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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

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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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JoAnn C. Carland
Editor
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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MACHIAVELLIANISM AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

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Leila Messarra, Lebanese American University

ABSTRACT

The intention of this study is to identify the relationship between Machiavellianism and the three determinants of career development i.e. career satisfaction, career goals, and career path. 170 employees employed by three retail companies in Lebanon were surveyed. The results from the regression analysis show that high Machiavellian orientation moderated by age and educational attainment, is positively correlated with career goals, and career path. While Low Machiavellian orientation is negatively correlated with career satisfaction and career path.

Keywords: High Mach's, Low Mach's, Career Development, Career Path, Career Goals, Career Satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Many researchers have studied the different personality traits of individuals, that offered a broad explanation about their effect on human behavior (Hamer and Bruch, 1997). The most accepted and studied among them is the Big Five personality traits introduced by MacCrae and Costa (1982) that relates personality to organizational outcomes. These traits were found to be predictors of career development variables. A study by Reed, Bruch, and Haase (1997) found that career exploration which is a variable of career development can be predicted by the Big Five personality traits. For example, openness to experience and neuroticism held unique relations with all the variables of career exploration, while the trait of extraversion and conscientiousness had unique relation with only one exploration variable. On the other hand, shyness proved to impede the career development process during the college years (Hamer and Bruch, 1997).

Overall, employees' personalities, values, attitudes, norms, and behaviors affect their interactions and performance in the work place. Hence, the study of the relationship between personality traits, management, and organizational behavior is crucial. It helps managers match the right person for the right task (Chung C.Liu, 2008).

MACHIAVELLIANISM

Machiavellianism is a personality characteristic that describes individuals who mislead and manipulate others for personal gain and success. Christie and Geis (1970) describe Machiavellian oriented individuals as charismatic, confident and smooth as well as proud, distrustful, and prone to influencing and exploiting others. On the other hand, low Machiavellians are kind, submissive, and socially incompetent. Machiavellian candidates are liable to experience negative personality, depend on their logic more than emotions and feelings, disregard personal relationships, and use their emotions to influence others in order to reach their desired destinations (Lau and Shaffer, 1999). This is why Machiavellianism as a personality trait has been regarded negatively.

So far, research on the relation between Machiavellian orientation and behavioral outcomes has been substantial. High Mach individuals tend to manipulate more, persuade other more than they are persuaded when compared to low Machs (Ramanaiah et al., 1994). Thus, they tend to be distrustful of others and as such, may act in an unethical way. Research suggests that Machiavellian orientation can predict unethical employee actions (Andersson & bateman, 1997).

Gemmill and Heisler (1972) studied 150 managers working in a large manufacturing firm in the Northeastern section of the United States and found a positive relation between Machiavellian orientation and job strain, and formal control. However, the relation with job satisfaction was negative, with no relation to upward mobility. A recent study by Chung C.Liu (2008) concluded that managers can predict employees' knowledge sharing willingness based on the employees' Machiavellian orientation, and that Machiavellian orientation and Knowledge sharing willingness are negatively related.

Yet, with all the negative implications towards Machivallian orientation, we find that more High Machiavellian individuals are chosen as leaders since they are very effective in manipulating others and tend to be very skillful in finding a satisfying environment that fits their values and beliefs (Gemmil and Heisler). However, Hambirk and Bradon (1988) argued that Machiavellian oriented CEO's will apply a hierarchical and centralized organizational structure that will grant them power. As such, they prefer employees who are dependent (Zaleznik and Kets de Vries, 1975).

According to McGuire & Hutchings (2006), although Machiavellian thinking ignores the importance of integrity and honesty in their pursuit for power, this thinking plays an important role in understanding and managing change in a complex business environment. Leaders and teams should seize this way of thinking because it improves their dealing with change and all the related variables a business faces. This thinking also provides a precious guide for leaders and managers when facing challenges and barriers while negotiating especially when it relates to accepting or rejecting organizational change.

Lau and Shaffer (1999) based their study on social learning theories and stated that personality traits such as self mentoring, self esteem, locus of control, Machiavellianism, and their

correlations are determinants of career success. They found that Machiavellian orientation is a predictor of job performance, and subjective and objective career success.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The University of Wisconsin Adult and Student services (2007) defines Career development as an unending and active process that starts with gathering information, setting goals and making decisions. The career development process/path is defined by a model based on continually assessing, exploring, setting goals, and acting. It is a long term process that begins in early childhood and progresses through adulthood (Ginzberg & et.al, 1951).

Several studies have highlighted different approaches for defining the career development process. Parson (1909) proposed the matching approach which defines congruence between career development, individuals' personality, and their occupation. On the other hand, Super's (1974) defined career development in a five stage development process with many tasks in every stage i.e. growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline. At a later stage, Holland (1997) proposed a match between job requirement and personalities, and presented six personality types (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, social, Enterprising, and Conventional). Holland argued that a person's behavior is the interaction between his/her personality and the environment. That is why individuals should seek out environments that fit their abilities, skills, attitudes, and values. In addition, Lent, Brown, and Hackett's (1994) proposed the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) which defined the building blocks of career development as self efficacy and outcome expectation. Recently, there has been renewed interest in the topic of career development due to its relative importance as a competitive edge for organizations (McCarthy & Garavan, 1999). It is a useful mean for facing the social and demographic trends, and the changing nature of work and technology. Thus, the career development process is vital and should be applied by both the employer and the employee. A study by Kuijpers & Scheerens (2006), discussed the many facets that relate to career development i.e. career development ability, reflection on capacities, reflection on motives, work exploration, career control and networking, and there relation to modern career variables (mobility perspective, career support at work and private life). They concluded that increasing mobility, dynamic work environment, and career support within organizations will assist individuals' self management in developing their career.

McCarthy and Garavan (1999) indicated that self awareness is a vital component for career development. They emphasized that the more the individual understands his strengths, weakness, work approaches, and personality type, the more effective his/her training and development. Furthermore, Hamer and Bruch (1997, p.382) concluded that "the social nature of many career development tasks, roles, and personality factors that have relevance to the social realm can be expected to predict career success".

CAREER DEVELOPMENT & MACHIAVELLIANISM

Lau and Shaffer (1999), Hamer and Bruch (1997), Lounshury, Hutchens and Loveland (2005) agreed that a correlation exists between personality traits and career decidedness, career success, and job satisfaction. According to Reed, Bruch, and Haase (1997), personality traits should play a crucial role in promoting behavior models that could assist or delay career development behaviors such as career exploration. However, researchers have passed out examining the relation between Machiavellianism which is a personality trait and career development.

In sum, the literature review suggests that high Machs are more capable of manipulating and influencing others in various situations. As such, they have an advantage over others in achieving their goals i.e. in support of their career (Ramanaiah et al., 1994; Lau and Shaffer, 1999). Gemmill & Heisler (1972) concluded after reviewing the literature that high Machs appear to be better at finding a satisfying position and in supporting their own career. On the other hand, since low Machs are good natured, trustful, sociable, and honest (Christie, 1970), they are then expected to impede their career development process. The following hypothesis can be drawn:

H1: High Machs improve individuals' career development

H2: Low Machs impede individuals' career development.

METHODOLOGY

To test our hypothesis, a survey was carried out between June and August 2008. 200 questionnaires were distributed across 3 retail companies in Lebanon with a letter indicating the purpose of the survey and assurance of anonymity. The response rate was 85% or 170 individuals.

For this investigation the researchers designed a three part questionnaire. The first part collected demographic data and asked about gender, age and position (managerial/non-managerial). The second part included the MACH-IV test developed by Richard Christie (1999). It is a 20-item scale, designed to measure the level of Machiavellian orientation. i.e. high or low. This scale showed high reliability and was used by many (see e.g. Macrosson and Hemphill, 2001; Chung C.Liu, 2008).

The third part had 10 questions that asked about career satisfaction, established goals and career path (Karkouljian & Osman, 2008). All questions were measured using a seven-point Likert scale that ranged from 7= strongly agree to 1=strongly disagree and 4= neutral.

RESULTS

The purpose of this research was to investigate the relationship between Machiavellianism and career development path and whether it enhances or impedes career development.

The major demographic results were as follows: 75% of respondents were between 20 and 30 years old, with 61% females and 39% males. 70.5% held masters degrees, 18% had a bachelor degree, and the remaining 10.5% high school. 58% had 1 year experience, and 19% -5 years (see Table 1 for all results).

Table-1: Demographic Results		
<i>Gender</i>	# of respondents	% percentage
Female	105	61%
Male	65	39%
Age		
Between 20-29	10	5%
Between 30-39	128	75%
Between 40-49	32	20%
Education Level		
High School	18	10.5%
BS/BA	32	18%
MAB/MS/MA	120	70.5%
Years of Experience		
1 year	97	58%
2 years	9	5%
3 years	8	4.5%
4 years	8	4.5%
5 years	32	19%
8 years	8	4.5%
10 years	8	4.5%
Total	170	100%

The Pearson Chi-square test was used to see the association between the Machiavellian variable and the demographic variables. The null hypotheses for each demographic variable are stated below:

H1: Machiavellian scores and years of experience are not related.

H2: Machiavellian scores and age are not related.

H3: Machiavellian scores and gender are not related.

H4: Machiavellian scores and level of education are not related.

The results from the null hypothesis are stated in Table 2

Pearson Chi-Square	value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Machiavellian variable and years of experience	2.016	1	0.156
Machiavellian variable and age	10.919	1	0.004
Machiavellian variable and gender	0.934	1	0.334
Machiavellian variable and level of education	12.959	1	0.002
N of valid cases	170		
Significance level=or < 0.05			

From the above chi-square table results indicate that the null hypothesis H1 and H3 are accepted, while the null hypothesis H2 and H4 are rejected. Then more analysis of the H2 and H4 among High Mach individuals is presented below:

Number of respondents	High Mach	Low Mach
170	90/170=53%	80/120=47%
	Age =82 % (30-39)	Age=67% (30-39)
	Education=81% master	Education=57% master

Among the 170 respondents, those with High Mach orientation (53%), had 82% age range between 30-39, and 81% with a masters degree.

Using SPSS package 16.0, a Pearson correlation was performed to test the relationship between the two dependent variables (High Machs, Low Machs) and the three independent variables (career satisfaction, career path, and career goal) (see results in Table-3).

		Career Goals	Career Path	Career satisfaction
Low Mach	Pearson correlation	-.001	-.217**	-.477**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.986	.005	.000
High Mach	Pearson correlation	.288**	.256**	-.024
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.001	.760

The above correlation table shows that individuals with high Mach scores indicated a positive correlation with career goals ($r=0.288$) and career path ($r=0.256$), with no relation to career satisfaction.

Those with Low Mach scores had a negative correlation with career path ($r= -0.217$) and career satisfaction ($r= -0.477$), but no relation with career goals.

For further analysis the researchers conducted regression analysis. The results are presented below:

Anova Table						
	Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	24.340	3	8.113	10.219	.000 ^a
Coefficients Table						
		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std.Error			
1	(constant)	2.458	.363		6.779	.000
	Career Goals	.272	.066	.293	4.091	.000
	Career Path	.227	.060	.278	3.798	.000
	Career Satisfaction	-.083	.074	-.081	-1.112	.268

Significance level= $\alpha < 0.05$

The linear regression equation generated is:

$$\text{High Machs} = 2.458 + 0.272 \text{ career goals} + 0.227 \text{ career path}$$

The two independent variables (career goals and career path) were significantly positively related to the dependent variable (High Machs). No significant relation was found between High Machs career satisfaction.

Regression equation for the Low Mach orientation						
Anova Table						
Model		Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	116.890	3	38.963	17.475	.000 ^a
Coefficients Table						
		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
1	(constant)	7.381	.608		12.147	.000
	Career Goals	-.006	.111	-.004	-.056	.956
	Career Path	-.179	.100	-.124	-1.780	.004
	C a r e e r Satisfaction	-.808	.124	-.451	-6.496	.000
Significance level=or < 0.05						

The linear regression equation generated is:

$$\text{Low Mach's} = 7.381 - 0.179 \text{ career path} - 0.808 \text{ career satisfaction}$$

The two independent variables (career satisfaction and career path) were negatively related to low Machs. No significant relation was found between Low Machs and the independent variable career goals.

DISCUSSION

This research studied the relationship between Machiavellian orientation and career development. The results support our two hypotheses in general that High Machs improve individuals' career development and Low Machs impede individuals' career development. High Machs had a positive relationship with career goals and career path i.e. the higher the Mach orientation, the clearer the career path, and the faster the career goals can be reached. This is contrary to previous research conducted in Hong Kong on bank executives. The research concluded that individuals with low Machiavellian scores tend to achieve higher job success, while those with a high Mach scores have a greater satisfaction with their jobs (Siu and Tam, 1995). This could be

as a result of the Hong Kong banking environment being too structured as opposed to the organizational environment where the research was carried out i.e. retail sector.

Our results also indicated that High Mach orientation had no relation with career satisfaction. This is in agreement with Gemmil & Heisler (1972) who found that the greater the managers' Machiavellian orientation, the lower their career satisfaction.

On the other hand, Low Mach orientation was negatively correlated with career path and career satisfaction, with no relation to career goals. This result seems logical since Low Mach oriented individuals are less manipulative, more persuaded than High Machs (Robbins & Judge, 2007), and socially incompetent, which will cause their career to suffer.

The variables age (30-39) and education (master's degree holders), were the only demographic variables that indicated a significant relation to Machiavellian orientation. Results of previous research investigating Machiavellian orientation and demographic variables are mixed. On one hand, Mudrack (1989) found no direct relation between Machiavellian orientation and age. However, researchers tend to believe that they are somewhat related since younger individuals are likely to be less ethically inclined or less stable in their ethical judgment (Pratte et al., 1983). Also, Tuner and Martinez (1977) found that Machiavellian males with high education will more likely achieve success

CONCLUSION

These results propose new additions to the theory and practice relating to personality and career development. Our findings show how career development, to a great extent, is influenced by having a high Machiavellian orientation moderated by age and educational attainment in the retail sector in Lebanon. However, since our results can not be generalized, further study needs to investigate these relationships in other cultures and sectors.

Although Machiavellians disregard ethical behavior and believe "ends justify the means", they flourish in situations that are less structured. Nevertheless, it is sometimes important to possess certain characteristics that show relevance to handling and influencing others (e.g. in negotiation) especially in leadership roles. These individuals are able to arouse emotions of love and motivate their followers in a way that improves their own career development process and increases the performance of the organization. We can then conclude that whether having high Machiavellian orientation is a good character depends on the sector and culture. We then recommended that organizations match the right job with the right personality for a better organizational performance.

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SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AS ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN A BRAZILIAN MINING COMPANY: A THREE-PERSPECTIVAL NARRATIVE

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ABSTRACT

Based on a qualitative study carried out in 2008, I explore in this paper the multi-layered and multi-perspectival nature of the culture of corporate social responsibility (CSR) of a major Brazilian mining company. To this end I borrow Martin's (2002) meta-theoretical framework to examine this phenomenon through three different perspectives: the integration view, which emphasizes consensus; the differentiation view which exposes dissent, and the fragmentation view which reveals ambiguity. This analytic framework produces a richly detailed account of the ideational, material and communicative elements of an organizational culture of CSR, and also takes into account the role of the researcher in the construction of this narrative.

Key words: Organizational culture – corporate social responsibility – CSR – social responsibility – thick description.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I explore the multi-layered and multi-perspectival nature of the culture of corporate social responsibility (hereon 'CSR culture') of a major Brazilian mining company. To this end I borrow Martin's (2002) meta-theoretical framework to examine this phenomenon through three different perspectives or 'lenses': the *integration* view which emphasizes consensus; the *differentiation* view which exposes dissent, and the *fragmentation* view which reveals ambiguity. The application of this analytic framework produces a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of the findings of the study – that is, a richly detailed three-dimensional account of the ideational, material and communicative elements of a CSR culture.

For the purpose of the study, I conceptualize organizational culture – not purely as a 'variable' that can be arbitrarily created, manipulated and sustained to suit managerial interests (Smircich, 1983) – but as 'in-depth, subjective interpretations of a wide range of cultural manifestations... both ideational and material' (Martin, 2002). This perspective rejects the assumption that organizational culture has an objective existence 'out there', but rather it is a product of the interpretation of a range of phenomena by organizational members and researcher alike. Indeed, as acknowledged by Chia (1996, p. 42), the researcher plays a significant role 'in

constructing the very reality he/she is attempting to investigate'. There is thus no pretense of objectivity in this paper. I write its narrative mostly in the first person in a self-reflective style to generate a new text which will bear my own interpretation of the phenomena examined. The purpose of this new text is to compare the narratives that emerged from the field with one another and also against the theories used to make sense of the fieldwork data (Czarniawska, 1997, pp. 54-72).

The paper is structured as follows: the first section defines the key theoretical concepts of the study; the second discusses Martin's meta-theoretical framework, and the third applies this framework to an interpretive study of the CSR culture of a large Brazilian mining company.

DEFINING KEY CONCEPTS

CSR is 'an essentially contested concept' (Gallie, 1962, pp. 28-32), as it has 'no clearly definable general use' that can be considered 'correct or standard'. This is evident in the numerous definitions of CSR found in the literature (de Bakker, Groenewegen, & den Hond, 2005). However, given that this paper is about CSR in a Brazilian mining company, I borrow a definition provided by a Brazilian institution called Ethos Institute of Business and Social Responsibility:

Corporate social responsibility is a form of management defined by the ethical and transparent relationship between a company and all the groups to which it relates, by the establishment of corporate goals compatible with the sustainable development of society. (Instituto Ethos, 2008)

Due to increased public demand over the past few years for greater accountability and transparency in the business sphere, the notion of CSR has become embedded in the discourses and practices of many business corporations, in particular those operating in sectors that have a negative environmental and social track record (e.g., mining, chemicals, timber). The embedding of CSR values in organizational discourses and practices often leads to the creation of a CSR culture that over time permeates the broader culture of the organization. As pointed out by Schein (2004, p. 15) this leads to the integration of the various cultural components 'into a larger paradigm or "gestalt" that ties together the various elements' into a more or less coherent whole.

Drawing on Martin's definition of organizational culture provided above, I define CSR culture for the purpose of this paper as subjective interpretations of ideational and material manifestations informed by the notion of social responsibility. Ideational manifestations include for example the company's values and mission, and material manifestations include elements such as interior decoration and company uniform. In this analysis, I take into account a critique of Martin's definition of organizational culture by Taylor Irvin & Wieland (2006, p. 306), who point out that Martin over-emphasizes 'the ideational dimensions of organizational culture, thereby inhibiting

analysis of its communicative production'. I address this limitation by considering in my analysis inter-subjective aspects of organizational cultures such as talk and text.

As the paper draws on the notion of *organizational culture*, it will be relevant to say a few words about it. For more than three decades the notion of organisational culture has been extensively studied both quantitatively and qualitatively. So thoroughly explored was this notion in the 1980s, that Smircich and Calas (1987, p. 229) declared its study as 'dominant but dead'. It was their view (perhaps with some justification) that the concept had been colonized by managerial perspectives which used it to legitimate the interests of managers.

However, in the last few years there have been some important theoretical developments (for example Alvesson, 2002; Martin, 2002) which demonstrate that organizational culture is still a useful concept to think with, despite disagreements among researchers in the field 'about what culture is or why it should be studied' (Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg, & Martin, 1991, p. 7). Martin's (2002) meta-theoretical framework based on three overlapping and complementary perspectives is particularly suitable to make sense of the data gathered for the current study, as it captures the multi-layered and multi-perspectival nature of what I conceptualise here as a CSR culture. The section below provides a brief overview of Martin's framework to enable a more thorough understanding of the 'tales of the field' (Van Maanen, 1988) that I am about to recount.

MARTIN'S THREE PERSPECTIVAL FRAMEWORK

In a book that undertakes to 'map the terrain of organizational culture', Martin (2002) puts forward a framework for studying organizational culture which does not dismiss the tensions, contradictions and ambiguities that often emerge in this type of analysis¹. The broad goal of Martin's (2002, p13) work is in her own words 'to open readers' mind about new ways to think about and study cultures, so that culture can be understood in different and deeper ways'. This means that cultural analyses should go beyond conventional functionalist approaches that reduce organizational culture to a 'variable' that can be arbitrarily created and manipulated (Smircich, 1983) to meet organizational goals. While Martin does not dismiss the functionalist view in her framework, she significantly enriches it by incorporating deeper levels of analysis; by borrowing Smircich's (1983, pp. 347-348) conceptualization of culture as a metaphor which produces 'expressive forms, manifestations of human consciousness'.

For Martin (2002, pp. 164-165) organizations are not merely an ensemble of people working for common goals, but are 'a nexus in which a variety of internal and external influences come together' in the 'permeable, fluctuating boundary' of the organization as a collectivity. The organizational nexus examined in this study comprises a large Brazilian mining company, the local communities associated with it and the researcher. Martin's (2002, p. 154) three-perspective approach reveals the world in a particular, socially constructed way informed both by 'the viewpoint of the researcher and the characteristics of the context and the people studied.'

The three perspectives constitutive of Martin's framework are: the *integration* view, the *differentiation* view and the *fragmentation* view. It should be emphasized that these categories are not 'reflections of *a priori* essences contained in organizational culture' (Taylor, Irvin, & Wieland, 2006, p. 306), but as heuristic constructs that help the researcher to be mindful of the different levels and layers of organizational cultures.

