4%

The students were all enrolled in a course that was equivalent in terms of course content, assignments, and textbook. The same instructor taught the courses at both universities.

## Procedures

The students were asked to rate themselves on 35 communication skills that are addressed in the course. The skills included interpersonal relations, listening, speaking, asking and answering questions, team communication, interviewing, meeting management, writing routine documents, reports, and proposals. The assessment instrument consisted of 5-point Likert-type scales. The instruments were administered twice to the students – once at the onset of the course, and again at the conclusion of the course, but before final grades were calculated.

Pre-post comparisons were made for self-rated scores on each of the 35 skills in an attempt to determine the extent to which self-perceptions changed as a result of taking the course. Paired t-tests were computed to determine the differences between the mean pre- and post-course scores for each skill.



The research questions were:

1. How did the students perceive their communication competencies at the onset of a graduate MC course?
2. How did the students' perceived competency levels change at the conclusion of the course?
3. Which competencies changed the most?
4. Which competencies changed the least?

## RESULTS

Tables 3-10 below show the pre-course and post-course means for each of the 35 communication skills addressed in the course. The skills are divided into eight categories, six oral communication competencies, and two written communication competencies: interpersonal communication, listening, speaking, asking questions, team communication, interviews and meetings skills, writing routine documents, and writing reports and proposals.

**Table 3**  
**Pre-Post Mean Scores for Interpersonal Communication Skills**

Interpersonal Relations Skills	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	T-Values	P-Values
I convey warmth and empathy when communicating at work.	3.75	3.91	-2.26	.026
I remain open-minded in relationships.	3.80	4.03	-3.64	.000
I resist judging or comparing people.	3.26	3.69	-6.17	.000
I foster liking and trust among my coworkers.	4.03	4.15	-2.09	.039

**Table 4**  
**Pre-Post Mean Scores for Listening Skills**

Listening	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	T-Values	P-Values
I am motivated to listen to others.	3.83	4.08	-3.76	.000
I listen empathically.	3.63	3.95	-4.51	.000
I am alert to verbal and nonverbal cues.	3.61	3.98	-4.03	.000
I use feedback techniques such as paraphrasing.	3.34	3.74	-4.36	.000

**Table 5**  
**Pre-Post Mean Scores for Speaking Skills**

Speaking	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	T-Values	P-Values
I state my point simply and succinctly.	3.59	3.97	-5.28	.000
I support my opinion with facts, reasons, or examples.	3.59	3.89	-3.57	.000
I avoid technical terms (jargon) when talking with lay people.	3.37	3.80	-5.16	.000
I give clear, logically organized instructions.	3.24	4.05	-9.22	.000
I know how to begin and conclude a business presentation.	3.34	3.90	-6.80	.000

**Table 6**  
**Pre-Post Mean Scores for Questioning Skills**

Asking Questions	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	T-Values	P-Values
I ask various types of questions for different purposes.	3.51	3.85	-4.61	.000
I recognize hostility and resistance in question form.	3.70	3.99	-4.15	.000
I check my understanding of a question before replying.	3.47	3.79	-4.27	.000

**Table 7**  
**Pre-Post Mean Scores for Team Skills**

Team Communication	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	T-Values	P-Values
I interact cooperatively with teammates to achieve our goal.	4.07	4.31	-4.28	.000
I can diagnose the problem when my team isn't working well.	3.55	3.85	-4.24	.000
I understand the fundamentals of group dynamics.	3.69	4.08	-6.02	.000
I can motivate and lead a team to achieve high performance.	3.58	3.90	-4.42	.000

**Table 8**  
**Pre-Post Mean Scores for Interviewing and Meeting Skills**

Interviews and Meetings	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	T-Values	P-Values
I participate in job selection interviews satisfactorily (either as an interviewer or applicant).	3.52	3.97	-6.35	.000
I participate in performance appraisal interviews satisfactorily (either as a supervisor or subordinate).	3.47	3.89	-5.91	.000
I know how to begin and conclude an interview.	3.30	4.15	-9.52	.000
I make valuable contributions to business meetings.	3.50	4.08	-8.08	.000
I am competent in leading meetings.	3.31	3.95	-7.92	.000