The integration perspective is based on the assumption that most members of a given organization share some aspect of its culture and produces clear and cohesive interpretations of organizational phenomena (Martin, 2002, p. 94). This perspective is based on 'consistency across manifestations, collectivity-wide consensus, and clarity'. By contrast, the differentiation perspective focuses on those cultural manifestations that have divergent interpretations in the organizational nexus; that often challenge the legitimacy of the integration view. The fragmentation view focuses on ambiguity rather than clarity. From this perspective 'consensus is transient and issue specific', and some aspects of the culture will be 'interpreted ambiguously, with irony, paradox, and irreconcilable tensions' (p120).

Martin (2002, pp. 115-167) promotes the view that all three perspectives should be used in a single study 'not sequentially but simultaneously' because they are complementary 'worldviews' (p108). She draws attention to the fact that no lens on its own is sufficient to account for the complexities of organizational cultures (2002, p. 120) because each view has 'blind spots'. For example, the integration perspective is blind to dissent and ambiguity, and the differentiation and fragmentation views are blind to shared meanings. When used together, the three perspectives address the blind spots and offer a broader range of insights than any single perspective. They enable the researcher to take into account the plurality of voices and worldviews that co-exist in the cultural nexus of an organization.

VIEWING A CSR CULTURE THROUGH MULTIPLE LENSES

In this paper I report the findings of a 'window study' in which 'the researcher opens an arbitrary time window and describes all that can be seen through it (Czarniawska, 1997, p. 65). The window was a six-week fieldwork in a major city in Brazil where I collected data between August and September 2008. The broad purpose of the research was to foster a better understanding of the CSR culture of a large mining company which for the purpose of this paper will be called '*Ferrus*'. The key technique for data collection was semi-structured, face-to-face interviews which were supplemented by corporate documents (e.g., annual reports; publicity brochures), information from the company website, informal conversations, and non-participant observation. The study involved theoretical sampling, which means that I consciously chose a group of participants for my study because of their potential to provide 'illuminating examples of a type of case' (de Vaus, 2001, p. 240) relevant to my research. My sample included two CSR managers, two company employees and nine community members; a total of 13 people. With the permission of the participants, I recorded

the interviews and then transcribed and translated them from Portuguese into English (I am a native Portuguese speaker). The data was then coded for emerging themes and grouped into three categories corresponding to each of Martin's three perspectives. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, I replaced the names of participants and geographic locations by pseudonyms.

My key informant was an executive from the Sustainability Division of the company under examination, whom I contacted following a recommendation by an academic colleague in Brazil. She assisted me with the recruitment of other employees and all the community members I interviewed.

In the sections below, I produce a multi-layered narrative of my fieldwork, recounted through the integration, differentiation and fragmentation lenses. Despite Martin's admonition that the three perspectives should be considered simultaneously, for the sake of greater clarity I treat them as separate narratives.

Integration Lens

Through the integration lens, I saw *Ferrus* as a successful Brazilian mining company with a robust financial performance and a strong CSR culture. The company had more than 3,000 employees and offices and industrial plants located in two municipalities – which for the purpose of this paper are called *Mata Verde* [Green Bush] and *Mar Azul* [Blue Sea]. *Ferrus*' global orientation was reflected in its foreign trade and exchange operations offices, and in the fact that it had sales offices in European and Asian countries.

Ferrus' 2007 Annual Report states that the company's financial performance had been particularly impressive over the past few years, since it began exporting its products to China. From the Company's perspective, this was a profitable venture which at the time of the study had led to plans to increase its production by more than 50 per cent from previous years². The enthusiasm of *Ferrus*' CEO about the company's financial success is evident in the excerpt below from the Report:

We reached the milestone of three decades of operation, overcoming numerous challenges. We achieved record-breaking results in our expansion operations. The drive and commitment of our team led to performance control indicators that exceeded all expectations. We produced more, sold more and earned more at lower operating costs. We took full advantage of the booming market demand and enhanced our customers' competitiveness. It was a year in which we finished one cycle and prepared to embark upon a new one, at a higher production level.

A reading of the boardroom of *Ferrus*' head office in *Mata Verde* through the integration lens revealed a number of clues about the Company's CSR culture and financial success. The room was spacious, clean and elegantly furnished, dominated by a solid oval mahogany table and twelve

stylish swiveling chairs arranged around it. At the centre of the table there were samples of the Company's mineral products attractively displayed in a rectangular glass container divided up into sections. On the main wall, there was a large map showing the broad scope of *Ferrus*' operations, large color photographs of its open-cut mines, and bar graphs highlighting its exponential growth over the past five years. A cabinet matching the mahogany table displayed a number of neatly stacked trophies – visible symbols of the social recognition that the Company has received for its service to society. On the opposite wall there was a large poster with the caption '*Ferrus* values its communities' below a photograph of smiling children and adults interacting with equally smiling employees wearing grey uniforms with the Company's logo and yellow safety helmets. Next to this poster there was another one showing the various species of flora and fauna found in *Mata Verde* and a list of initiatives carried out by the Sustainability Division to protect them. The boardroom told a corporate tale of economic excellence and social and environmental responsibility, suggesting that it is possible to sustain all of these goals concomitantly.

The belief in the possibility of simultaneously addressing financial, social and environmental goals lies at the core of *Ferrus*' CSR culture, reflected for example in its mission statement.³

It is our mission to produce high quality minerals for the global market and also to contribute to the improvement of people's lives and well-being. We endeavour to foster social, economic and environmental development through the responsible use of resources and the forging of lasting relationships with our stakeholders. We are guided by principles such as respect for human beings, justice and collective well-being. We establish transparent and ongoing relationships with our stakeholders, based on ethics and aimed at generating value for all.

Through the integration lens I saw the above values being dutifully enacted by *Ferrus*' managers from the Sustainability Division. For example, in the interview with 'Carlos', a senior manager from the Division, I sought his opinion on how *Ferrus* deals with the fundamental dilemma of ensuring good financial performance and at the same time being socially responsible. Carlos did not see this as a dilemma because he views profits as 'a consequence of good business', and he is confident that *Ferrus* does good business. As he put it:

I don't see this as a dilemma at all [said emphatically]. Profits are consequences of good business. Social responsibility must not enter in the Company's expenses sheet; it has to be part of its investment. At least in our vision the future employees of our Company are found in those places where we operate. Those people will guarantee our continuity into the future. So, providing adequate conditions for the communities is one of our roles. [...] So, for me there's no dilemma with profits; profits are a necessity, and also a consequence of good business. And as we talk in our

organization about *excelencia empresarial* [excellence in business] we can be excellent in the generation of profits and value for the shareholders, but also excellent in the generation of environmental and social values.

The integration lens revealed a cohesive team of highly trained, committed and dedicated employees from the Sustainability Division working hard to foster, promote and sustain *Ferrus'* CSR culture. My key informant 'Lucia' was one of these dedicated employees. With the title of Community Relationship Manager at the Sustainability Division, Lucia showed great passion for her work with local communities. In the interview, she promoted a very positive image of *Ferrus'* CSR activities, proudly reminisced about the process that led to a 'pact' with the communities:

For *us*, the pact with the communities is a motive of great pride. It was difficult in the beginning because we couldn't enforce anything compulsorily; we couldn't create a reference model. The transformation was only possible with a lot of work. There was a lot of discussion to create an understanding between us. There was distrust in the beginning, which is natural ...but we believe it's a good participatory model with the communities that can lead to more promising outcomes; to define what we can perhaps do in the future.

Carlos (Lucia's boss) also expressed pride in the work done by his team. In the interview he described his favourite social responsibility projects at *Ferrus* and the role he played in their operationalization:

Our environmental education program has been designed to capacitate teachers, giving them opportunities to improve their lives, at the same time that they improve their educational level. Another initiative that is also very dear to us is the generation of jobs and income. We know we cannot employ *everyone* who lives in the vicinity of our organization, but we have a handicrafts program in the *Mata Verde* community which creates lots of jobs. [...] Our initial role was to encourage, and later to capacitate. Today, we endeavour to give them the opportunity to sell their products. *Ferrus* allows these people to create an exhibition of their products inside the company... They were part of poor communities with few opportunities and basically [this initiative] was the only economic opportunity they had... This program stemmed from our environmental objectives and was given a social dimension. It is going very well.

Endorsing Carlos' response, Lucia explained that most of the Division's activities had been implemented as a result of *Ferrus*' Social Investment Policy, which had become an important point of reference in the Company and also a model for other organizations:

Ferrus' Social Investment Policy [has] become a point of reference for *us* to conduct the process with a high degree of transparency. We have established a form of dialogue with the communities which is extremely proactive; extremely constructive. [...] Following [the implementation] the state government ruled that this model of dialogue would be implemented in all state enterprises.

The integration perspective also highlighted the loyalty of *Ferrus*' CSR managers in relation to their employer. For example, when I asked Carlos how he responded to allegations that *Ferrus*' Social Investment Policy was just 'another public relations exercise', he denied this allegation, emphasizing what he sees as the 'transformative' effects of this initiative:

We do hear this sort of comment, and my first reaction is to contest it, because this *is not* our intention [said emphatically]. You've got to understand that many companies do this, but here we try to separate what is '*marketing*' [the latter was said in English] and what is positive and sustainable action. And we do believe that the definition of our own social responsibility policy helped a lot, because when people have the opportunity to propose projects, the policy has criteria to differentiate between 'marketing' and social action. [...] What we [Sustainability Division] try to do in this case is to work more intensely to demonstrate that our social action is primarily transformative [...] We contend that action in education, for income generation and entrepreneurship are transformative actions in society, and it's legitimate to publicize this – not as 'marketing' – but because in publicizing your achievements you are setting an example, encouraging other organizations to do the same; because it's pointless to do something and not make it known, because divulging brings new opportunities.

Feelings of pride, commitment and loyalty in relation to *Ferrus* were also expressed in the interviews with non-managerial staff. This is reflected, for example, in the comments below by a community liaison officer from the Sustainability Division office in *Mar Azul*, who described the personal satisfaction that she derives from her job:

My satisfaction to work here can be explained in terms of the recognition in my team that our group is cohesive and we share the same values and aspirations. Here I had the opportunity to develop my work in whatever way I like. That is, I have the

opportunity to externalise what I think, to apply new ideas to my activities, and in particular, I have the freedom to make decisions within my sphere of activity. My manager has a unique ability to deal with people, and to provide each person with a challenging environment while respecting their qualities and competencies. The impression I have is that she knows how to combine the “ingredients” to arrive at a result that is positive for the Company and for the team. [...] It might sound silly, or even facile, but my impression is that through helping the communities, I manage to give some meaning to my life.

Similar sentiments were articulated by two employees from the *Mar Azul* plant – ‘Joaquim’ and ‘Luiz’. Joaquim believed that *Ferrus* greatly valued its employees, and as a result, he felt he was a highly motivated worker. In his response Joaquim reflected on the reasons why he enjoyed working for the Company:

We know that *Ferrus* is one of the best companies to work for, and you are a living proof of this: you’re doing research on a place that really cares about society, people, the environment, and everything. [...] I’m very proud to have this job [...] because *Ferrus* greatly values its employees. It gives us lots of benefits. For example, I’m doing a course, and if I weren’t working here I’d have to pay for it myself. *Ferrus* pays 75 per cent of my fees. [...] It also gives us medical insurance, medical care, all rights that workers deserve... And in here, if something happened, they’re like...family, really. And that’s why I say that the Company values [...] all of its employees. So, I have to try to reciprocate by giving the best I can [to the Company]. I think *Ferrus* manages to get the best out of its employees. That’s why I’m proud to work here. Since I started working here one and a half years ago, my life has improved a lot!

Joaquim’s use of a family metaphor to describe his work environment implied a relationship of comfort and security with his employer. These sentiments were echoed by Luiz who also used a family metaphor in the interview to describe his work experience at *Ferrus*:

Yes, I like working at *Ferrus* for two reasons: first because of the family atmosphere of the place. I think this is very important because you feel free to talk about anything with people. If you have a problem – even a personal problem – you know where to go. If you have a work related problem, you go to your manager or to the supervisor; or even to your workmates. You can talk about whatever you like. *É um clima de irmão mesmo* [it’s really a brotherly environment]; you’re always guided. This makes you feel secure. You’re not afraid when you talk to people. I think this

is very important. The other reason is the benefits which are really good, but I think the most important thing is the freedom to do what you like, because it's pointless to work in a place only because of the salary, you know.

Through the integration lens, I found that the views expressed by the participating community members in relation to *Ferrus*' CSR programs were also favourable. For example, 'Renata' from the *Mata Verde* community expressed strong approval of *Ferrus*' presence in her area, in particular its on-going support for the people who live there. Renata talked about *Ferrus* as though it were a 'super-person' (Czarniawska, 1997, p. 41) who benevolently looked after its protégés:

Ferrus [has] always been the company that has most invested in our community. We have [another mining company operating in the region] but it's very much in the background. These days, the most active company is *Ferrus*. It's always involved with the community. [...] So far, *Ferrus* has had a strong presence in our community, and I think it'll be here for another 20 years. And the girls from *Ferrus* [referring to the community liaison team of the Sustainability Division] always visit our associations to see how things are. So, I mean, *Ferrus* is always present in the associations. As I told you before, it was the pillar, the base from which we emerged. [...] That's why we feel *um carinho especial* [a special affection] for *Ferrus*.

Renata's allusion to staff from the Sustainability Division as 'the girls' connotes a relationship of camaraderie and warmth which no doubt enhances the cohesiveness of *Ferrus*' CSR culture. A similar pattern was observed in the response of 'Marcia' (also from *Mata Verde*) who seemed moved by what she perceives as *Ferrus*' faith in the communities:

Ferrus believes in us. It's a company that – even when we find that things are too difficult – goes there [to the community sites] and believes in us. It's always encouraging us to believe that we can improve our community.

Positive sentiments in relation to *Ferrus* were also expressed by members of the *Mar Azul* community, evident for example in an interview with husband and wife 'Paula' and 'Sergio'. The couple ran a successful handicraft workshop financed through *Ferrus*' Social Investment Policy, which manufactured straw products. This income generation project provided employment for dozens of families in the area and was a motive of great pride for the entrepreneurial couple. In Paula's comments, *Ferrus* was again characterized as a benevolent super-person:

Ferrus has been a great partner. It's given us training, and also this workshop, which is something that we'd never be able to achieve on our own. *Never!* [Said emphatically] The Company has been helping us, because it's been giving us work. It's given us work, and we've been sustaining it; we've been productive.

Sergio's perceptions of *Ferrus* were equally positive, and he emphasized a close relationship with staff from the Company at all levels. As he put it, 'My relationship with *Ferrus* is excellent; very good – from the Company's president to staff at the gate. Excellent! We're well known there, so I can speak from a privileged position.'

Summing up, the integration lens allowed me to see *Ferrus* in a very positive light as a successful and socially responsible company with proud and loyal employees, surrounded by grateful communities that are thriving on its CSR initiatives. This is the view promoted in the Company's official discourse through corporate documents and by committed CSR managers who played a pivotal role in sustaining the Company's CSR culture. The integration view was endorsed by community members who have significantly benefited from *Ferrus*' social responsibilities programs. However, probing beneath the 'the polite appearance of consensus' (Goffman, 1959, p. 210), I came across a significantly different picture of *Ferrus*, as will be seen below.

Differentiation Lens

The differentiation lens exposed *Ferrus* as a company which despite a rhetoric of social and environmental responsibility left a lot to be desired in these areas. Whereas the integration perspective underplayed, for example, the impacts of air pollution, the differentiation perspective consistently exposed this problem. The excerpt below from a blogg written by a *Mar Azul* resident is illustrative:

The aggression to the environment by *Ferrus* is notorious and it couldn't be different given its size and the nature of its activities. At dusk, the sky in *Mar Azul* is transformed into a beautiful scenery created by the pinkish reflection of the lights on the clouds laden with impurities. Balconies and external areas of houses located below the dominant wind paths have to be cleaned daily, as they are constantly covered by a fine layer of mining dust from *Ferrus*.

In my web searches, I also came across a number of reports denouncing air pollution by dust and gases emanating from the *Mar Azul* plant, and polluting particles found in water sources. It was alleged in one of them that *Ferrus* had been fined millions of dollars for polluting the environment since its last expansion, but collusion with local government had resulted in fine evasion.

Through the differentiation view, I also came across the issue of pollution in informal observations during fieldwork. For example, one morning as I had breakfast in the restaurant of my hotel (located at 10 km from the *Mar Azul* plant), I overheard one of the waitresses complaining to a workmate that the fine dust coming from *Ferrus*' plant was *uma praga* [a nuisance]. As she frantically wiped the furniture in the dining room, the young woman commented that she was 'sick and tired' of wasting time every morning wiping off that *pó preto* [black dust] only to have to 'do it all over again in the afternoon'. The woman's complaints were later endorsed by a couple of academics I met at a university located near *Mar Azul*, who also described the *pó preto* from *Ferrus* as 'a nuisance'.

The differentiation perspective also framed a conversation that I had with the taxi driver who took me to the airport, following the *Mar Azul* interviews. He enquired about the reason for my visit to that region, and when I mentioned that I was 'doing research on social responsibility at *Ferrus*', he volunteered to provide his own opinion on the topic. He commented that there was a high incidence of respiratory diseases in *Mar Azul* as a result of air pollution originating from *Ferrus*' plant. He stated that his youngest son suffered from severe asthma, and that he knew about other children in his community who had the same problem. He also spoke about social problems such as teenage pregnancy, underage prostitution and drug usage, which in his view were caused by the influx of thousands of male laborers who temporarily settled in *Mar Azul* to work for *Ferrus*. I later came across an electronic bulletin published by a local residents' association, which alluded to other socio-environmental impacts caused by the floating populations of workers:

The 3,000 workers that *Ferrus* asserted to be necessary transformed in approximately 6,000! Some came with their families, and we calculate that during the construction of the new plant, the population of newcomers would have increased to 7,000. [...] From various parts of Brazil, there arrived busloads of people looking for jobs which meant that jobs that could, and should, be given to local populations were given to outsiders. [...] Tourist areas lost their appeal, and large groups of rowdy men kept the tourists away. They filled our beaches with garbage.

Through the differentiation lens I also found out that not all *Ferrus*' employees were happy with their working conditions. In a 2008 electronic bulletin published by a mining workers' syndicate based in *Mar Azul*, operatives demanded 'more appreciation and respect' from *Ferrus*, enhancements in their work benefits, and a 10 per cent pay rise. There were also allegations of 'bullying' of employees by bosses. The report further implied that these problems were part of a long standing struggle between workers and company, and that *Ferrus* had shown intransigence in relation to the workers' demands:

As it happens every year, the bosses are not modernizing, repeating the old *conta gota* [eye drop] tactics. That is, at each meeting they offer a little crumb, hoping that this will appease the employees. Pure deception.⁴

Summing up, the differentiation perspective recounted a significantly different story from that constructed by the integration view. It portrayed *Ferrus* in a rather negative light, as a corporation that had little regard for people and the environment, in stark contrast with the ‘official’ view promoted by the Sustainability Division staff and the docile employees selected for the interviews by my key informant. The third perspective that emerged from the research incorporates elements of both the integration and the differentiation views, weaving a narrative of ambivalence and ambiguity.

Fragmentation Lens

Through the fragmentation lens I was able to identify ambivalent attitudes among community members in relation to *Ferrus*. This was evident in the interview with *Mar Azul* community leader ‘Bernardo’ – a melancholy man in his late fifties who had been struggling to secure the rights of people in his community for many years. At the beginning of the interview, Bernardo expressed concern about the social impacts created by *Ferrus*’ activities since the Company moved into *Mar Azul* three decades ago, in particular about the disruptions caused by the army of *peões* [slightly derogatory word used in relation to mining labourers] who settled in the area at different stages of *Ferrus*’ life-cycle. He believed that, while *Ferrus* and other companies prospered, the region was ‘rife’ with environmental and social problems, including air and water pollution, teenage pregnancy, prostitution and drugs. In his own words:

Ferrus has only brought pollution and social problems. [...]. It’s been expanding here in *Mar Azul*; growing a lot. So, we have these changes in the lives of the community which harms its social structure. For example, the number of people in the region has increased a lot [and] we don’t have an area for leisure activities or an area for sports. We haven’t got a covered gym, where we can take our children, where people can interact. We haven’t got a secondary school. So, what happens? These people sit around on the footpaths. [...] Then there’s prostitution and drugs; all the bad things come to our little town, while the financial capital is doing very well in the market. Today, the government of this region is considered an ‘El Dorado’; it’s spreading out, you know. *Everyone* wants to come here! *Ferrus* with their expansions, and other big corporations too. [...] As people say, ‘*Aqui a gente so fica a ver navio* [Here we only see the ships passing by]. Only seeing ships... Ships everywhere. Improvements in the community? No one helps!’⁵

However, later in the interview Bernardo painted a more favourable picture of *Ferrus* when he acknowledged its efforts to open the lines of dialogue with the local communities. He was particularly appreciative of the work done by the Sustainability Division staff who had been holding regular consultative meetings with members of the *Mar Azul* communities. Bernardo's ambivalence in relation to *Ferrus* is evident in the excerpt below:

Ferrus has been here for 30 years... and it had never helped the communities with anything. [...] But since I started going to meetings with *Ferrus*' staff, I'm getting to know the dynamics and processes of its work; how things are done. This has added great value to the [Residents'] Association. It helped me trust *Ferrus*. Now we [the community] are organising ourselves; we're interacting better. Maybe things will improve for everyone, and maybe the community will grow together with *Ferrus*' enterprises.

Through the fragmentation view, I also detected ambivalence in relation to *Ferrus*' CSR initiatives in the interview with community leader 'Gloria', from *Mata Verde*. Gloria had been in regular contact with *Ferrus* for more than one decade and her experience with the Company was generally positive. Through targeted funding, *Ferrus* had enabled Gloria and her friends to create a handicraft cooperative for women, which became a successful income generation initiative. However, at the same time that Gloria was thankful for *Ferrus*' assistance to the community, she seemed uneasy about the negative social impacts created by the Company's operations. Like Bernardo, she made an explicit connection in the interview between the social problems in her village (i.e., 'broken families', troublesome adolescents, teenage pregnancy, prostitution and drugs) and the arrival of floating populations of laborers in the region to work for *Ferrus*. In her own words, 'These *peões* come and go, leaving a trail of broken families and troublesome adolescents'. Through the fragmentation view I was also able to identify a tension between Gloria's awareness of the unsustainable nature of mining as a core economic activity of contemporary society, and her positive personal feelings in relation to *Ferrus*. This ambivalence is evident in the excerpt below:

Our resources are going because mining is one harvest only. So, I think it's good that *Ferrus* and other mining companies are taking responsibility to leave something behind, because in the future, we'll have *zero* [resources]! We know that we'll be left with zero! *Ferrus* came here in the 1970s saying that there would be 50 years' worth of mining. After 25 years ... they closed... We see that in many places [mining companies] go, take minerals and do nothing, [but] at least I think *Ferrus* is taking the responsibility [for] the communities living where it's operating; where it's taking iron ore [...]; where it's taking great big slabs of soil. At least they're giving support to local communities; it's that sort of responsibility that I think every company

should have, if they're causing harm. [...] It's 30 years now, and lots have gone. Other contracts will arrive, and more contracts mean that more iron ore goes; and things will get harder.

Finally, the fragmentation lens highlighted the ambiguous nature of the notion of *community*, which is often a central element of CSR cultures in the mining sector. I first became aware of this during an interview with Sergio in which he expressed disapproval of members of his own community who complained about air pollution caused by *Ferrus*' activities. In his own words:

Does the Company pollute? Yes, it does. Has it polluted a lot? Yes, it has. [pause] But today it pollutes much less. I've been following the expansion of the Company for many years. I'm part of a monitoring committee at Ferrus. I've got a long history of involvement with Ferrus, and I know its history well. I know about its social responsibility; about what it does for the communities. This is well known. Are there people who don't recognise this? Yes, because they have their personal interests unsettled. Myself, I don't have any personal interest challenged [by the Company's] presence in the area

Sergio's comments made me wonder: What exactly is a *community*? This concept is hard to define because a community has often little to do with geographic or sociographic factors (Cohen, 1985). It exists mainly in the minds of its members. One of the reasons for the definitional problems surrounding the idea of 'community' is that people have 'multiple, overlapping and changing identities' (Kapelus, 2002, p. 281). This is clearly Sergio's case: while he was a member of the *Mar Azul* community, he revealed in the interview that he was also a member of a 'monitoring committee' at *Ferrus*. As seen earlier, Sergio claimed that he had a good relationship with *Ferrus*' staff, 'from the Company's president to staff at the gate'. It can be suggested therefore that Sérgio is part of 'local elites' – conformist, compliant people appointed by the company as the legitimate representatives of the community. (Kapelus, 2002, p. 282).

The fragmentation lens revealed another instance of ambiguity in the notion of community in the interview with *Mar Azul* resident 'Osvaldo'. Here, the issue at stake was the danger to assume that 'communities' located in the same municipality have the same interests. Osvaldo made it clear that this was not the case in *Mar Azul* when he expressed dissatisfaction with the system of bids for project funding under *Ferrus*' Social Investment Policy. It was his view that the bidding system disadvantaged communities located near the mining plant – those that endured the direct socio-environmental impacts generated by *Ferrus*' activities. What happened, he explained, is that sometimes other communities located in more remote areas that were not directly affected by *Ferrus*' activities won the bids and received the benefits. As he recounted:

Ferrus recently sponsored a project management course, but used a bidding process to allocate the funding. I told [the Community Liaison Officers] that as a community leader I didn't like this very much. *Ferrus* should do the following: we are the local communities, so it should target us and not invite bids from all communities in the area. *Ferrus* should support us because we suffer direct impacts from their operations. I know other communities [in the area] also feel the impacts, but we feel them much more. The Community X [from another municipality] won the bid for the project management course [...] but I think *Ferrus* should target the communities directly affected by their activities. It owes us this one.

The fragmentation lens made it obvious in the window study that 'the community' is not an objective, incontestable phenomenon, but a social construct 'invented' because people agree to behave as though it exists. It is 'an imposing of order that does not necessarily fit the lived experience of the people in question' (Kapelus, 2002, p. 281).

CONCLUSION

Based on a window-study of a Brazilian mining company, I explored in this paper the complex nature of CSR cultures. This was accomplished through the application of Martin's three-perspective framework to phenomena observed during my fieldwork.

The study revealed that these perspectives are not *a priori* reflections of organizational 'reality', but theoretical constructs to foster an appreciation of the multi-layered and dynamic nature of organizational cultures. The integration lens, represented mainly by management, portrayed the organization under examination in largely positive terms as an economically successful and socially responsible company that effectively combined market imperatives with social values. The differentiation lens probed beneath the surface of consensus to reveal divergent voices dissatisfied with the Company's socio-environmental performance. The fragmentation lens unveiled ambivalence and ambiguity in the narrative of *Ferrus*' CSR culture, reflected in contradictory attitudes in relation to the Company and in definitional problems associated with the notion of community.

It must be acknowledged, nevertheless, that the study had some limitations that should be considered in future studies of this kind. From a methodological perspective, my sample could have been larger and more diverse. It could have included executives and non-executives employees from different parts of the organization. (There were only two employees from outside the Sustainability Division: 'Joaquim' and 'Luiz'.) Another methodological limitation was the fact that all community interviewees were selected by my key informant who obviously wished to create a favourable impression in the researcher with regard to *Ferrus*' CSR initiatives. Notwithstanding a couple of slightly dissenting voices (identified through the fragmentation lens), the majority of community

representatives portrayed Ferrus in a positive light as a caring and generous mining company. Finally, the study could have examined a wider range of ideational and material manifestations in *Ferrus*' CSR culture, including organizational stories, rituals and linguistic patterns.

Despite the above limitations, it can be said that the study has contributed to knowledge in five ways. First, from a methodological perspective it has demonstrated the usefulness of Martin's 'epistemological lenses' to develop heuristic representations (Taylor, Irvin, & Wieland, 2006, p. 308; 315) of CSR cultures. As seen in this paper, no lens on its own would have been sufficient to account for the different worldviews that constituted the totality of *Ferrus*' CSR culture. The study also highlighted the role of the researcher in the construction of the very reality she set out to investigate. Second, by providing a multi-perspectival analysis of a CSR culture, the study has contributed to enhance the understanding of how CSR cultures are constructed and maintained – not just through the actions of senior executives but also through an ensemble of ideational, material and communicative manifestations produced in interaction by individuals from various groups. Third, the study brings to light the role of divergent voices in drawing attention to contentious issues that need to be addressed by management (for example, the social problems introduced by the floating populations of male workers and the inequities generated by the bidding system used by the Company noted by one of the community leaders interviewed). Fourth, from a broader perspective, the paper provides a contribution to the study of CSR as a critically important development of the last two decades. A deeper, multi-layered, understanding of the processes through which CSR cultures are created, developed and maintained, and of how they are experienced inside and outside a company can potentially contribute towards the institutionalisation of more transparent and ethical practices of social responsibility.

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ENDNOTES

1. This work builds on a framework originally developed by Martin and Meyerson (1992).
2. Data collection for this study took place before the global financial crisis in October 2008, which perhaps explains the optimism of *Ferrus*' CEO. Since then, many Brazilian mining companies (including *Ferrus*) have significantly reduced their production quotas.
3. This is a slightly modified version of *Ferrus*' mission statement to preserve the Company's anonymity.
4. This excerpt and others shown in this paper have been translated into English from the original in Portuguese, and have been slightly modified to prevent identification of their authors.

5. 'A ver navios' is a popular Brazilian adage which means seeing opportunities passing by without being able to take advantage of it.

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SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE: ARE HUMAN RESOURCE PROFESSIONALS VICTIMS?

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ABSTRACT

This research utilizes Fitzgerald's, et al. 1995 Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ, Form W) to determine the extent to which human resource professionals have received unwanted sexual behavior in the five years from 2001-2006. Results show that 89 percent of human resource professionals self-reported to have received gender harassment, 47 percent self-reported to have received unwanted sexual attention, and 6 percent self-reported to have received sexual coercion. However, only 29 percent of human resource professionals also claimed to have been "sexually harassed." Implications include the need for human resource professionals' continuing education and continuous training of supervisors and managers in regard to sexual harassment. Employers should consider an alternate reporting structure and should provide an alternate person, such as legal counsel, to whom the human resource professional (or others if needed) may report sexual harassment.

Keywords: Ssexual harassment, human resource professionals, Sexual Experiences Questionnaire, sexual harassment training, reporting sexual harassment, Quid pro quo, hostile environment, sexual harassment lawsuits, reasonable person vs. reasonable victim

INTRODUCTION

The right to pursue a career and economic gain in the absence of sexual harassment is a basic legal tenet in the United States. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (CRA) of 1964 guarantees Americans that race, color, sex, national origin, religion, or veteran status will not be a factor of employment (<http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/vii.html>). The 1991 update to the CRA provides the original version with the necessary power to stop illegal and discriminatory employment practices regarding race, sex, color, etc. It allows plaintiffs to seek jury trials, and successful plaintiffs can recover compensatory and punitive damages and attorney fees stemming from intentional employment discrimination (<http://www.eeoc.gov/35th/thelaw/index.html> ¶ 28).

The Society for Human Resource Managers reported in 2002 that 97 percent of employers have written sexual harassment policies and that 62 percent of those employers provide training on

sexual harassment (Blackman, 2005). Although employers are taking a stand on the issue of sexual harassment, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) reported that it continued to receive an average of 15,000 sexual harassment complaints per year (Simon, Scherer, Rau, 1999). In 2008 alone, the EEOC received 13, 867 charges of sexual harassment (<http://www.eeoc.gov/stats/harass.html>) and _____ since the CRA was updated in 1992.

Sexual harassment hinges upon whether or not the sexual behavior was welcomed by the recipient. Sexual harassment is determined by the victim and is subjective because what one person finds as sexually harassing behavior may be acceptable to another person. People identify and perceive sexual harassment differently. Many authors have attempted to research predictors of perceiving sexual advances as sexually harassing or harmless (Fitzgerald, et al. 1988; Gutek, et al., 2004). Although a definitive answer has not been established, previous research can reasonably be grouped by influences which may lead to a person's perception of sexual harassment.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this research is to measure the extent to which human resource professionals receive sexual behavior in the workplace and the likelihood of human resource professionals to label the sexual behaviors they experienced as harassment.

There is ample research-based literature regarding gender, culture, race, and age as factors determining perception of sexual harassment (Wuensch, Campbell, Kesler, & Moore, 2002, Desouza, Pryor, & Hutz, 1998, Foulis & McCabe, 1997); as well as workplace environment issues such as employers with high levels of turnover, an absence of policies, and other quantifiable workplace statistics (Gordon & Lowe, 2002, Trevor, 1998, Laband & Lentz, 1998). Although many of these studies include human resource professionals as part of the reporting structure, and often as the designated trainer, research is lacking regarding the sexual harassment of human resource professionals themselves.

Do human resource professionals receive unwanted sexual behaviors in the workplace? If so, this would be a surprising discovery considering that human resource professionals serve as the gatekeeper for professional behavior in the workplace. Furthermore, do human resource professionals accurately label sexually harassing behaviors as sexual harassment? If not, this would expose a problem since human resource professionals often serve as the initial judge of whether or not a behavior is appropriate in the workplace. To date, there are no data to directly answer these questions.

This research utilizes Fitzgerald's, et al. 1995 Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ, Form W) to determine the extent to which human resource professionals have received unwanted sexual behavior in the last five years.. Although the SEQ has been used to measure and compare how sexual behaviors in the workplace are or are not labeled as harassment among men and women,

among Blacks, Whites, and Latinos, and within a relatively few occupations, there is an absence of research regarding the sexual harassment of human resource professionals.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1A.) *What percentage of human resource professionals have experienced gender harassment as self-reported and determined by the SEQ?*
- 1B.) *What percentage of human resource professionals have experienced unwanted sexual attention as self-reported and determined by the SEQ?*
- 1C.) *What percentage of human resource professionals have experienced sexual coercion as self-reported and determined by the SEQ?*
- 1D.) *What percentage of human resource professionals have been “sexually harassed” as self-reported and determined by the SEQ?*

SEXUAL HARASSMENT DEFINED

What is sexual harassment and why is it so hard to define the limits of tolerable sexual behavior? The EEOC provides the following definition of sexual harassment (Wall, 2001, p. 528):

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when any of the following conditions are met:

1. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment.
2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such an individual.
3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

The first two items are often referred to as *quid pro quo*, a Latin term that translates into “this for that.” Moreover, it disallows someone of power and/or authority to make offers such as “If you

will go out on a date with me, I will see that you get a promotion.” Other examples include managers requesting sexual favors, and the receipt or non-receipt of those favors as a condition for making hiring, termination, promotion, and other placement decisions. *Quid pro quo* is very damaging to both the harasser and harassee and tends to be easier to identify than hostile environment claims.

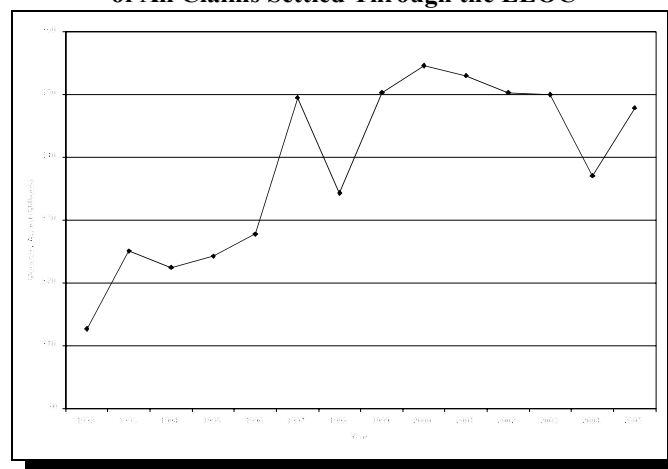
The third type of sexual harassment defined by the EEOC is often referred to as “hostile work environment.” Blatant examples include a pornographic photo of a co-worker posted in the break room or squeezing a person’s buttocks while waiting at the copy machine. However, a key element of any type of harassment is: unwelcome sexual advances, which is tricky to define under the umbrella of “hostile environment.”

For example, if a manager makes sexually-related comments about an employee’s clothing, the courts will consider what the clothing actually was. That is, if an employee wears a very short skirt and low cut blouse, she should expect to hear more comments than a woman who wears pants or long dresses and a non-revealing blouse. However, many feminists argue that it is their right to wear anything they want and that the courts do not have the right to implicitly judge their clothing as a factor of sexual harassment (Wall, 2001).

MONETARY AWARDS

From 1992 to 2005, the monetary award for all claims of sexual harassment ranged from \$12.7 million to \$50.3 million (<http://www.eeoc.gov/stats/harass.html>). These amounts do not include claims that received damages in private court after receiving a statement of “No Reasonable Cause” from the EEOC and are not publicly available. The monetary awards during this 14 year period are displayed in Figure 1.

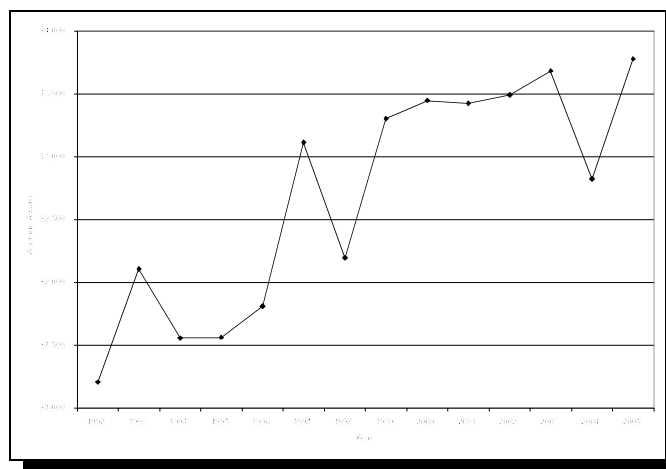
Figure 1: Total Monetary Awards for Sexual Harassment Cases by Year of All Claims Settled Through the EEOC



Source: <http://www.eeoc.gov/stats/harass.htm>

The average monetary award for all claims increased over these 14 years. For example, in 1992, the average award was \$1,205 and in 2005, the average award was \$3,777 (<http://www.eeoc.gov/stats/harass.html>). These averages are based on total claims divided by total awards and are displayed in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Average Monetary Award for all Sexual Harassment Claims



Source: <http://www.eeoc.gov/stats/harass.html>

SEXUAL HARASSMENT: STANDARDS FOR A SUBJECTIVE ISSUE

Sexual harassment is perceived by the victim and is subjective because what one person finds as sexually harassing behavior may be acceptable by another person. This occurs because people often identify and perceive sexual harassment differently.

According to law, however, the victim must be a “reasonable person.” The “reasonable person” standard first appeared in a landmark case involving *Rabidue v. Osceola Refining* (1986). In this case, the majority ruled that “vulgar language and the sexually oriented posters did not result in a working environment that could be considered intimidating, hostile, or offensive under the guidelines” (Bennett-Alexander & Hartman, 2006, p. 317). However, in a dissenting opinion, Judge Keith stated that he could not “agree that the effect of pin-up posters and misogynous language in the workplace can have only a minimal effect on female employees and should not be deemed as hostile or offensive” (Bennett-Alexander & Hartman, p. 318). Essentially, Judge Keith felt that sexual harassment should not be judged by a reasonable person but rather by a reasonable victim. Although his minority dissent did not affect the outcome of this particular case, it is often cited as the predecessor to the landmark Supreme Court case, *Ellison v. Brady* (1991).

In *Ellison v. Brady* (1991) the Supreme Court ruled that it is unreasonable to use a "reasonable person" standard since the rules were established by men. Thus, the standard of "reasonable victim" came into existence. The Court stated that "we note that the reasonable woman victim standard we adopt today classified conduct as unlawful sexual harassment even when harassers do not realize that their conduct creates a hostile working environment" (Bennett-Alexander & Hartman, 2006, p. 338).

Risser (1992) states that "in sexual harassment cases, the behavior must be considered explicitly sexual by a reasonable victim. If the victim is a woman, it's a reasonable woman standard. If the victim is a man, it's a reasonable man standard" (Risser, as cited in Van Mechelen, 1992, ¶1).

SEXUAL EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

Fitzgerald, et al. created the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ) in 1988, with modifications in 1995 to provide an instrument to measure sexual harassment across industries, occupations, and genders. This instrument contains twenty questions related to unwanted sexual behavior. The first nineteen questions are categorized into three forms of harassment: Gender Harassment, Unwanted Sexual Attention, and Sexual Coercion. The final question asks: "Have you ever been sexually harassed?" Prior research indicates that although over 50% of men and women often receive gender harassment, unwanted sexual behaviors, and sexual coercion, they are somewhat reluctant to label themselves as having been harassed (Mecca & Rubin, 1999; Calderone, 1999; Gerrity, 2000).

Fitzgerald, et al.'s (1988) original instrument was developed by conducting two studies. The first study consisted of 3,804 female and male students enrolled at two universities of similar size, but geographically distant. Over 99 percent of the students who participated returned usable data. This original instrument contained twenty-eight questions unevenly split among the following areas: Gender Harassment, Seductive Behavior, Sexual Bribery, Sexual Coercion, and Sexual Assault. Furthermore,

all items were written in behavioral terms and the words 'sexual harassment' did not appear until the end of the questionnaire, thus avoiding the necessity for the respondent to make a subjective judgment as to whether or not she had been harassed before she could respond (Fitzgerald, et al., 1988, p. 157).

The second study focused on sexual harassment in the workplace utilizing 642 female faculty members, administrators, and staff of one of the universities in the first study.

The SEQ yielded a Chronbach's coefficient of internal consistency of .92. Test-retest reliability was conducted at two weeks which yielded a .86 stability coefficient. In regard to validity, all but two of the items showed little variance (Fitzgerald, et al. 1988). Thus the SEQ "has

become standard, such that it is now typical to base measurement on the unwanted experiences endorsed by the participants on this instrument [SEQ] rather than relying on their interpretation of these behavior as harassing or not” (Magley, Hulin, Fitzgerald, Denardo, 1999 p. 390).

SEQ IN PRACTICE

The SEQ has been in frequent use in research involving sexual harassment. Although the original study consisted predominantly of White females either enrolled at, or employed by one of two universities, further research on sexual harassment has been conducted using Blacks, Latinos, males, and blue collar workers as the participants.