**Table 9**  
**Pre-Post Mean Scores for Writing Routine Business Documents**

Writing Routine Business Documents	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	T-Values	P-Values
I compose letters and memos in standard business format.	3.41	4.08	-7.98	.000
I compose documents that are well organized.	3.68	4.13	-5.40	.000
I plan documents by considering my purpose and audience.	3.82	4.19	-4.68	.000
I revise documents for conciseness, clarity, courtesy, and completeness.	3.86	4.20	-4.94	.000
I proofread documents for surface errors (spelling, mechanics).	3.96	4.24	-4.06	.000

**Table 10**  
**Pre-Post Mean Scores for Writing Reports and Proposals**

Reports and Proposals	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	T-Values	P-Values
I know how to compose all the parts of a standard business report and proposal.	2.89	3.83	-10.5	.000
I can write an Executive Summary.	2.77	3.76	-9.93	.000
I organize formal reports logically.	3.24	3.97	-8.33	.000
I write persuasive proposals that achieve their goal.	3.08	3.81	-8.29	.000

Results in Tables 3-10 above indicate the answer to RQ1, *How did the students perceive their communication competencies at the onset of a graduate MC course?* The students rated themselves highest at the onset of the course in teamwork skills (Pre-test Mean = 4.07) and interpersonal skills (Pre-test Mean = 4.03). Their lowest self-ratings were for ability to write an Executive Summary (Pre-test Mean = 2.77) and ability to compose a standard business report (Pre-test Mean = 2.89). It is interesting to note that, as they entered the course, the students believed their greatest communication skills to be in oral communication and their weakest to be written communication.

Results in Tables 3-10 above indicate the answer to RQ2, *How did the students' perceived competency levels change at the conclusion of the course?* All t-values showed significant change in a positive direction ( $p < .05$ ). That is, the students believed that they improved significantly in all 35 skills during the course. In addition, all but two skills showed improvement over the course at the  $p < .001$  level. The smallest improvement was for interpersonal communication skills: fostering liking and trust (T-value = 2.09) and conveying warmth and empathy at work (T-value = 2.26).

Results in Tables 3-10 show the answer to RQ3, *Which competencies changed the most during the course?* The greatest improvements were for report writing (T-value = 10.53) and executive summary writing (T-value = 9.93). Regarding improvements in oral communication skills, the students felt they had improved the most in interviewing (T-value = 9.52) and giving instructions (T-value = 9.22). The answer to RQ4, *Which competencies changed the least?* is found in Tables 3-10. The least improvement had to do with students' ability to foster liking and trust (T-value = 2.09) and convey warmth and empathy when communicating (T-value = 2.26). It is understandable that these competencies were the least affected by a skill-based course, since they may be tied to personality traits or are environmentally determined.

In summary, interpersonal skills were rated the highest at the onset of the course and showed the least amount of change during the course. Report writing skills were rated the lowest at the onset of the course and showed the greatest amount of change during the course.

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study compared how business graduate students self-rated their level of communication competency at the beginning and again at the end of a required managerial communication course. Pre-post comparisons were made for each of 35 communication skills to determine which perceptions changed after taking the course. Findings indicate that students felt their level of competency had changed positively for all the skills addressed in the course. The competencies that were the most improved were writing skills, particularly report writing skills.

One of the implications of these results may be that student self-perceptions about competency levels should be included in learning assessment programs. The statistically significant differences in pre-and post-course ratings are evidence that the students believed that they had improved on all the communication skills studied. Whether these student perceptions actually correspond with their final grades is a matter for future research.

A third implication may be that administering a skills test at the beginning of a communication course is a useful strategy in that a pre-test will identify the students' perceptions of where their weaknesses are and motivate them during the course to work on those specific skills. Then a post-course test will help students determine whether they feel that they improved in those specific areas. Similarly, examining such metrics can help instructors decide what topics need emphasizing or de-emphasizing, according to the students' perspective.

A fourth implication of our results is that we as instructors may need to change our style of teaching and/or course content to better suit the expectations of the students and their future employers. Since our study indicates that students have clear preferences and perceptions about what they need to study, curriculum development efforts should consider them when making decisions regarding topics and the amount of emphasis each topic receives.

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