Mecca and Rubin (1999) used the SEQ to measure sexual harassment among Black university students. Although 52 percent of the participants acknowledged the occurrence of at least one item from the SEQ, only 4 percent claimed to have been sexually harassed. Like other studies, the majority of reported sexual harassment experiences in this study were in the gender-harassment category.

Matchen and DeSousa’s (2000) research focused on contra-power harassment, whereby the student was sexually harassing the instructor. This research included 359 students and the entire faculty at a Midwestern university. It was discovered that 63 percent of students “reported at least once engaging in potentially sexually harassing behaviors towards faculty” and that approximately 53 percent of faculty had received some form of sexual harassment from at least one student (p. 301). Congruent to other research, Matchen and DeSousa also discovered that among the participants, “female faculty were significantly more bothered by instances of unwanted sexual attention and gender harassment than their male counterparts” (p. 301).

SEXUAL EXPERIENCES QUESTIONNAIRE: THE GOLD STANDARD

According to Brown (as cited in Murray, 1998, ¶6), the SEQ is regarded as “the gold standard in this area” [measuring sexual harassment]. Likewise, it is considered by Calderone (1999, p. 48) to be “the most widely used instrument to determine sexual harassment incidents rate.” The instrument used in this research is the 1995 version of the SEQ which groups the questions into three categories using “Joreskog’s (1971) procedure for simultaneous factor analysis in several populations” (Fitzgerald, Gelfand & Drasgrow, 1995, p. 432). The goodness-of-fit index and adjusted goodness-of-fit were $>.95$ in all samples (Gelfand, Fitzgerald & Drasgrow, 1995).

The SEQ allows answers in the form of a five point Likert-like scale which includes the following choices: 0 – Never, 1 – Once or Twice, 2 – Sometimes, 3 – Often, 4 – Many Times. The SEQ was altered, with permission from the author (Fitzgerald, personal communication, June 15, 2006), to become more contextually appropriate. In the unedited version of the SEQ Form W, each question begins with “DURING THE PAST 24 MONTHS at this organization, have you been in a

situation where any of your MALE supervisors or co-workers:.” This was re-written as “DURING THE PAST 5 YEARS, have you been in a situation where any of your supervisors or coworkers:” The reason for making this change and others is due to the discussion with jurors, which is addressed later in this article. Nonetheless, according to the author of the SEQ (Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow, 1995):

As previously suggested, the SEQ rests on the notion of a behavioral construct. Although some of the behavioral indicators (i.e., items) are more common than others, none is definitive. Some generally infrequent items (e.g., indecent exposure, mooning) are considerably less uncommon in certain types of workplaces. In other words, the specific items in the SEQ are not as important as are the constructs themselves. (L.F. Fitzgerald (personal communication, June 15, 2006)

Therefore, adjusting the measurement period from 24 months to five years and changing the items to be contextually appropriate is unlikely to impact the validity of the instrument.

SEQ Form W	Online SEQ	Category	Question (abbreviated)
--	1	--	If you consent to this survey, click NEXT.
A	2	GH	Habitually told suggestive stories?
B	3	USA	Made unwanted attempts to discuss sex?
C	4	GH	Made crude and offensive sexual remarks?
D	5	GH	Made offensive remarks about your appearance”
E	6	USA	Gave you unwanted sexual attention?
F	7	USA	Was staring, leering, or ogling?
G	8	USA	Attempted to establish a romantic relationship?
H	9	GH	Displayed or distributed sexist materials?
I	10	GH	Frequently made sexist remarks?
J	11	USA	Has continued to ask you for dates, drinks, etc.?
K	12	SC	Subtly bribed you for sex?
L	13	SC	Made you feel subtly threatened for sex?
M	14	USA	Touched you?
N	15	USA	Made unwanted attempts to fondle you?
O	16	USA	Made unwanted attempts to have sex?
P	17	SC	Implied faster promotions for sex?
Q	18	SC	Made you accept invitations for better treatment?

Table 1: Sexual Experiences Questionnaire Form W			
SEQ Form W	Online SEQ	Category	Question (abbreviated)
R	19	SC	Caused fear if you didn't cooperate sexually?
S	20	SC	Treated you badly for refusing sex?
T	21	--	Have you been sexually harassed?
	22	--	What is your age?
	23	--	What is your gender?
	24	--	Which area of HR is your primary role?
	25	--	How much experience investigating sex. harass?
GH = Gender Harassment, USA = Unwanted Sexual Attention, SC = Sexual Coercion Note: Online SEQ, Categories and Questions in abbreviated form as used in Study			

The 1995 version of the SEQ (Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow, 1995) reduced the subscale categories from five (Gender harassment, Seductive behavior, Sexual bribery, Sexual coercion, and Sexual assault) to three and included the following:

1. Gender harassment – a broad range of verbal and non-verbal behaviors not aimed at sexual cooperation but that convey insulting, hostile, and degrading attitudes about women.
2. Unwanted sexual attention – verbal and non-verbal behavior that is offensive, unwanted, and unreciprocated.
3. Sexual coercion – the extortion of sexual cooperation in return for job-related considerations.

Additionally, the 1995 version of the SEQ reduced the number of questions from twenty-eight to twenty. Table 2 provides the GFI measures of the three-factor model. The 1995 version of the SEQ served as the instrument for this investigation.

<i>Measure</i>	<i>Value</i>
Chi-square	133.67
Degrees of freedom	116.00
Ration of chi-square/df	1.15
GFI index	.983
RMSR	.207

Source: Fitzgerald, Gelfand, Drasgow, & Drasgow, 1995.

A review was conducted prior to this investigation that included ten senior human resource professionals who served as a jury. All ten members received a request to participate in the initial survey and participate in an open discussion regarding the contextually adjusted SEQ survey. The survey used for the jurors was hosted at www.advancedsurvey.com, survey # 40618. Afterwards, a meeting was held with all jury participants to discuss any problems, suggestions, or confusing areas in regard to the survey. Only two contextual changes were made from the 1995 SEQ as listed in items 1 and 2 below. The jury recommended the following changes to the survey.

1. Edit questions 2 through 21 to capture a time period of “in the last 5 years” rather than “during the past 24 months.”
2. Edit questions 2 through 21 to capture harassment by ANY supervisor or co-worker rather than “male” supervisors or coworkers.

POPULATION

The population for this research consists of men and women who are members of at least one of the following organizations: The Oklahoma City Human Resource Society, The Enid Society of Human Resource Managers, and the Stillwater Area Human Resource Society. The Bartlesville Area Human Resource Society initially agreed to participate, but later withdrew due to their Charter which prevented sharing any member information. A human resource professional is defined for the purpose of this research as a member of the human resource profession including Vice Presidents, Directors, Managers, Generalists, Assistants, Coordinators, and other positions inherent to the Human Resource Department. The sample consists of those members of the population who responded to various questions in the survey.

DATA COLLECTION

After making adjustments to the survey, a request to participate in the survey was sent to all members of the Oklahoma City Human Resource Society, the Enid Human Resource Society, and the Stillwater Area Human Resource Society via email. This invitation directed the participant to www.advancedsurvey.com to participate in survey #43578 by clicking on a hyperlink. The email included instructions for participating with Informed Consent. There was no payment or incentive given to the participants for completing the survey.

Survey #43578 included the SEQ along with demographic questions in electronic format. The electronic survey included technological barriers to prevent participants from completing the survey more than once.

Data points of the Likert-like scale were gathered for each question. Participants were instructed to answer each question of the SEQ, which was preceded with “During the last five years that you were employed as a human resource professional, have you been in a situation where any coworkers or supervisors....”

PARTICIPANTS

The survey was available on the Internet at www.advancedsurvey.com from September 25, 2006, until October 6, 2006, which allowed participants two business weeks to complete the survey. The initial request resulted in 83 responses. A follow-up email was sent October 3, 2006, after which another 41 responses were captured. The survey captured 124 participants, all of whom provided usable data for the study resulting in a 25.35 percent response rate. All data except for that gleaned from question 24 were converted to an index composition (0 = never, 1 = once or twice, etc.). Thirteen participants requested a copy of the executive summary.

The number of participants (n) ranged from 110 to 124. For example, question one captured 124 responses. However, question 7 received 117 responses whereas question 25 received 110 responses. Thus, n varied based on each particular survey question due to non-response. If a participant did not answer a particular survey question, that participant was excluded from that particular question analysis.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographics of the participants are provided in Tables 3, 4, and 5, and include the distribution of participant’s age, gender, and HR functional area, respectively.

Age (in years)	Frequency	Percentage
18 – 24	1	.91
25 – 34	8	7.27
35 – 44	31	28.18
45 – 54	41	37.27
55 – 64	27	24.55
Over 65	2	1.82

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	26	23.64
Female	84	76.36

Functional Area	Frequency	Percentage
Benefits	7	6.42
Compliance	7	6.42
Generalist	72	66.06
HRIS	0	0.00
Performance Improvement	3	2.75
Safety	0	0.00
Staffing	10	9.17
Training	10	9.17

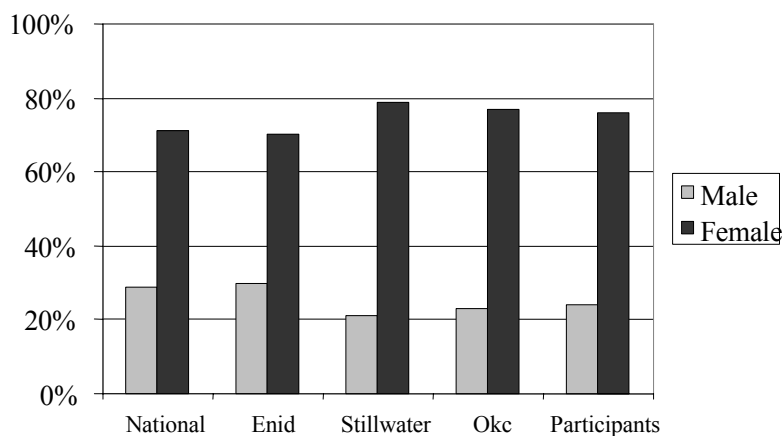
REPRESENTATIVENESS OF SAMPLE

Although participants provided an indication of their age by self-reporting an age-band, the data does not provide the actual age of each participant. Although further insight may have been gleaned by collecting the years that each participant has worked in human resources, the jury found that type of question to be confusing due to the often shared duties between human resources and

operations or management. The authors believe the age breakdown of the sample to represent that of the industry in our area.

The demographics of gender represented in the study reasonably match human resource professionals nationally and the members of SHRM chapters located in Enid, Stillwater, and Oklahoma City as seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Comparison of Gender Among HR Professionals



Source: National: U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 1998
 Cities: Respective SHRM Affiliated Chapter, 2006

HR PROFESSIONALS RECEIVING SEXUALLY HARASSING BEHAVIOR AND IMPLICATIONS

Table 6: HR Professionals Receiving Sexually Harassing Behavior		
HR Professionals	Frequency	Percent
Gender Harassment		
No	12	10.91
Yes	98	89.09
Unwanted Sexual Attention		
No	58	52.73
Yes	52	47.27

HR Professionals	Frequency	Percent
Sexual Coercion		
No	103	93.64
Yes	7	6.36
Q21 Have you been sexually harassed?		
No	78	70.91
Yes	32	29.09
<i>N</i>	110	

As indicated in Table 6, 89 percent of human resource professionals self-reported to have received gender harassment, 47 percent self-reported to have received unwanted sexual attention, and 6.36 percent self-reported to have received sexual coercion. However, only 29.09 percent of human resource professionals also claimed to have been “sexually harassed.”

This investigation discovered that unwanted sexual behavior frequently occurs for human resource professionals thereby possibly indicating a greater understanding of unwelcome behavior and the laws surrounding sexual harassment. Regardless of the level of harassment that human resource professionals personally receive, it is likely that organizations will continue to expect them to have expert knowledge of sexual harassment and what is welcome or unwelcome in the workplace or organization. Therefore, human resource professionals who have the authority to conduct harassment investigations and administer discipline at mid-to large-sized employers should be required to participate in continuing education regarding sexual harassment. It is critical that human resource professionals are experts at assessing the severity and pervasiveness of sexual behavior and the reasonableness or unreasonableness of the behavior. States would be advised to consider following the lead of California and Connecticut in pursuit of this goal by requiring employers to continuously train supervisors and managers in regard to sexual harassment in the workplace.

Required sexual harassment training for all employees both at the inception of employment and periodically thereafter may assist in the reduction of instances of sexual harassment. Although the U.S. has made great strides in reducing sexual harassment, it is critical to eliminate the pairing of sexual harassment and economic welfare which interferes with productivity and the wellbeing of employees. However, those charged with reducing sexual harassment in the workplace (human resource professionals) are themselves often the victim of sexual behavior which presents a somewhat convoluted challenge.

Alternate reporting structures for sexual harassment are advised for mid-to large-sized employers. The percentage of human resource managers who receive sexual harassment at work is alarming. Yet, to whom are they to report it? Although some human resource professionals may be able to report it to a superior, there is no guarantee that the superior is equipped to handle the

complaint or will remain unbiased during the investigation. Thus an alternate person to whom the human resource professional (or others if needed) may report sexual harassment is recommended. A likely candidate would be legal counsel who normally represents the company. However, it is important that this reporting structure is formally known by all.

LIMITATIONS

Although the findings can reasonably be applied to human resource professionals within Oklahoma, it is possible that the participants do not represent the national average human resource manager due to regionally-based factors such as culture, family, religion, and political view. Furthermore, this investigation did not capture racial ethnicity which is believed to be a factor in regarding sexual behavior as welcome or harassment (Wuensch, Campbell, Kesler, & Moore, 2002).

Although the SEQ adequately serves to measure sexual harassment from a psychological viewpoint, it does not have legal merit (Gutek, Murphy, Douma, 2004). However, as the understanding of sexual harassment increases and current laws are challenged, evidence gleaned from the SEQ could reasonably be used as guidance for developing future workplace policies, and as legal construct.

Of particular concern is that the SEQ is not consistently utilized across various studies. For example, some investigators phrase the questions as having happened “ever” or “in the last two years” or “in the last five years.” This makes comparisons of sexual harassment across occupations very difficult if not impossible in terms of the relative results yielded from the discoveries.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Suggestions for future research include an investigation of the differences in percentage of harassment that female versus male human resource professionals receive in regard to gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, sexual coercion, and overall. Additional suggestions include a comparison of female and male human resource professionals as they self-report and perceive:

- gender harassment and “sexual harassment” as determined by the SEQ
- unwanted sexual attention and “sexual harassment” as determined by the SEQ
- sexual coercion and “sexual harassment” as determined by the SEQ.

CONCLUSIONS

Almost eighty nine percent of human resource professionals have received some form of sexual behavior in the workplace. In comparison to prior investigations of sexual behavior in the workplace with participants ranging from attorneys (Laband & Lentz, 1998) to police officers

(Collins, 2004) to professors (Fitzgerald, et al, 1988; Matchen & DeSouza, 2000), etc., human resource professionals self-reported a higher level of Gender Harassment, higher level of Unwanted Sexual Attention, but a lower level of Sexual Coercion than average. Likewise, HR professionals self-reported a higher than average positive endorsement of “sexual harassment.” However, these comparisons are not definitive as indicated by the limitations listed earlier.

Moreover, while the reported rate of unwanted sexual behavior ranges from fifty to seventy percent in other research, the conclusion of “sexual harassment” is normally around six to twenty percent (Laband & Lentz, 1998, Matchen & DeSouza 2000, Collins, 2004, Meca & Rubin 1999, Calderone, 1999, Fitzgerald, et al., 1995). This lack of properly identifying unwanted sexual behavior as sexual harassment is disappointing given laws and organizations’ attempts to reduce sexual harassment in the workplace. However, the results are very encouraging in regard to human resource professionals’ abilities to identify unwanted sexual behavior as sexual harassment.

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THE IMPACT OF DUAL-EARNER COUPLES' BELIEFS ABOUT CAREER PRIORITY ON THE SUPPORT EXCHANGE → WELL BEING RELATIONSHIP

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ABSTRACT

Our study of 120 partners in dual-earner relationships (sixty couples with data collected from both partners) examined the impact of two independent variables - differentials in support and magnitude of support provision - on quality of life and marital conflict. We also investigated the role of individuals' normative beliefs about career priorities in dual-earner relationships on the support → well being relationship. Our results supported our hypotheses that the magnitude of tangible and emotional support provision would be negatively related to marital conflict and positively related to quality of life. We also found that emotional support differentials related to elevated marital conflict, and that tangible support differentials contributed to decreased life quality. Finally, our data indicated that normative beliefs about career priorities moderated relationships between tangible support differentials and marital conflict, and magnitude of emotional support and quality of life.

Key words: Normative beliefs, partner support differentials, career priority, marital conflict, quality of life.

INTRODUCTION

The burgeoning number of dual-earner couples in the workforce (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2006) today has changed organizational and family life (Archer & Llyod, 2002; Bond, Thompson, Galinsky & Prottas, 2002) resulting in increasing research attention on the dynamics of dual-earner relationships (Byron, 2005; Litzky, Becker & Parasuraman, 1998; Purohit, 2000) especially in terms of partner support (Livingston & Judge, 2008; Neff & Karney, 2005; Walen & Lachman, 2000). Partner support has been examined as a resource assisting individuals in dealing with intense, and often conflicting, work and non-work role demands (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux & Brinley, 2005; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Litzky, Purohit & Weer, 2008). The present study furthers partner support research by examining the impact of support provision differentials and magnitude on individuals' marital conflict and quality of life. This study also contributes to existing research

by examining whether individuals' normative beliefs about the career priorities of dual-earner couples influence the relationship between partner support and well being.

PARTNER SUPPORT IN DUAL-EARNER RELATIONSHIPS

Researchers have examined different aspects of partner support including types of partner support (Bird & Schnurman-Cook, 2005; Parasuraman, Purohit, Godshalk & Beutell, 1996), functions of partner support (Carlson & Perrew, 1999; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000), sources of support (Beauregard, 2007; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Neff & Karney, 2005), and predictors of partner support (Litzky et al., 2008; Purohit, 2000). Despite what we know, research examining partner support has disproportionately focused on support receivers rather than on support providers (Eby et al., 2005; Granrose, Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1992; Purohit, 2000). With a unidirectional focus on support recipients, we know almost nothing about support providers' support perceptions (Purohit, 2000; Shumaker & Brownell, 1984). A related research gap stems from the fact that in most partner support research data is typically collected from only one partner despite the fact that partner support is widely acknowledged as a dyadic exchange phenomenon (Crossfield, Kinman, & Jones, 2005; Eby et al., 2005; Granrose et al., 1992; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1994). Consequently, researchers have emphasized that to understand truly the *interpersonal* nature of partner support it is imperative for future research in this area to study *both* partners in the support process, and to assess support as a continuous exchange progression (Eby et al., 2005; Parasuraman & Greenhaus 1992, 1993; Purohit, 2000).

Previous research also indicated that there are systematic differences in the magnitude and types of support partners provide and receive (Cinamon & Rich, 2002; Neff & Karney, 2005; Reevy & Maslach, 2001). It is important to examine support differentials within partners, in addition to the magnitude of support exchanged, as support differentials may mitigate the beneficial effects of support exchanges (Byron 2005; Granrose et al., 1992; Pearlin & McCall, 1990). Scant research exists examining the role and implications of support differentials, as facets of support exchange, despite the well-documented theoretical importance of support differentials (Eby et al., 2005; Granrose et al., 1992; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999; Shumaker & Brownell, 1984).

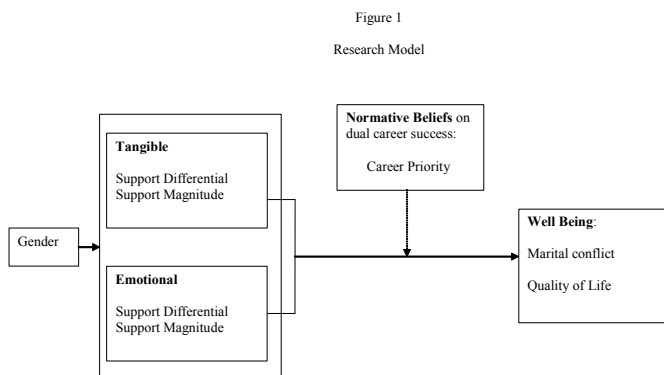
Additionally, men and women experience different work and non-work outcomes resulting primarily from different socialization contexts (Archer & Llyod, 2002; Loscocco, 1997; Sekaran 1985). The disparate findings regarding differential work and non-work outcomes for men and women have frequently been attributed to the dissimilarities in their normative beliefs stemming from early gender-role socialization (Eby et al., 2005; Litzky et al., 2008; Loscocco, 1997). Normative beliefs are defined as cognitions individuals hold about how they believe others think they need to behave as a result of their membership in a particular group (Cooke & Szumal, 1993; Litzky et al., 2008). Men's early socialization experiences often results in their holding normative beliefs that they are the "breadwinners" for their families and women's early gender-role

socialization typically results in normative beliefs that they play the role of nurturers (Eby et al., 2005; Ely & Padavic, 2007; Kulick, 2002; Neff & Karney, 2005). Examining individuals' normative beliefs may give us deeper insights into what men and women think are appropriate behaviors in their work and family domains, and how these behaviors translate into dual-earner relationship outcomes (Kukick 2002; Litzky et al., 2008; Neff & Karney, 2005; Reevy & Maslach, 2001). Normative beliefs are particularly important in the case of women as their career priorities and choices are very often influenced by their spouses' careers, belief systems, and levels of support (Ely & Padavic, 2007; Cooke & Szumal, 1993; Hardill & Watcon 2004; Werbel, 1998). Despite the critical impact that individuals' normative beliefs may have on their work and family outcomes, little existing research has specifically measured or assessed individuals' normative beliefs about the success of dual-career relationships or their outcomes (Litzky et al, 1998; Litzky et al., 2008; Parasuraman et al., 1996).

The present study addresses three research gaps by examining (i) support provision with independent assessments from *both* partners; (ii) the role of support differentials and support magnitude as two support exchange facets; and (iii) by exploring the role of partners' normative beliefs regarding when dual-career relationships work best. In following sections we describe the research model and our study methodology, and discuss our findings.

RESEARCH MODEL

Our research model (Figure 1) proposes that dual-earner couples' experiences of marital conflict and quality of life are determined by two partner support exchange facets – the differential within partners regarding the support they provide, and the magnitude of support they provide. Our model also proposes that individuals' normative beliefs regarding when dual-career relationships work best moderate the direct relationship between the two support exchange facets and the outcomes. Following sections detail the rationale for our model.



Support Exchange Facets

Our model indicates that exploring support differentials and support provision magnitude are likely to yield a richer understanding of how support exchanges influence marital conflict and quality of life. Examining support differential scores in isolation provide incomplete details about support exchanges as couples providing very little support to one another, or those providing high levels of support to each other, may both appear to have low differential scores. Similarly, examining only support magnitude in a couple may not be adequate as the high magnitude of support may all be from one partner. Examining support magnitude, in conjunction with support differentials, offers an enhanced perspective of the support exchange process in dual-earner couples (Granrose et al., 1992; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999; Hardill & Watson 2004; Pearlin & McCall, 1990). Since differential in partners' support provision is a relatively new concept, we discuss this first, and then elaborate on its hypothesized impact.

Support differentials

There is extensive research on partner support in work-family research but there is the challenge of understanding and researching the role of differentials, reciprocity, and equity in support exchanges (Granrose et al., 1992; Neff & Karney, 2005; Purohit, 2000; Reevy & Maslach, 2001). Before we make specific predictions regarding support differentials, it is important to note that though support can be of many types, we focus on two types of support differentials – tangible and emotional support provision differentials. Tangible support provision refers to individuals' giving information, advice, suggestions, as well as help in terms of time, money, or actual assistance, to their partners to get tasks accomplished (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1994; Neff & Karney, 2005). Emotional support provision refers to individuals' listening to their partners, enhancing their partners' self-esteem, and providing the love and nurturance needed for the relationship. It includes the provision of esteem, affection and trust as well as feedback and affirmation (Greenhaus & Callanan, 1994; Neff & Karney, 2005).

Based on the Social Exchange theory (Homans, 1961) and the Equity theory (Huseman, Hatfield & Miles, 1987) our model hypothesizes that individuals in dual-earner relationships will aspire toward low differentials in the tangible or emotional support they provide and will expect their partners to provide equivalent amounts and/or kinds of support. Therefore, if individuals' expectations for reciprocal support are not met, they are more likely to be dissatisfied and consequently alter their behaviors and/or expectations (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999; Litzky et al., 2008; Pearlin & McCall, 1990; Purohit, 2000). With this expectation in mind, our study proposes that tangible and emotional support provision differentials will contribute to higher marital conflict and lower quality of life.

Magnitude of Support Provision

Partner support is crucial in sustaining individuals' health and well being (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Parasuraman et al., 1996). Research on partner support in dual-earner families indicates that support may reduce role conflict (Freidman & Greenhaus, 2000; Livingston & Judge, 2008; Parasuraman et al., 1996), increase job, family and marital satisfaction and influence long-term marital outcomes (Martins, Eddleston, & Veiga, 2002; Parasuraman et al., 1992; Sekaran, 1985).

The preceding research summary (meant to be representative rather than exhaustive) highlights the fact that prior research has not specifically examined the outcomes of *providing* support but rather has focused on the impact of receiving support. We hypothesize that providing tangible and emotional support will both be negatively related to individuals' marital conflict, and positively related to their overall quality of life. Our hypotheses are founded on the *expansionist view* (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) that providing support is likely to have a positive impact on well being outcomes and a negative effect on conflict (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Research on work-family dynamics has primarily adopted a conflict perspective derived from the scarcity hypothesis assuming that individuals function with limited time and energy, thereby, experiencing conflict when balancing multiple life roles (Ford, Heinen, & Langmaker, 2007; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999). However, the conflict perspective was challenged as early as 1974 when researchers argued that involvement in multiple life roles may actually add to the satisfaction and quality of individuals' lives (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). This view - the expansionist perspective - is getting increasing research attention both theoretically (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000) and empirically (Kirchmeyer, 1992; Rothbard, 2001). We acknowledge that providing support may involve "costs," but we adopt the expansionist perspective in this study and propose that providing support will reduce marital conflict and enhance quality of life.

Impact of Gender on Support Exchange Facets

Gender is a very well documented predictor of differences in emotional and tangible support provision and is expected to play an important role in predicting support differentials and magnitude (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Kulick, 2002; Neff & Karney, 2005; Powell & Butterfield, 2003; Purohit, 2000). Researchers, in general, indicate that women seek and receive more emotional support than men and are better socialized to form effective social support networks than men (Neff & Karney, 2005; Turner, 1994). With the dual-earner family now representing the modal American family (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2006; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; White & Rogers, 2000), researchers are acknowledging that traditional gender roles are changing and evolving, and that increasingly men are expected to take on increased responsibilities for non-work related activities

(Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Bond et al., 2002; Greenhaus & Callanan, 1994; Sayer, England, Bittman, & Bianchi, 2004). Despite the shifting and adapting gender roles in both partners, women still appear to be primarily responsible for the household chores in addition to their work role demands (Bond et al., 2002; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000). The Families and Work Institute compared data about dual-earner couples collected in 1977 and 2002 and despite a significant increase in the overall hours men reported devoting to their families in 2002 compared to 1977, the total hours men devoted to their families in 2002 were still *fewer* than the hours women devoted (Bond et al. 2002).

The above discussion highlighted the impact of changing gender roles on tangible support exchanges. As far as emotional support goes, recent research on partner support demonstrates that women continue to report providing significantly more emotional support than do men (Neff & Karney, 2005; Purohit, 2000). Since respondents' sex is a pivotal variable in spouse support research, we include sex in our variable construction and in our data analysis and predict that women will provide more tangible and emotional support than men will.

Outcomes

Marital Conflict

Partners' marital conflict is another important indicator of couples' well being as close relationships are almost inevitably fraught with both satisfaction and conflict (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Turner, 1994). Parasuraman and Greenhaus (1992) found that providing less emotional and informational support to partners was significantly related to increased perceptions of family conflict. These findings indicate that support provision may result in behaviors that reduce conflict and tension in dual-earner relationships. Thus, as we predicted earlier tangible and emotional support (i) differentials positively relate to marital conflict and (ii) magnitude negatively relates to marital conflict.

Quality of Life

Greenhaus and Powell (2006) stated that researchers examining whether multiple life role demands deplete or enrich individuals' lives, investigated quality of life as an important outcome of work-family conflict and conflicting role demands. Researchers found that satisfaction in work and non-work roles enhanced life quality in individuals (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Parasuraman et al., 1996), that stressors in work and non work roles depleted quality of life (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Parasuraman et al., 1989), and that family support increased life quality (Gaitley, 1996).

Though the support provision → quality of life relationship has been insufficiently examined, previous research has demonstrated a negative relationship between work and family stressors and quality of life (Parasuraman et al., 1996), and a positive relationship between support receipt and

quality of life (Fusilier, Ganster & Mayes, 1986; Gaitley, 1996). We support the notion that providing support involves both costs and benefits for individuals (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) but believe that providing support may be intrinsically satisfying and socially rewarding thereby resulting in positive affect and regard associated with helping others (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Therefore, we predict that both, tangible and emotional support differentials negatively relate to quality of life, and that magnitude of tangible and emotional support positively relate to quality of life.

Moderator

Individuals' normative beliefs about when dual-career relationships work best are critical; moderating the direct relationship between support exchange facets and outcomes. Recent research uses the equity-sensitive theory emphasizing that individual differences have a direct impact on equity perceptions (Litzky et al., 2008; Miles, Hatfield & Huseman, 1994; Yamaguchi, 2003) and we think of normative beliefs as influencing individuals' responses to equity or inequity. The normative priority prescribed by society typically involves a "nurturing" role for women and a "bread-winner" role for men (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Neff & Karney, 2001; Winslow 2005). Researchers examined the normative beliefs of younger entrants in the workforce who may have grown up in dual-earner families positing that their normative beliefs may be different from older individuals (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Bond, Galinsky & Swanberg, 1998; Litzky et al. 1998). Litzky, et al. (1998) found that individuals' with synchronous career priority beliefs had better relationships compared to those with asynchronous career priority beliefs. Thus, it seems logical that individuals with normative beliefs that dual-earner relationships work best when the partners' careers are asynchronously prioritized would expect, and believe, that support differentials resulting from asynchronous priorities in partners' lives would actually contribute to successful relationships. In the same vein, individuals holding normative beliefs that both partners' careers need to be equally important are more likely to seek more equity, that is, little or no differentials in support.

With the above discussion in mind, we hypothesize that the positive relationship between differentials in support provision and marital conflict is expected to be stronger for individuals with synchronous career priorities compared to those with asynchronous career priorities. The negative relationship between support magnitude and marital conflict is expected to be stronger for individuals with synchronous career beliefs compared to their counterparts. In the same vein, we expect that the negative relationship between differentials in support provision and quality of life will be stronger for individuals with synchronous career priority normative beliefs than for those with the asynchronous beliefs. Finally, we expect that the positive relationship between support magnitude and quality of life will be stronger for individuals with synchronous career normative beliefs than those with asynchronous beliefs.

METHODOLOGY

Our sample included part-time MBA students at three Northeast United States universities (hereafter designated as University 1, University 2 and University 3) involved in dual-earner relationships (married or living with a partner) where both partners were employed for at least twenty hours/week. MBA students in our respondent pool were not part of executive education programs. All our respondents were pursuing their MBAs while holding part- or full-time jobs where they were on their respective campuses for evening classes. Survey packets, consisting of two separate surveys and postage paid envelopes for each respondent, were distributed to eligible students. Approximately ninety-five survey packets were distributed yielding 60 useable survey pairs - 120 surveys (a 63% response rate). .

		University 1	University 2	University 3	Total
N		36	42	42	120
Sex	Male	18	21	21	60
	Female	18	21	21	60
Race*	Caucasian	21	40	36	97
	Others	15	2	6	23
Age**		4	3	4	
Income		\$40,001-60,000	\$40,001-60,000	\$40,001-60,000	
Organizational Tenure		5.3 years	5.2 years	6.2 years	
Job Position Tenure		3.4 years	3.0 years	3.7 years	
Hours at work/week		43.5 hours	43.0 hours	46.4 hours	
Years in relationship		11	8.5	9.8	
Average number of children		1	1	1	
* Significant differences in race $p < .01$, with University 1 students more diverse than either University 2 or University 3 students.					
** Age was a categorical variable where 3 = 30 – 35 years and 4 = 35 – 40 years.					

To be thorough, although we did not predict them in our model, we ran analyses on our data to assess the appropriateness of combining data collected from multiple universities. We tested for significant differences on key demographic and background variables such as sex, racial composition, age, income, organizational tenure, job position tenure, hours at work per week, years in relationship, and average number of children. Table 1 provides some descriptive statistics of our

sample. There were no same sex couples among our respondents. There were significant differences among the three universities only on racial composition ($p < .01$), consequently, we controlled for race in all subsequent analyses. Several researchers used samples of MBA students to examine work and family issues (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Granrose et al., 1992; Gaitley, 1996; Litzky, et al., 1998; Litzky et al., 2008) in the belief that MBA students more closely resemble organizational samples.

Measures

We used well-established scales except for the support differential measure, and respondents' normative beliefs about dual-earner relationships. Demographic data was collected on background variables like sex, age, race, family and work characteristics. Sex was a categorical variable coded "1" for men and "2" for women. Race was also a categorical variable with Caucasian respondents coded "1" and all other races coded "2" (including Hispanics, Asians, African American, Native American and Others).

Tangible support magnitude

Tangible support magnitude was assessed with a sub-set of a three item scale adapted from Parasuraman et al. (1992). A sample item was: "To what extent do you give your partner advice when s/he has a family or personal problem?" The response categories were (1) "almost none" to (5) "a great deal." Factor analyses yielded a single-factor solution (50% total variance explained). The reliability coefficient was low ($\alpha = 0.41$) but we used the measure in its existing format primarily due to robust support in previous research (Gaitley, 1996; Parasuraman et al. 1996; Purohit, 2000).

Emotional support

To assess the magnitude of *emotional support* we used an eight-item scale based primarily on Parasuraman et al.'s (1992) social support measure. We adapted two of the items from The Careers and Life Interest Project (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000) and two items from those developed by Gaitley (1996). A five point Likert-type rating scale with "almost none" (1) and "a great deal" (5) was used; an example of an item is: "To what extent are you willing to listen to your partner's problems?" Although factor analysis yielded a two-factor solution (57% total variance explained), we used the scale given its high reliability coefficient ($\alpha = 0.80$).

Differential support provided

Measures of *differential support provided* were computed specifically for this study by calculating the difference between the primary respondents' scores (the MBA student) and their partners' scores on each item in the emotional support and tangible support provision scales. Next, we summed these differences for each measure to derive a differential score for each individual on both support provision scales. A positive number indicated that the primary respondent provided more support and a negative number indicated the reverse. A differential score of zero indicated that each partner provided equal support in the dual-earner relationship.

To reflect the differential score variation more parsimoniously in subsequent data analyses, and to overcome any potential challenges resulting from the use of difference scores in our analyses (Edwards, 2001; Peter, Churchill & Brown, 1993), we used dummy coding to group our respondents into support differential categories. Since our sample did not include same sex couples, we could examine the support differential scores in conjunction with respondents' sex to establish whether the woman or the man in the dual-earner relationship reported providing more support to his/her partner. This helped us establish, within each couple, whether the woman (or the man) provided equal, greater, or less support. Dummy coding entails using $n-1$ indicator variables to create the categories needed (n = number of groups). Since we had three groups we used dummy variables 1 and 2 (DV1 and DV2) to code our respondents into the three support differential categories. Our reference group (the equal support group) was coded "0" for both DV1 and DV2. When women provided more support, we coded DV1 = "1" and DV2 = "0". In case of men providing more support, we coded DV1 = "0" and DV2 = "1". Using this dummy coding scheme, 56 women were in relationships where they provided more tangible support, 46 were in relationships where their partners provided more tangible support, and 18 were in dual-earner relationships where they provided as much support as their partners. Additionally, 80 women in our sample provided more emotional support than their partners did, 22 had partners who provided more emotional support than they did, and 18 women were in relationships where both partners provided the same levels.

Normative beliefs about when dual-career relationships

Partners' *normative beliefs about when dual-career relationships* were measured using a subset of a twelve item measure from the Careers and Life Interests Project ENRfu (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000). These items asked respondents to express when two-career relationships work best. The items were anchored to responses ranging from (1) "strongly agree" to (5) "strongly disagree" and a sample question was: "both partners agree on whose career has priority." Factor analysis indicated one distinct factor – labeled "Career Priority" (variation explained was 57.7%) and the Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha=0.63$. Individuals with normative beliefs that dual-career

relationships work best when career priorities are synchronous (both careers have equal priority) had higher scores.

Marital conflict

Individuals' *marital conflict* was measured using a sub-set of a fifteen-item scale - Short Marital Adjustment Test (SMAT) - by Locke and Wallace (1959). Respondents were asked for their level of agreement or disagreement on issues such as handling family matters, matters of recreation, demonstration of affection, etc. The responses were anchored between "always disagree" (1) and "never disagree" (5). We reverse coded responses so that low scores were indicative of lower levels of marital conflict. While factor analysis yielded a two-factor solution explaining 62.7% variation, we used the well-established SMAT as it was reliable with $\alpha = 0.88$.

Quality of life

The construct, *quality of life*, assessed an individuals' family- and work- related well-being and the extent to which they experienced fulfilling and rewarding life roles. We measured quality of life using a scale derived from Quinn and Shepard's (1979) Quality of Employment Survey used extensively (Fusilier et al. 1989; Gaitley, 1996; Parasuraman et al. 1989). The respondents were asked to describe their lives in terms of nine semantic differential scales (e.g., boring -- interesting, miserable -- enjoyable) and two global questions concerning respondents' overall satisfaction and happiness with their lives. While factor analysis yielded three factors (68.9% variance explained), the eleven-item measure of quality of life was reliable with $\alpha = 0.83$. Following prior research and our high reliability, we used the established 11-item scale.

Data Analyses

Correlation analysis followed the descriptive analyses, factor analyses and reliability analyses. Table 2 displays the results of the correlation analyses for all the background variables included as control, independent, and dependent variables in the study.

Hierarchical moderated multiple regression analyses measured the main and moderated effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables. Since some of the interaction terms yielded significant Beta coefficients, the next step examined sub-group differences using interaction plots and post hoc analyses (Aiken & West, 1991; Jaccard, Turrisi & Wan, 1990). We performed four regression analyses, two for each of the dependent variables. For each dependent variable there was a regression equation for the tangible support variables and one for the emotional support variables. In the hierarchical moderated multiple regression analyses, the respondents' sex and race were entered in the first step of the regression equation (as controls). Next we entered the tangible

support or emotional support, dummy coding indicator variables, the magnitude of tangible or emotional support provision, and the normative belief scores on the third step. In the last step, we entered the interaction terms between the support differentials and career priority, and magnitude of support provision and career priority.

Table 2: Intercorrelations among Variables Included in the Model¹

N = 120	Mean	Standard Deviation	Race	Sex	Magnitude of Tangible Support Provided	Magnitude of Emotional Support Provided	Career Priority	Quality of Life	Marital Conflict
Race	1= Caucasian 2=Others		1						
Sex	1=Men 2= women		-.055	1					
Magnitude of Tangible Support Provided	4.0833	.57044	.227*	.061	1				
Magnitude of Emotional Support Provided	4.3867	.45933	.236**	.267**	.538**	1			
Career Priority	2.8528	.90830	.103	-.036	-.030	.193*	1		
Marital Conflict	2.4825	.69235	-.167	-.113	-.307**	-.621**	-.192*		
Quality of Life	3.7886	.55029	.184*	.081	.263**	.296**	.153	-.327**	1
**	Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).								
*	Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)								
¹	Since emotional and tangible support differential are effect coded, these variables are not included in the correlation table.								

RESULTS

Tables 3 and 4 show the results of the hierarchical regression analyses. Our hypotheses regarding tangible and emotional support differentials predicted that marital conflict would increase, and quality of life would decrease, with higher support differentials. We found mixed support for these hypotheses; marital conflict was higher in those relationships where women (Table 3, Model 2, $\beta = .263$, $p < .01$) and men (Table 3, Model 2, $\beta = .218$, $p < .05$) provided more emotional support than in those relationships where both partners provided equal emotional support. Quality of life was lower only in those cases where women reported providing more tangible support than their partners,

when compared to couples with equal reported tangible support (Table 4, Model 2, $\beta = -.285$, $p < .05$).

Variable	Tangible Support				Emotional Support			
	Standardized Beta				Standardized Beta			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Sex	-.123	-.108	-.112	-.100	-.123	.049	.045	.047
Race	-.174	-.074	-.056	-.044	-.174	.007	.009	.018
Differential Support 1		.218	.184	-.804		.263**	.257*	.213
Differential Support 2		-.167	-.183	-1.125**		.218*	.207*	.171
Magnitude Support		-.264**	-.274**	-.420		-.598***	-.590***	-.423
Career Priority			-.158	-1.016			-.039	.506
Differential Support 1 x Career Priority				.978*				.045
Differential Support 2 x Career Priority				.953*				.029
Magnitude Support x Career Priority				.372				-.628
<i>DR</i> ²	.043	.199	.024	.034	.043	.384	.001	.003
<i>DF</i>	2.62	9.99***	3.68	1.77	2.62	25.49***	.27	.19
<i>R</i> ²	.043	.242	.266	.300	.043	.427	.428	.431
<i>Adj. R</i> ²	.026	.209	.227	.243	.026	.402	.398	.385
Total <i>F</i>	2.62	7.29***	6.83***	5.23***	2.62	16.70***	14.12***	9.27***
Degrees of freedom	2,117	5,114	6,113	9,110	2,117	5,114	6,113	9,110
* Significant at the $p < 0.05$ level; ** Significant at the $p < 0.01$ level; *** Significant at the $p < 0.001$								

Our hypotheses regarding support provision magnitude predicted that higher levels of tangible and emotional support would be related to decreased marital conflict and increased quality of life. Our results fully support these predicted relationships. More tangible support (Table 3, Model 2, $\beta = -.264$, $p < .01$), as well as more emotional support (Table 3, Model 2, $\beta = -.598$, $p < .001$), had negative relationships with marital conflict. Additionally, higher levels of tangible support (Table 4, Model 2, $\beta = .221$, $p < .05$), and higher levels of emotional support (Table 4, Model 2, $\beta = .271$, $p < .01$), had positive relationships with quality of life.

Table 4: Dependent Variable – Quality of Life with Tangible and Emotional Support

Variable	Tangible Support				Emotional Support			
	Standardized Beta				Standardized Beta			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Sex	.091	.077	.080	.078	.091	.012	.019	.009
Race	.189*	.132	.119	.089	.189*	.126	.123	.082
Differential Support 1		-.285*	-.259*	.217		.008	.021	.423
Differential Support 2		-.106	-.094	-.153		-.091	-.068	.043
Magnitude Support		.221*	.228*	-.401		.271**	.255*	-.487
Career Priority			.118	-1.187			.081	-2.280*
Differential Support 1 x Career Priority				-.488				-.417
Differential Support 2 x Career Priority				.079				-.045
Magnitude Support x Career Priority				1.574				2.815**
ΔR^2	.042	.097	.103	.058	.042	.069	.006	.076
ΔF	2.581	4.282**	1.790	2.698*	2.581	2.931*	.771	3.434*
R^2	.042	.139	.153	.211	.042	.111	.117	.192
<i>Adj. R</i> ²	.026	.101	.108	.146	.026	.072	.070	.126
Total <i>F</i>	2.58	3.69**	3.39**	3.26*	2.58	2.84*	2.49*	2.91**
Degrees of freedom	2,117	5,114	6,113	9,110	2,117	5,114	6,113	9,110

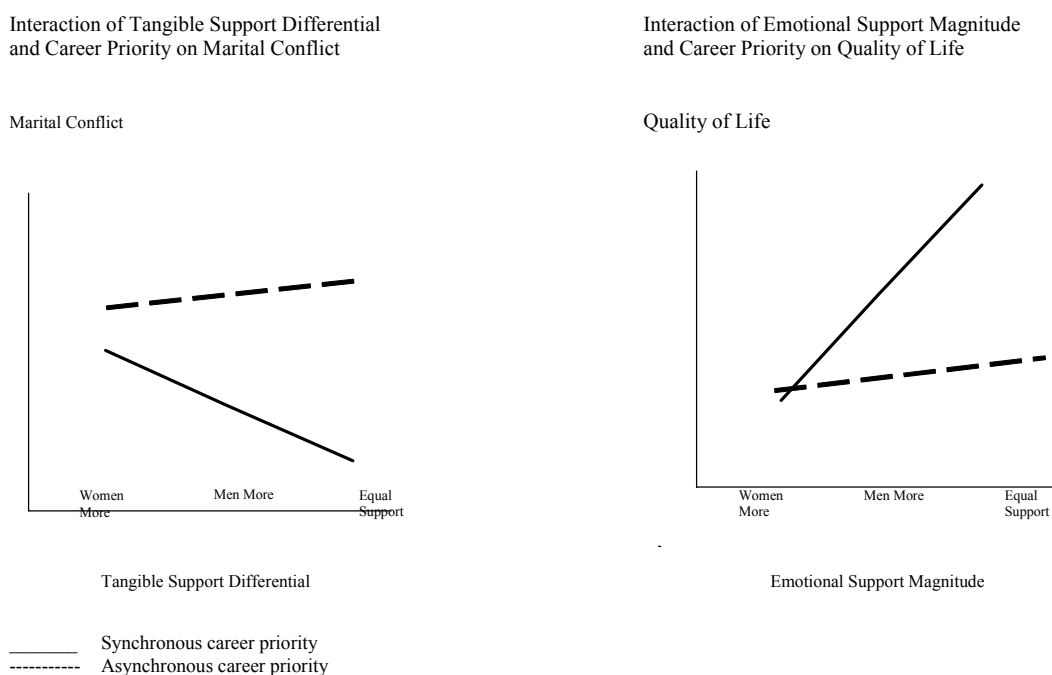
* Significant at the $p < 0.05$ level; ** Significant at the $p < 0.01$ level; *** Significant at the $p < 0.001$ level

We also predicted that normative beliefs about successful dual career relationships would moderate the relationships between the direct associations described above and well-being outcomes. Our results indicate that career priority moderated the relationship between differential tangible support and marital conflict (Table 3, Model 4, $\beta = .978$, $p < .05$ and $\beta = .953$, $p < .05$). The interaction of career priority with magnitude of emotional support and quality of life (Table 4, Model 4, $\beta = 2.815$, $p < .01$) was also significant. We performed sub-group analyses as recommended by Aiken and West (1991) and plotted the significant interactions.

Figure 2 demonstrates that when respondents hold the normative belief that dual-earner relationships work best when career priorities are asynchronous, tangible support differentials have almost no impact on marital conflict. However, when respondents hold beliefs that career priorities

should be synchronous, marital conflict is lowest in partners providing equal support, higher when men provide more support, and highest when women report providing more support. Figure 2 also supports our expectation that the positive relationship between support magnitude and quality of life would be stronger for individuals with normative beliefs that synchronous career priorities contribute to the success of dual-earner relationships than for respondents with beliefs that career priorities should be asynchronous. Magnitude of emotional support enhanced the quality of life for those respondents holding synchronous career priority beliefs, but did not enhance the quality of life for those with asynchronous career priorities.

Figure 2



DISCUSSION

Existing research on support exchanges in dual-earner couples focused almost exclusively on support receipt, and on the receiver's point of view (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2006; Eby et al., 2005; Granrose et al., 1992; Purohit, 2000). Additionally, literature on partner support almost entirely examined support – i.e., one partner's perspective (Eby et al., 2005; Granrose et al., 1992; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1994). Consequently, important goals of the present study include examining support as a between-partner phenomenon with data from both partners. To the best of our knowledge, no other study collected data about support *provision* from both support partners and

treated it as a dynamic and interactive variable. Examining support in this manner also helps diminish self-report bias criticisms, as each partner reported on his/her own characteristics.

The data strongly support our hypotheses that tangible and emotional support provision magnitude is related to decreased experiences of marital conflict and enhanced quality of life. Our findings correspond to the extensive existing research body indicating that support has a direct and positive impact on individuals' well being (Carlson & Perrewe, 1999; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Walen & Lachman, 2000; Weer, Greenhaus, Colakoglu & Foley, 2006). Our results offer partial support for the predicted relationship between tangible and emotional support differentials and the well-being measures. Table 4 indicates that when women provide more tangible support (traditional dual couple relationship) than their partners there is a significant decrease in reported quality of life. In the case of non-traditional couples in our sample (where men reported providing more tangible support than their partners), the respondents' quality of life decreased but not significantly ($\beta = -.106$, n.s.). Therefore, our data indicate that respondents' life quality is more vulnerable to tangible support differentials in traditional dual-earner relationships where women report providing more tangible support. Our finding regarding the relationship between tangible support differentials and quality of life is consistent with Friedman and Greenhaus's (2000) findings. They found that one partner's behavioral support (comparable to what we describe as tangible support in our study) was a predictor of how much time the other partner spent on household and/or childcare activities.

In a similar vein, we found that emotional support provision differentials were associated with higher marital conflict in couples where either of the two provided more emotional support. The significant positive Beta weights for both the emotional support differential variables in Table 3 indicate significantly higher marital conflict in couples where one partner provides more emotional support than in respondents where both partners provided equal emotional support. Based on our results, in traditional dual-earner relationships (women providing more support) and in non-traditional relationships with men providing more support, marital conflict was higher than when both partners reported providing equal emotional support. Our results, consistent with Friedman and Greenhaus's (2000) support the importance of emotional support on well-being. More importantly, our use of a support differential classification of couples further teases out the nuances of this relationship.

Our results regarding partner support differentials were consistent with the theoretical expectations of researchers such as Granrose et al. (1992) and Parasuraman and Greenhaus (1993) who posited that support differentials and support reciprocity were likely to play a very important role in predicting the quality and continuance of support exchanges. They proposed that the lack (or presence) of support reciprocity would result in partners' withholding (or increasing) their support provision. Our results provided empirical support for these expectations. We found that support differentials were key predictors of well-being outcomes and contributed to a clearer understanding

of the complexity of support exchanges in dual-earner relationships (Eby et al., 2005; Granrose et al., 1992; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1993).

A major contribution of our work is the moderating role of individuals' normative beliefs about their career priorities on the relationship between tangible support differentials and quality of life. Sub-group interaction analysis demonstrates a strong negative relationship between tangible support differential and marital conflict for individuals who believe that dual-earner relationships are more successful if the partners' careers have synchronous priority. On the other hand, the relationship between tangible support differential and marital conflict is almost flat for individuals who believe that dual-earner relationships are more successful if the partners' career priorities are asynchronous. A plausible explanation for this could be that individuals holding a view that dual-earner relationships work best when careers are asynchronous are likely to have lower equity and reciprocity expectations. Most conflict arises when individuals' expectations are not met; in case of individuals holding lower equity and reciprocity expectations, the impact of support differentials on marital conflict may be low as they are not expecting as much support from their partners. Therefore, though the overall marital conflict experienced by the asynchronous careers group is higher, the three support differential groups in this category appear to experience almost the same levels of marital conflict. Respondents holding synchronous beliefs on the other hand appear to experience lower levels of marital conflict and demonstrate greater variability in perceptions of marital conflict across the three groups.

Sub-group interaction analysis also demonstrated a strong positive relationship between magnitude of emotional support provided and quality of life for individuals who believed that dual-earner relationships were more successful with synchronous career priority. On the other hand, the slope of the relationship between magnitude of emotional support provided and quality of life was positive, albeit not as strong, for individuals who believed that dual-earner relationships were more successful with asynchronous career priorities. These findings demonstrated that all respondents – regardless of asynchronous or synchronous career priorities - experienced lower quality of life if they provided less emotional support. Additionally, higher magnitude of emotional support provided enhanced all respondents' quality of life. Importantly, though, greater magnitude of emotional support enhanced quality of life far more for respondents with synchronous career beliefs than for those with asynchronous beliefs.

Our findings regarding the moderating role of individuals' normative beliefs about dual-earner relationships were significant as they extended earlier research about gender role expectations into the area of partner support. Researchers like Litzky et al. (1998), Litzky et al. (2008), and Loscocco (1997) have examined the role of traditional gender role expectations in how individuals viewed themselves as employees and parents and found that gender role expectations played a pivotal role in how women and men viewed and shaped their career choices. By examining individual's normative beliefs about dual-earner relationships, our research demonstrated how individual values and beliefs influenced the relationship between support and well-being.

Researchers have emphasized that the relationships between work-family variables, support, and well-being were multifaceted and complex (Eby et al., 2005; Granrose et al., 1992; Litzky & Greenhaus, 2007; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1993) and our work empirically examined these complexities.

Although our model predicted the direct relationships between tangible support differentials and marital conflict, and emotional support differentials and quality of life, our results did not support these relationships. Similarly, we hypothesized that respondents' normative beliefs would moderate all relationships between the support facets and well-being outcomes; our data supported only a few of these relationships. Our small sample size, and the relatively large number of independent variables in our regression analyses, may have suppressed these relationships (Jaccard et al., 1990). The results of this study should be interpreted with caution because of the methodological limitations resulting from using a cross-sectional, correlational research design. This issue can be resolved using a longitudinal research design and is an important recommended direction for future research on social support. The findings of this study are potentially applicable only to other educated, professionally qualified individuals with relatively high incomes, rather than dual-earner couples with lower income levels. In the same vein, these results are applicable to dual-earner couples and cannot be applied to single-income households, same-sex couples, support exchanges at work, or among friends and non-work support networks. These challenges, however, are an invitation for future research into complex support relationships.

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INNOVATION ADOPTION DECISIONS: THE EFFECT OF PROBLEM SOLVING STYLES AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

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ABSTRACT

Previous innovation research has focused on organizational factors that lead to the adoption of an innovation. However, there has been little research on individual and behavioral factors in the innovation adoption process. Typically, many innovations are proposed each year for implementation consideration by organizations. However, only some are adopted while many others are not. It is possible that the fate of an organization may be determined by its ability to infuse itself with new ideas as problems occur or to anticipate changes that might produce challenges to it. Managers with innovator problem solving styles may be essential to whether, or not, an innovation is adopted. Further, innovations that may be effective for the organization might not be implemented without support from other stakeholders. Thus, managers must have effective work relationships and support from people both internal and external to the organization.

This study investigates how the personal involvement of change agents in the organization (innovators) relates to their problem solving style, social support patterns, and innovation adoption decisions. Results indicate that while the innovator problem solving style is positively related to both internal and external forms of informational and emotional social support, only the external forms of social support are associated with the adoption of innovations. Research contributions and implications about the importance of social networks for innovators are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations are constantly presented with problems and challenges that require innovative solutions. Human resource management innovations (HRMI) occur in the areas of recruiting and selection; appraisal; training and development; rewards and benefits; organizational design; and communication (Wolfe, 1995). Although problems and challenges exist in these areas that require innovative solutions, many employees will choose not to accept the challenge to seek new ideas. Many managers at both top and lower levels are satisfied with the status quo. Typically, managers

become involved in the innovation process only when they are familiar with the area of the problem and feel they have the expertise to get involved (Daft, 1978).

Previous research has demonstrated that the innovator problem solving style is positively related to informational support from within and outside the organization (Nelson & Brice, 2008). They also found some support for the moderating effect of emotional social support on the relationship between informational social support and personal involvement in the innovation. In this study, we extend those findings and hypothesize that managers who seek new ideas and become involved in innovation as a solution to a problem have an innovative problem solving style. In essence, some employees are willing to take risks and become involved in resolving problems (innovators) while others are quite risk-averse (the status quo). Further, we postulate that in order to facilitate adoption of innovations, managers must have both emotional and informational support from both within and outside of the organization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational innovation research has been generally confined to three areas: 1) the spread or diffusion of an innovation; 2) the determinants of innovativeness; and 3) the process of innovation (Wolfe, 1994). Research on diffusion has typically tried to understand what factors affect the rate of diffusion of innovations, while previous research on the determinants of innovativeness focused on the difference between early and late adopters (Abrahamson, 1991). Process research focused on changes in an organization's technology and has expanded its perspective to identify and investigate the stages of innovation, as well as to describe the conditions, which facilitate innovative processes (Ettlie & Reza, 1992). None of these areas of research provides any explanation for individual behavioral effects during the innovation process.

In spite of the various approaches to examining innovation, no general theory of innovation exists in the current literature (Drazin & Schoonhoven, 1996). Downs and Mohr (1976) suggested that there is no theory of innovation because of conceptual and methodical issues. They argued that many conceptual problems occur when considering whether primary or secondary attributes of innovations should be utilized in theory building. Primary attributes are those that are inherent in an innovation, while secondary attributes are those that could vary from organization to organization, such as routine versus radical, or major versus minor innovations. Secondary attributes should be used in the innovative-decision design to determine the circumstances influencing a decision to innovate (Downs & Mohr, 1976).

Rogers (1962; 1995) used secondary attributes and developed an innovative-decision design that describes the innovation process. An individual goes from knowledge of an innovation, to forming an attitude about the innovation, to a decision to accept or reject the innovation, to implementation of the innovation, and finally to confirmation of the decision. Knowledge occurs when the individual becomes aware of the innovation and has some general information about its

use. Based on his/her limited knowledge of the innovation, the individual forms a favorable or unfavorable opinion in the persuasion stage. During the decision stage, the individual gathers additional information about the innovation that leads to a decision to adopt or reject the innovation. If adoption is the choice, then the next step is the implementation of the innovation. Generally, implementation is conducted on a limited basis as a trial and the results of this trial, as well as other feedback, provides the basis for the last stage, confirmation. During the confirmation stage, the individual may use positive feedback as validation to implement the innovation on a larger scale, or negative feedback to discontinue implementation.

Innovations have generally been viewed as a way of changing the organization for the better or improving its effectiveness (Damanpour, 1991). Typically, most people believe that innovations are adopted when they are good and rejected when they are bad. This perspective is called efficient-choice and assumes that decision-makers only choose to adopt and implement effective innovations. In reality, some innovations that are adopted and implemented are later withdrawn due to their ineffectiveness or lack of organizational support. Abrahamson (1991) also argued that the efficient choice perspective is flawed and that it restricts or at least limits research on ineffective choices of innovations. Although the objective is the adoption and implementation of effective innovations, a good innovation may be rejected or a bad one may be adopted. During the innovation process, others will influence the innovator and may affect his/her decision to adopt or reject an innovation. Although a manager may have an innovative problem solving style, he/she still needs reassurance that the new idea has merit

Some researchers have classified human resource management innovations (HRMI) as administrative innovations because they occur within the social system of the organization (Tannenbaum & Dupuree-Bruno, 1994; Wolfe, 1995). These researchers do not consider technological innovations a part of HRMIs. While it is true that most administrative innovations are intangible and unable to be measured using traditional means such as cost-benefit analyses; many technological innovations are directly related to human resource management (HRM) functions. For example, computer based training (CBT), computer based ads, Internet recruiting and the company Intranet are just a few of the ways HRM effectively utilizes technology.

Stone, Templer, and Nelson (2002) argue that omitting technological innovations from HRM limits the view of HR as being only related to the people aspect of the organization. Likewise, Van de Ven (1986) and Nohria and Gulati (1996) concurred that separating technical and administrative innovations results in a fragmented categorization of the innovation process. In reality, the components of the organization (i.e., people, technology, structure, and task) make up a system with parts interrelated such that a change in one component has an effect on every other component. Daft (1978) found that innovation can occur both bottom-up and top-down in an organization. He proposed a dual-core mode of organizational innovation with technical innovations from the bottom-up and administrative innovations from the top-down based on expertise of information.

Personal Involvement and the Innovator Problem Solving Style

Problem solving is defined as an activity that is undertaken under conditions of uncertainty with the goal of removing or circumventing an obstacle (Tallman, Leik, Gray, & Stafford, 1993). Problems are barriers to attaining a desired goal where there is some doubt about the means to overcome the obstacle, as well as the outcome of using any particular means (Tallman & Gray, 1990). Problem solving, therefore, is a process used for nonroutine events and is successful if it overcomes the goal-impeding barrier. Implicit in the definition of problem solving is a process that requires making change and making a choice between alternative courses of action.

The theory of problem solving behavior (Tallman et al., 1993) addresses the process of problem solving by explaining how a person becomes aware of a problem, and addressing when and why people choose certain actions to solve a problem. Initially, an individual becomes aware of an issue that is preventing him/her from attaining a desired objective. The individual can, upon awareness of this problem, decide to adjust his/her situation to deal with it or find some other means of coping. Coping might be considered when the magnitude of the problem is greater than the resources available to solve it. The individual may, however, choose to take action to become personally involved to resolve the problem.

In many cases the resolution to a problem will require an innovation or an idea not previously utilized in the organization. Kirton (1976) developed a classification to describe individuals based on the amount of structure needed to solve a problem. He argued that everyone can be located on a continuum ranging from an ability to do things better to the ability to do things differently, called adaptive and innovative, respectively. Adaptors are characterized by precision, reliability, efficiency, and methodicalness. Innovators, on the other hand, are seen as undisciplined, thinking tangentially, and approaching tasks from unexpected angles. Kirton (1980) suggested that although both innovators and adaptors are needed for organizational effectiveness, innovators bring needed change to the organization while adaptors provide the stability needed.

Hypothesis 1: Personal involvement in the adoption of the innovation is positively related to the innovator problem solving style.

Innovator Problem Solving Style and Social Support

A behavioral process that should help us understand the innovation process is social support. Social support provides resources to a receiver that helps him/her increase his/her sense of well-being (Shumaker & Brownell, 1984; McIntosh, 1991). House included informational and emotional support in his description of supportive behaviors (House, 1981). Informational support consists of data, facts, knowledge or other information given to a receiver while emotional support includes listening to problems and taking a personal interest in the receiver. Researchers generally agree that

the receipt of social support is related to positive outcomes (Hupcey, 1998; Richman, Rosenfeld, & Brown, 1998). A limited number of studies have investigated the effect of social support in the workplace. A longitudinal study to examine the relationship between job characteristics and psychological well-being found that job demands and social support influenced job satisfaction (Jonge, Dormann, Janssen, Dollard, Landeweerd & Nijhuis, 2001). Ducharme and Martin (2000) also concluded that emotional and instrumental social support contributed to the job satisfaction of full-time workers.

The innovator will seek social support as he/she attempts to resolve the problem. According to the theory of problem solving behavior (Tallman et al., 1993), after the innovator becomes aware of an innovation that may resolve the problem, he/she begins an information search to determine what alternatives are available to solve the problem. In this information search stage, the individual will utilize various sources to gather information about the problem and possible solutions. The outcome of the information search could lead to a decision to cope with the problem or to take action to resolve the problem.

In the persuasion stage and in the decision stage of the innovation process, the innovator seeks evaluative information in order to reduce uncertainty about the innovation's expected consequences. Here the individual wants to know the innovation's advantages and disadvantages in his/her own situation. Interpersonal networks with peers are particularly likely to convey such evaluative information about an innovation prior to taking action to adopt and implement the innovation. The innovator will seek information from colleagues inside and outside the organization to affirm the benefits of the innovation. Colleagues inside the organization can provide information on the current problem to assess the likelihood of this innovation resolving the problem and colleagues outside the organization can provide information on organizations that have successfully implemented the innovation.

The innovator will also seek information to reinforce his/her innovation and may not adopt the innovation if he/she perceives too much risk. Factors used to evaluate the degree of risk associated with HRMIs are pervasiveness, magnitude, and radicalness (Wolfe, 1995). These factors contribute to the uncertainty of the knowledge concerning the link between the innovation's inputs, processes and outcomes. Pervasiveness is the extent to which the innovation is perceived as a threat or the proportion of employee behaviors that are affected by the innovation. Magnitude is the degree of displacement of existing structure, personnel, and financial resources from the innovation. Radicalness is the extent to which an innovation is novel or represents change. It influences both uncertainty and resistance. Innovations that are high in pervasiveness, magnitude, and radicalness will create greater friction in the organization. Such changes will require greater support in order to be accepted and adopted by the organization. Thus,

Hypothesis 2a: Innovators will utilize informational social support from within the organization to form an opinion about the innovation.

Hypothesis 2b: Innovators will utilize informational social support from outside the organization to form an opinion about the innovation.

During the persuasion stage and in the decision stage of the innovation process, the innovator will also need emotional social support to provide the confidence needed to proceed with the innovation. Emotional support is the most likely type of support to receive from others because it primarily involves a willingness to listen and show concern. The innovator will need someone willing to listen to his/her ideas about the innovation and provide a supportive exchange. The innovator will turn to colleagues that he/she can trust to provide a critical analysis of the proposal, while also taking in consideration the innovator's feelings by showing concern for him/her. Trust involves faith in the intentions and behavior of others (Berman & Jones, 1999). This person may be someone the innovator has supported in the past with positive outcomes and is now seeking reciprocity. The innovator will have persons inside the organization that are familiar with his/her performance and will encourage him/her in this new endeavor. The innovator will also have emotional ties with friends and colleagues outside the organization who are willing to listen to his/her ideas. The innovator will seek colleagues with relationships in which they value each others' opinions and have confidence in their good intentions. Thus,

Hypothesis 3a: Innovators will utilize emotional social support from within the organization to form an opinion about the innovation.

Hypothesis 3b: Innovators will utilize emotional social support from outside the organization to form an opinion about the innovation.

Social Support and Adoption of the Innovation

Previous research has shown that HR innovators receive informational social support from colleagues both inside and outside the organization (Nelson & Brice, 2008). In this study we ask the question: Does this support lead to the adoption and implementation of the innovation? Informational social support provides facts and other information for innovators when determining whether to adopt the innovation. It is reasonable to expect innovators to solicit information within the organization to determine if this innovation will resolve the problem. Colleagues within the organization may be willing to provide informational social support to facilitate the goals and

mission of the organization, especially in an organizational culture that emphasizes teamwork. There may also be a financial incentive for all employees if the innovation provides a cost reduction or increase in profit for the organization.

Frambach and Schilewaert (2002) conducted a study of the determinants of innovation adoption and found that, at the individual level, personal innovativeness was an important factor. Personal innovativeness was defined as a positive attitude toward innovation and an acceptance of the innovation influenced by the organization. Organizations communicate with their employees and provide information necessary to appraise the innovation. Innovators may have relationships with outside colleagues in organizations that promote creativity and innovation and they, in turn, pass information along to innovators. Therefore,

Hypothesis 4a: Informational social support from within the organization is positively related to the adoption of the innovation.

Hypothesis 4b: Informational social support from outside the organization is positively related to the adoption of the innovation.

Emotional social support is inherent in most social relationships and is just as important in work relationships. Due to the risk associated with something new, the innovator will want to talk through the innovation process before deciding to adopt the innovation. However, innovators may have difficulty getting social support from colleagues inside the organization. This situation may result from budget allocations, competition for limited resources, or even internal conflicts over status and recognition. Colleagues from inside the organization may also be adaptors who resist change and see the innovator as a rebel who seeks to change things. This resistance to change is common when there is a fear of the unknown (as is the case with an innovation) or a fear of failure, especially common with new technology. In this case, innovators are more likely to seek emotional support from colleagues outside the organization who will be more objective because they are not going to be affected by the innovation. These external colleagues may have some personal knowledge of the innovation from prior implementation in their organization. Innovators from other organizations are also more likely to understand the need for support when new ideas are being considered for adoption. In addition, an innovator may be aware of his/her reputation and more prone to provide support to others in order to enhance his/her own personal social network. Thus,

Hypothesis 5a: Emotional social support from within the organization is negatively related to the adoption of the innovation.

Hypothesis 5b: Emotional social support from outside the organization is positively related to the adoption of the innovation.

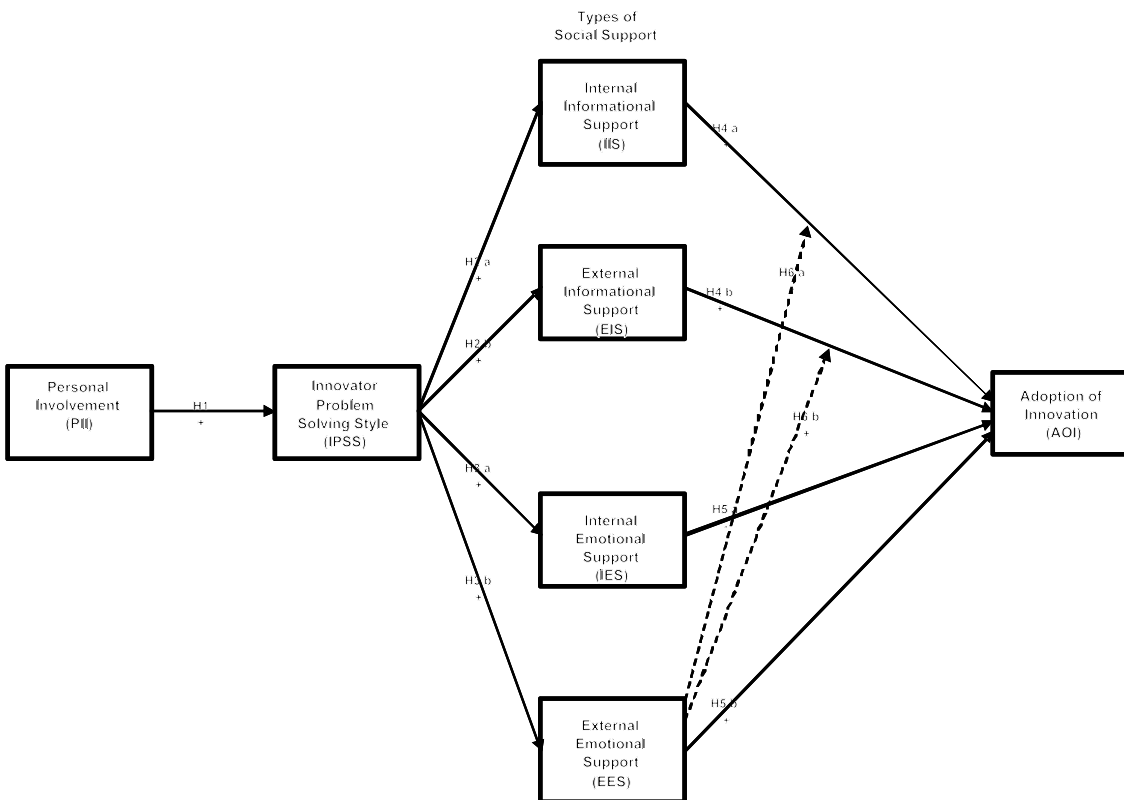
The Moderating Effect of External Emotional Support on Informational Support

Individuals who are innovators are likely to bring new ideas to an organization and are highly tolerant of risk (Kirton, 1976). That being said, they are more likely, than not, to utilize external sources of support more than organizational conformists who may be satisfied with the status quo. Nelson and Brice (2008) found that employees seek informational and emotional support from within and outside of an organization. However, it is more likely that innovators, who face resistance to their ideas and suggestions from traditional employees, need the emotional support of external colleagues more so than others.

Past research has demonstrated that individuals lacking organizational support utilize their own networks to spread information about possible innovations (Dougherty & Hardy, 1996). Other work has shown that innovators who receive information about innovations through his/her network were positively linked to whether or not an innovation was adopted (Abrahamson & Rosenkopf, 1997). Albrecht and Hall (1991) found that innovators sought emotional support from others perceived as being trustworthy or supportive (like friends, colleagues, and family). Ford (1985) found that emotional support from interpersonal relationships is more important than other types of social support for positive work outcomes. This evidence suggests that regardless of the type of informational support (internal or external) gathered by the innovator, the decision to adopt the innovation, or not, may hinge on the presence, or not, of external emotional support surrounding the decision. Therefore, it is hypothesized that the relationship(s) of internal and external informational support to the adoption of an innovation may be significantly heightened when moderated by the existence of external emotional support. Thus,

Hypothesis 6a: The existence of external emotional support will moderate the relationship between internal informational support and adoption of the innovation.

Hypothesis 6b: The existence of external emotional support will moderate the relationship between external informational support and adoption of the innovation.

Figure 1: All Hypothesized Relationships

METHODOLOGY

Sample

This study utilized a sample of professional members of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). Chapter presidents were contacted by telephone and/or email and requested to distribute the questionnaire via email, newsletter, or during their chapter meetings, to their members. Those who received the questionnaire could respond online, or by mail, fax, or email to the author. A follow up letter and another copy of the questionnaire were sent to chapter presidents approximately two weeks later. A total of 100 usable surveys were received for this study.

Measures

Personal Involvement in the Innovation was measured by asking respondents two questions about their level of involvement in the adoption of an innovation. The first question was “To what extent did you personally investigate the use of a new product...” and the second question was “To

what extent did you personally take action to insure the adoption of the new product ...” Both questions used a Likert scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all and 5 is to a great extent. The Cronbach alpha was .77.

Problem Solving Style was measured using the modified Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory or KAI (Kirton, 1976). This measure evaluates the characteristic approach a person has towards problem solving and decision-making and their propensity to innovate. The modified KAI has 13-items with each item scored on a scale from 1 (very difficult) to 5 (very easy). Respondents were asked to describe how easy or difficult it is to do and maintain a set of behaviors such as “have original ideas, enjoy detailed work, and never act without proper authority.” The Cronbach alpha was .80.

Emotional Social Support and *Informational Social Support* were measured by an index adapted from previous research (i.e., House, 1981; Dormann & Zapf, 1999). The items were reworded to be more specific to this sample. Sample items included “I can talk to my colleagues if I have a problem at work” and “I value the advice I receive from my colleagues.” The same information was requested from colleagues within and outside the organization. Social support was measured on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree. The Cronbach alphas ranged from .84 to .88.

Adoption of Innovation was measured by asking respondents if the innovation was adopted and implemented in the organization.

Data Analysis and Results

All hypotheses were tested using regression analysis (SEE Table 1). Hypothesis 1 (Analysis 1), which posited that personal involvement in the adoption of the innovation is positively related to the innovator problem solving style was supported. In this analysis, the dependent variable, problem solving style, was regressed on the independent variable, personal involvement in the innovation. The relationship between personal involvement in the innovation and problem solving style (innovators) was positive and significant ($F = 4.04$, $p < .05$), supporting Hypothesis 1.

Regression	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	F-statistic
Analysis 1	IPSS	PII	4.037**
Analysis 2	IIS	IPSS	4.464**
Analysis 3	EIS	IPSS	6.760***
Analysis 4	IES	IPSS	12.054***
Analysis 5	EES	IPSS	15.101***

Hypothesis 5a (Analysis 8) posited that emotional social support from within the organization is negatively related to the adoption of the innovation but this hypothesis was not supported. Apparently, resistance to organizational change faced by innovators was not significant enough to influence the adoption of an innovation.

Hypothesis 5b (Analysis 9) posited that emotional social support from outside the organization is positively related to the adoption of the innovation. This hypothesis was supported ($F = 5.981, p < .05$). As hypothesized, this finding confirms that innovators may need strong sources of emotional support external to the organization in order to confidently proceed with innovation adoption decisions.

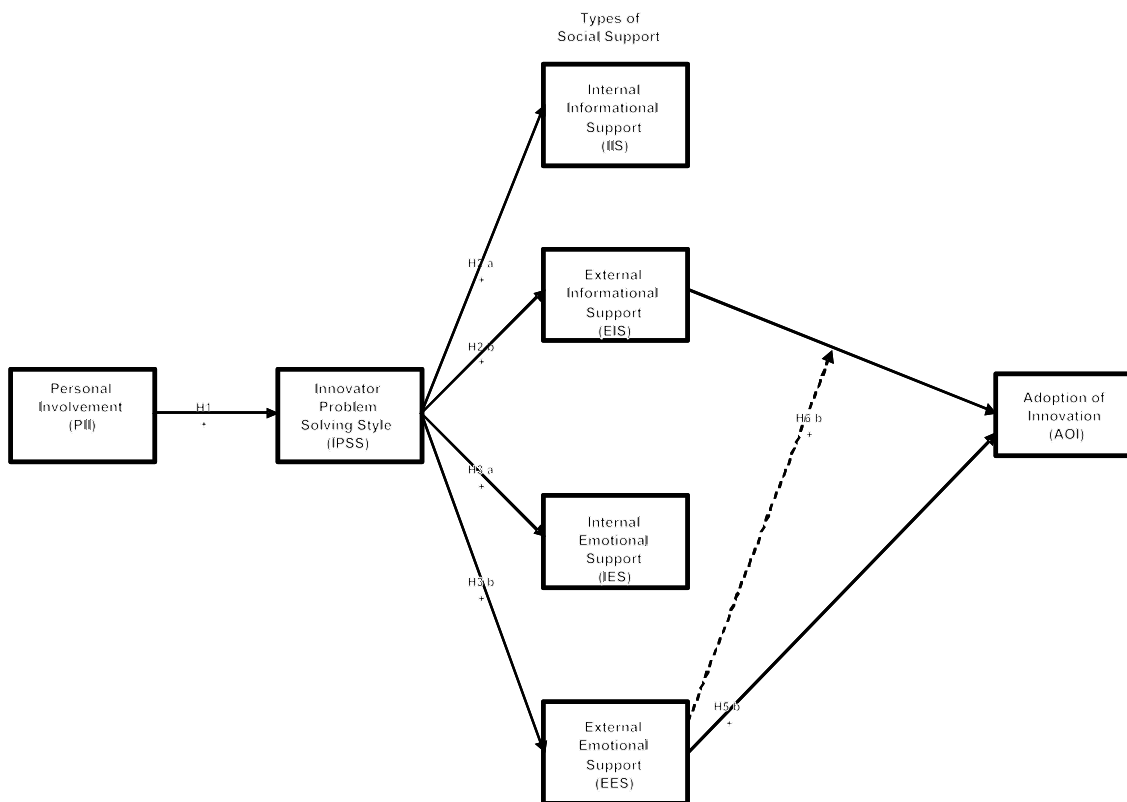
The last phase of the analysis employed a two-step series of regressions equations to gauge the proposed moderating effect of external emotional support on the relationship between internal (Hypothesis 6a) and external informational support (Hypothesis 6b) on the adoption of innovation (SEE Table 2).

Regression	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	F-statistic
Analysis 10			
Step 1	AOI	IIS	0.266
Step 2	AOI	(IIS x EES)	2.452*
Analysis 11			
Step 1	AOI	EIS	2.462
Step 2	AOI	(EIS x EES)	3.395**
N = 100 AOI - Adoption of Innovation * $p < .10$ IIS- Internal Informational Support ** $p < .05$ EES- External Emotional Support *** $p < .01$ EIS - External Informational Support () Negative relationships			

Step one of Analysis 10 incorporated internal informational support as the independent variable and adoption of innovation as the dependent variable. The result of this initial regression equation ($F = 0.266, ns$) was not significant, replicating Analysis 6 of this study, which substantiates that there is no direct effect of internal informational support on adoption of innovation. In step two, the interaction of internal informational support and external emotional support was added. While the results showed some support for the proposed moderating effect of external emotional support on the relationship between internal informational support and adoption of innovation ($F = 2.452, p < .1$), Hypothesis 6a was not supported.

The first step of final analysis (Analysis 11) tested the relationship of external informational support on adoption of innovation. The result of this initial regression equation, which replicates Analysis 7 of this study, was not significant ($F = 2.462$, ns). In step two, the interaction of external informational support and external emotional support was added. The results demonstrate that there is significant support for the proposed moderating effect of external emotional support on the relationship between external informational support and adoption of the innovation ($F = 3.395$, $p < .05$). Thus, Hypothesis 6b was supported. The implication of this finding is that while innovators do utilize external information to validate and support innovation adoption deliberations, the decision to adopt may only occur if the innovator feels that he/she has the positive emotional support of his/her external social network (SEE Figure 2).

Figure 2: All Significant Relationships $P < .05$



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research adds to the body of knowledge about the adoption of human resource management innovations. Most of the existing research either focuses on the relationship of HRMIs to organizational performance or the organizational factors affecting HRMI, such as hierarchical level or seniority. Previously, HRMI research has not examined interpersonal relations in the innovation adoption process. This study is significant since it indicates the importance of one's approach to handling problems and the support received as critical factors in the adoption and implementation of innovations.

While this study focused on HR professionals, the results also have implications for organizational innovations in general. Like HRMI, there has also been little or no research on interpersonal relations in other organizational innovations. Research on organizational innovations has primarily focused on the diffusion of an innovation, the determinants of innovativeness, and/or the stages in the innovation process. Previous research has not attempted to explain the individual behavioral effects that occur during the innovation process. The results of this study imply that informational and emotional social support may affect whether a proposed innovation becomes more than an idea on paper.

Finally, the results of this study indicate the importance of a social network for innovators as they facilitate the innovation process. In addition to their co-workers, innovators need colleagues outside one's organization for informational and emotional social support as they make decisions about adopting an innovation. Managers have to respond quickly to change and make decisions when there is limited information. Colleagues outside the innovator's organization can provide the information and emotional support needed to adopt and implement innovations for dynamic, competitive environments. Since change is inevitable, employees should have social networks where they can get information and support to resolve new problems in the organization. Organizations can support managers by encouraging their attendance and participation in conferences and meetings to network and develop their intellectual capabilities. Conner (1992) discussed interaction among members of an organization as a necessary requirement for the synergistic relationship needed to produce something new. This study indicates that interaction may be more important with others outside the organization for information relating to proposed innovations and the emotional support needed to adopt and implement these innovations.

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GAINING LEGITIMACY BY TELLING STORIES: THE POWER OF NARRATIVES IN LEGITIMIZING MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS

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ABSTRACT

This paper uses narrative theory to examine the role of narratives in legitimating organizational change. Specifically, the author examines the influence of organizational narratives – narratives from an organization’s management to its employees – on the legitimacy employees give to merger or acquisitions (M&A). It is argued that as the narrativity of organizational communication increases, the cognitive legitimacy of M&A activity will increase. Further, the author identifies a potential moderator of this relationship: employees’ perceived uncertainty. It is argued that the higher employees’ uncertainty about the future the more influence organizational narratives will have on the cognitive legitimacy of M&A activity.

INTRODUCTION

In addition to the financial and economic aspects of mergers and acquisitions (M&As), there is also a “human side” (Buono and Bowditch, 2003; Marks, 1982) to these activities. In particular, one determinant of M&A success is the degree to which employees of merging organizations “buy in” to both the integration process and the newly formed organization (Gole and Morris, 2007). More specifically, if employees are not committed to the integration of the merging organizations (Mottola et al., 1997), or do not identify with the merged organization (Van Knippenberg et al., 2002), then this will have a deleterious impact on the overall success or failure of a merger or acquisition. Yet both identification and commitment are, in part, dependent on employees’ perception that the actions of their organization are desirable, proper, and appropriate (Tyler, 1997). Hence, employees’ support will be a function of the perceived *legitimacy* of a merger or acquisition (Suchman, 1995). It is therefore critical to understand the factors that influence, and help to establish, the legitimacy employees grant to a merger or acquisition.

One factor that influences the legitimacy of organizations’ actions is organizational communication (Massey, 2001). Research examining the link between organizational communication and legitimacy has focused primarily on organizations’ external stakeholders and external influences (e.g. Massey, 2001). Specifically, research has examined how the communication used to inform groups *outside* the organization about organizational events, such as mergers and acquisitions, influences the firm’s legitimacy. For instance, studies have examined

how organizations attempt to gain legitimacy for a merger or acquisitions from the media (Vaara and Tienari, 2002; Leonardi and Jackson, 2004), within their industry (Massey, 2001), and more generally, within their organizational field (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2005). Another stream of research has examined the influence of communication during M&As on organizations' internal stakeholders; however, these studies have not examined legitimacy (e.g. Schweiger and DeNisi, 1991; Ivancevich et al., 1987). Unfortunately, research has devoted little or no attention to integrating these two topics. In other words, *the influence of organizational communication on M&A legitimacy among employees* has not received significant attention. However, given communication's ability to influence employees during M&As (Schweiger and DeNisi, 1991; Ivancevich et al., 1987), and given the importance of employees legitimizing other organizational actions (Chakravarthy and Gargiulo, 2002), it seems a logical extension to examine the ways in which communication can influence employees' perceived legitimacy of an organization's M&A activity.

From this starting point, several questions become critical: (1) Why might an organization (or more accurately, an organization's leadership) use communication to legitimize M&A activity to its employees? (2) What *form* of organizational communication is most likely to influence the legitimacy employees' give to their organization's M&A activity? And, perhaps most importantly, (3) How does communication, and particularly a specific form of communication, influence employees' perceived legitimacy of an M&A? The purpose of this theoretical paper is to offer plausible answers to these three questions.

LEGITIMACY

Legitimacy is defined as the "generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman, 1995: 574). It is critical that organizations possess legitimacy because without it they are vulnerable to claims that their actions are "negligent, irrational, or unnecessary" (Meyer and Rowan, 1991: 50). Legitimacy is often portrayed in two fundamentally different ways; namely, as something that is either strategically obtained or passively granted. The passive view suggests that organizational legitimacy is the result of field- or population-level dynamics that are beyond the influence of a specific organization (e.g. DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Meyer and Rowan, 1991); whereas the strategic view contends that legitimacy is a resource that can be strategically pursued by the management of an organization. (e.g. Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978; Suchman, 1995; Humphreys and Brown, 2002). According to the latter view, which will be the focus of this study, the pursuit of legitimation is "purposive [and] calculated" and involves managers extracting legitimacy from stakeholders and "employing [it] in pursuit of their goals" (Suchman, 1995: 576).

Further, Suchman (1995) has identified that there are three specific types of both the strategic and passive conceptions of organizational legitimacy: pragmatic, moral, and cognitive. Pragmatic legitimacy is based on “the self-interested calculations of an organization's most immediate audiences”, moral legitimacy “reflects a normative evaluation of an organization”, and cognitive legitimacy is based on the “comprehensibility and taken-for-grantedness” of an organization’s activities (Suchman, 1995: 582). While these types of legitimacy are not a strict hierarchy, Suchman (1995) explains that cognitive legitimacy is generally more fundamental than the other two types and that the cognitive type is, in fact, often the foundation for the others. Also, as will be explained shortly, organizational communication seems most capable of influencing this form of legitimacy. So, for these reasons, this analysis will focus primarily on cognitive legitimacy, and more specifically, on *strategic* (rather than passive) *cognitive* legitimacy. Hereafter “cognitive legitimacy” will imply *strategic* cognitive legitimacy. The following section examines organizational communication and details specifically how it is used to influence legitimacy in the context of mergers and acquisitions.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Organizational communication is a critical factor in shaping employees’ interpretations of organizational activity (Smidts et al., 2001). By influencing employees’ interpretations of events, organizational leaders are able to obtain support (Ruppel and Harrington, 2000), commitment (Schweiger and DeNisi, 1991), and ultimately, legitimacy for organizational actions (Humphreys and Brown, 2002). For instance, as Phillips et al. (2004: 638) explain, managers often use communication instrumentally in order to impart to employees the “appropriateness and desirability” of their activities. Unfortunately, studies linking organizational communication to internal legitimation (i.e. legitimacy from an organization’s employees) have not been conducted specifically in the mergers and acquisitions context. Despite this fact, the number of studies that demonstrate how critical it is for organizations to get their employees to commit to and to support M&As activity (Schweiger and DeNisi, 1991; Mottola et al., 1997) suggest that the interpretations-shaping communication used to achieve commitment and support is just as prevalent during M&As as it is during other organizational activities. In fact, this type of communication may be more critical during M&As, because M&As are more contested than other types of organizational change (Leonardi and Jackson, 2004). So if communication is being used during M&As to gain employee commitment and support, then given the importance of legitimacy in *other* organizational contexts, it also seems reasonable to conjecture that organizations also use communication to influence the legitimacy employees’ give to M&As. Yet what needs to be examined is precisely how and why organizations engaged in an M&A can use communication to gain legitimacy from their employees. A closer examination of one specific form of communication that is particularly suited to achieving legitimacy – narratives – will help to answer these questions.

NARRATIVES

Many contend that communication *form* is more important than other dimensions of communication such as quantity (i.e. the amount of communication) or type (e.g. face-to-face communication vs. electronic) (Fisher, 1985; Bruner, 1986). Further, *narrative* forms of communication are argued to be more influential than non-narrative forms of communication such as lists or technical arguments (Bal, 1997; Barthes, 1988). Therefore, communication from an organization's management to other employees can be classified by its degree of narrative or non-narrative form (i.e. its degree of narrativity).

A narrative can be defined as a collection of events or experiences that are (1) ordered in a temporal sequence and (2) imbued with a causal explanation (commonly referred to as a "plot") (Elliot, 2005). The first property of narratives, temporality, gives narratives the ability to order and organize a collection of events by placing them in a temporal sequence (Shaw et al., 1998: 42). The ability to order is critical because, as will be described in specific detail in the following section, ordering leads to understanding (Bruner, 1986) and comprehension (Rhodes and Brown, 2005). In addition to imbuing events with temporality, for discourse to be considered a "narrative" it must also provide a collection of events with a causal explanation – or "plot" (Bruner, 1986; Barthes, 1988). A plot is an organizing theme that makes clear the significance of, and relationships between, a collection of events or experiences (Polkinghorne, 1988). Narratives not only arrange a collection of events into a temporal sequence but they also create an "intelligible whole that governs the succession of events" (Ricoeur, 1981: 167). In other words, a plot organizes, shapes, and structures events so that they build on each other in a way that clarifies how each event contributes individually and as part of the whole (Polkinhorne, 1988). So a narrative provides more than merely "A then B", and in fact more than just "A causes B". Rather, a narrative represents "A causes B, *because...*" However, this "because", and more generally a narrative's plot, can be either explicit or implicit.

Organizational communication can be classified as *more or less* narrative by examining whether or not it contains one, both, or none of the elements of narrative form (i.e. temporal sequence and plot). For instance, while communication that contains both temporal order and plot is correctly classified as a "full-fledged" narrative, communication that contains just temporality is, in fact, *more* narrative than communication without temporal or causal order. "Organizational M&A communication" can be defined as communication provided to employees by the management of an organization concerning an impending merger or acquisition. Unless otherwise stated, this will refer specifically to communication from an organization's leadership *to lower-level employees* (not between-employee communication). This communication can range in form from non-narrative to narrative. However, in order to qualify as an organizational M&A *narrative* the communication must contain both temporal ordering and a causal explanation. In other words, management must attempt to convey an explicit "story" for the organization's merger or acquisition activity. For example, if

an organization merely presents employees with a list of the merging firm's positive qualities or corporate demographics, then this is not an "M&A narrative" because it contains neither temporality nor a causal explanation. However, if an organization provides employees with an outline of the steps necessary to complete the merger (i.e. temporal order), then this is *more* narrative than the previous example, but *less* narrative than if the organization were to also include an explanation for how each of the steps will work and why they will be necessary (i.e. both temporal order and a causal explanation). M&A communication can be of many different types ranging from texts (e.g. a document in an employee newsletter) to spoken discourse (e.g. a speech to employees by an organization's CEO).

Organizational researchers (e.g. Pentland, 1999; Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001; Bartel and Garud, 2009) and narrative theorists (e.g. Herman, 2000) have identified several ways in which narratives can influence the interpretation of organizational events. However, as Golant and Sillince (2007: 1151) argue, narrative forms of communication are particularly involved in the "emergence and maintenance of organizational legitimacy". Specifically, managers seeking acceptance for organizational events foster views of these activities as legitimate through the "authorship of judicious narratives" (Humphreys and Brown, 2002: 424). Although as stated above, the present analysis is concerned specifically with the way narratives are able to influence employees' *cognitive* legitimacy. Cognitive legitimacy is based on two general factors – comprehensibility and taken-for-grantedness (Suchman, 1995) – both of which can be influenced by narrative communication.

Comprehensibility

Comprehensibility is critical because the social world is a "chaotic cognitive environment, in which participants must struggle to arrange their experiences into coherent, understandable accounts" (Suchman, 1995: 582). Individuals give cognitive legitimacy to models that help them to create a coherent explanation for this tumultuous environment (Suchman, 1995). Given that mergers and acquisitions have been found to be one of the most complex events and one of the most complicated processes that an employee can experience (Larsson and Finkelstein, 1999; Cartwright et al., 2006), one might expect that employees faced with M&As are in particular need of a "coherent model" to help them make sense of what is occurring. This is precisely what organizational M&A narratives provide.

Narratives are particularly effective at representing the relationships between events in a complex process (Pentland, 1999; Bal, 1997; Barthes, 1988). They are effective because, in addition to providing events with a temporal sequence and a plot, they also become the description— i.e. the conceptual model (Pentland, 1999: 711) – for how the process that the narrative describes works. Moreover, a narrative of a collection of events summarizes and encapsulates how the events are linked together and then represents these relationships in a "coherent portrait" (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1997: 53). Then, by serving as a compact description of a complicated process,

narratives help to make their content – and the event or process represented – more comprehensible. As Rhodes and Brown (2005) explain, in cognitively complex environments this property of narratives is critical because it means narratives are ideally suited for comprehending what is occurring. Since individuals generally possess a strong desire to understand, rather than just experience, what is occurring around them (Astrachan, 2004), this suggests that given the complexity of M&A activity employees will be prone to accept, and “embrace”, the narrative given to them by their employers.

Taken-for-grantedness

The second basis for cognitive legitimacy is taken-for-grantedness. Taken-for-grantedness occurs when organizations make an activity so accepted that “for things to be otherwise is literally unthinkable” (Zucker, 1983: 25). As Suchman (1995: 583) explains, organizations not only render disorder comprehensible, “they actually transform it into a set of intersubjective givens” that become unquestioned by organizational members. Taken-for-grantedness becomes a foundation of legitimacy because if individuals cannot even imagine an activity or entity being different than it is, then it is difficult for them to consider it anything but appropriate or proper.

Narratives influence the taken-for-grantedness of activity, and particularly the taken-for-grantedness of M&As, by influencing the mental schemas employees’ use to interpret events (Herman, 2000). Schemas are defined as the cognitive structures – or mental models – individuals use to comprehend and understand experience (Brewer and Treyen, 1981). Narratives shape employees’ schemas through two different, albeit related, processes: imaging and indexing (Peterson, 1999). First, researchers examining *imaging* have found that narratives are incredibly effective at not only creating mental images but also in creating images that are “more memorable than either facts or abstract propositions” (Tannen, 1989: 84). Further, the more resonant a mental image the more likely it is to influence, and to be incorporated into, individuals’ schemas (Haven, 2009). The images incorporated into schemas shape how individuals make sense of and understand new events and experiences (Schank and Abelson, 1977). Thus, by influencing schemas, narratives influence employees’ interpretations of events. Second, in *indexing*, information contained in a narrative is attached to, or bundled with, elements of individuals existing schemas. As Peterson (1999) explains, the more information one is provided in a narrative about, say, a situation or an event, the more “places” the contents of this information can be indexed in the individual’s current mental model. Further, the more places in the schema that information can be indexed the greater the influence of the narrative’s content. In other words, the more information transmitted in a narrative, the greater the potential for indexing (or multiple indexing), and the greater the influence on an individual’s mental model. In fact, Peterson (1999) explains that one reason narratives are so powerful in shaping the way individuals think is that they are often very rich in indexable information (i.e. they contain many ties to individuals existing schemas). In contrast, if an event is

described only in terms of, say, a generalization or a series of facts, one will not have as many places to index, or “link”, the new information into his or her schema (Oatley, 2002); hence, one’s schema will not be as influenced by the event or experience.

The influence narratives have on individuals’ schemas through imaging and indexing is critical for taken-for-grantedness and for establishing cognitive legitimacy because employees’ schemas form the “framework for their reason and belief” (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2005). They also largely determine how it is that employees “see” organizational events. For instance, in the context of M&As, it is employees’ mental models of what is transpiring (and why) that determines what is understood as fact and what actions are accepted without question (Leonardi and Jackson, 2004). In short, an organizational narrative that is able to influence employees’ mental model of an impending merger or acquisition makes it so that the employees are less likely to grapple with the legitimacy of the M&A and more likely to view the organization’s actions as simply “the way things are”.

Therefore, narratives’ ability to influence both the comprehensibility and the taken-for-grantedness of merger or acquisition activity suggests the following proposition:

Proposition 1: As the narrativity of organizational M&A communication increases the cognitive legitimacy of a merger or acquisition increases.

The preceding analysis of how organizational narratives influence cognitive legitimacy seems to beg the question, why would employees be so willing to accept, or to internalize, the narratives their organizations use to legitimize a merger or acquisition? I would argue that it is not that employees would rather acquiesce to the narratives passed down from their superiors rather than create their own explanations of organizational events, but rather that employees often have little choice in the matter. In many cases, employees are faced with a dearth of alternative narratives because an additional property of narratives is that they can be used to suppress “oppositional discourse” (Leonardi and Jackson, 2004) through what is referred to as discursive closure (Deetz, 1992).

Discursive closure is defined as the use of communication to privilege certain meanings while suppressing, or “closing off”, alternative interpretations of events (Deetz, 1992). A key to discursive closure, which also suggests its influence in establishing cognitive legitimacy, is that it is difficult to notice and virtually taken-for-granted. Narratives are particularly effective at discursive closure because by their very structure narratives “privilege some conceptual systems” and some explanations for events “while excluding others” (Leonardi and Jackson, 2004: 616). For instance, a dominant organizational narrative about why an organization is engaging in a merger or acquisition will mask alternative narratives (Martin et al., 1983) and can, in a sense, “crowd out” the less dominant narratives created by employees. Therefore the “official” organizational narrative

of why a merger is occurring may become legitimized because other narratives do not have the chance to contest this narrative and compete for legitimacy. But when is this likely to occur? I argue that in complex and tumultuous environments (such as M&As) where, as described above, coherent narratives will be at a premium, organizational narratives that are perceived to provide a clear explanation for what is occurring will be particularly influential because they may represent the most comprehensible, and easily obtained, explanation available to employees. In other words, in complex situations, where uncertainty about what is occurring and what will occur is high, employees may be more likely to “latch onto” an organizational narrative (much like a cognitive life raft) rather than create their own narratives of what is occurring or rely on less coherent, or less polished, explanations for events (such as information that may be available from the “rumor mill” (DiFonzo and Bordia, 1998)). This suggests the influence of organizational narratives on M&A legitimacy may be moderated by a third factor, how much *perceived uncertainty* there is about what the outcomes of a merger or acquisition mean for employees.

UNCERTAINTY AND MERGERS

Uncertainty, which is defined as the psychological state of doubt resulting from equivocation and ambiguity about what an event signifies or portends (DiFonzo & Bordia, 1998: 296), is a significant source of psychological strain during mergers and acquisitions (Bastien, 1987). For instance, individuals whose organizations are engaged in M&As often possess uncertainty because they cannot predict what the merged organization’s culture will be like, what the impact of the merger will be on their work role, or what the merger will mean for their overall job security (Bordia et al., 2004b). As these examples illustrate, in the context of M&A activity, employee uncertainty is not a desirable state because individuals who are uncertain about their firms’ actions cannot comprehend or prepare for organizational change (Bordia et al., 2004b; DiFonzo et al., 1994).

As Berger (1987) explains, when individuals are uncertain about a change they not only struggle to *predict* what will happen next, but also to *understand* and to *describe* why things are currently as they are. This statement highlights that there are, in fact, three general components of psychological uncertainty (1) doubt about future events (i.e. lack of predictive ability) (2) ambiguity about a situation’s cause and effect relationships (i.e. lack of explanatory ability), and (3) an inability to describe, or to put into words, what is occurring (i.e. lack of descriptive ability) (DiFonzo and Bordia, 1998; Berger, 1987). If an individual perceives him- or herself to be lacking any of these abilities, then he or she will be uncertain. It is important to make this distinction because, as explained below, organizational narratives can address each of these components of uncertainty, which means that employees who desire to decrease their uncertainty may be more likely to embrace these narratives and, hence, to legitimize M&A activity.

First, when individuals cannot envision with any degree of certainty the future outcome of an event or process they lack *predictive* ability (DiFonzo and Bordia, 1998). For instance, in a

merger employees often cannot predict what the structure of the merged firm will be like or what the consequences of the change will be for their particular department or position (Matteson and Ivancevich, 1990). However, the temporal ordering of narratives can improve employees' predictive ability because when a collection of events are ordered into a sequence, individuals have a basis for making predictions about what *future* events may follow from the ones in the collection. Second, when individuals lack *explanatory* ability, they have difficulty understanding the cause and effect relationships of a situation (Berger, 1987). For example, individuals may learn that because of a merger (*cause*) their department will be reorganized (*effect*); however, this provides no understanding for why or how this change will occur. An organizational narrative can increase explanatory ability because in addition to imbuing events with temporality, narratives also provide events with a causal explanation, or plot (Bruner, 1986). Before the act of emplotment – that is, when a sequence of events is imbued with a plot – events may be “endemically chaotic and disorganized” (Rhodes and Brown, 2005: 170). Yet a narrative integrates these complex and loosely coupled bundles into a temporally and causally coherent whole by creating an overarching framework for the events that makes clear how and why the events are connected. It is then easier for individuals to explain and understand this framework than it is for them to explain the series of unordered and “un-plotted” events (Martens et al., 2007). Finally, when individuals cannot describe, to themselves or others, what is occurring around them or what is likely to occur in the future, they lack *descriptive* ability (Berger, 1987). This ability can also be conceived of as the ability to put one's explanations or predictions into words. Organizational narratives can be used to increase descriptive ability because they embody the description, or the conceptual model (Pentland, 1999: 711), for how the process the narrative describes works. By serving as a compact description of a complicated process, narratives help to make their content more comprehensible and, ultimately, to increase an individuals' descriptive power (Martens, et al., 2007). For instance, if employees have a narrative for why a particular process in a merger is occurring, not only will it increase their individual understanding of that process, but it will also allow them to more effectively communicate about this process to others.

This suggests that as the uncertainty of a merger increases, employees will be more likely to accept a coherent organizational narrative that will reduce their perceived uncertainty. It also suggests the following proposition:

Proposition 2: As the perceived uncertainty of a merger or acquisition increases, employees will be more likely to accept an organizational narrative and hence to cognitively legitimize the merger or acquisition.

CONCLUSION

Theoretical contribution

This paper makes three contributions. First, it contains one of the few applications of narrative theory to the analysis of mergers and acquisitions. While other papers have examined employee narratives in mergers and acquisitions, they have primarily used narratives as a methodological tool (e.g. as illustrative quotes in case studies) rather than as a theoretical lens for understanding merger and acquisition activity. Second, most prior research on the influence of organizational communication in M&As has focused on dimensions of communication – such as content, function, or type – other than the communication *form*. However, this paper has tried to provide a systematic examination of how the form of organizational communication can influence the M&A process. Third, even though the social sciences are said to be in the midst of a “narrative turn” (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006; Chase, 2005; Denzin, 2001), there has unfortunately been very little work exploring how the structural elements of narrative, such as its temporality and plot structure, influence individuals’ cognition and emotions. This may be due to the divide that, while beginning to narrow, still exists between social science and humanities research. Specifically, there continues to be too little overlap between the focus of narrative theorists in the humanities (who are primarily concerned with the structural elements of narratives) and the focus of narrative theorists in the social sciences (who are concerned with narratives’ effects on individuals). While this paper makes a preliminary effort to begin to bridge this divide, there remains much to be done in this area.

Limitations

One might argue that there are three limitations inherent in the paper’s arguments. First, it treats organizational communication as originating only from organizational leadership and as “flowing” in only one direction: from management to employees. In other words, in ignoring between-employee communication and the communication responses of employees (as well as employees’ narratives), the paper treats organizational communication as unidirectional rather than bidirectional or interactional. However, this simplified view of communication was assumed in order to focus specifically on the way that communication from an organization’s management, and particularly narrative communication, may leave employees with a dearth of alternative narratives besides the “official” narrative passed down from an organization’s leadership. Also, since an organization’s dominant narratives, and the ones that can result in discursive closure, often originate from an organization’s leadership, it is necessary to study the specific influence of this communication.

Second, with the exception of examining the influence of employee uncertainty, this paper fails to take into account any of the other moderating and mediating variables that may influence the

effect of narratives on legitimacy. For instance, the trust employees have for management, the employees' previous M&A experiences, the M&A history of the firms involved, and the firms' reputations, may all effect how the strength of the relationship between an M&A narrative and the legitimacy employees grant to the merger¹.

Finally, one might also argue that the transient nature of organizational narratives would make it extremely difficult to assess the validity of the propositions put forth in this paper. However, this concern can be at least partly addressed in the following section.

Directions for Future Research

Even though organizational narratives might seem to be difficult to observe, the author has identified an extensive archival source of this form of communication. Namely, when two or more U.S. public companies want to engage in a merger or acquisition they are required by law to file a series of forms with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). In addition, while it is not a required form, many organizations also file an "employee merger [acquisition] announcement". This document, which may have been included in an employee newsletter or issued as an email or memo, announces to employees the organization's intent to engage in a merger or acquisition. These documents are made publicly available in the SEC's EDGAR database. An inspection of a sample of these announcements revealed that they vary considerably in terms of their communicative form. Some announcements provide a history of the merging company, an explanation of precisely why the merging firm will be compatible and how it will improve the acquiring company, and a step-by-step description of the integration process. Other announcements provide only the date that the two firms will merge along with perhaps a few key upcoming dates in the merger, while others just provide a list of facts about the merging firm (financial information, number of employees, etc.). In other words, there are announcements that are narratives (i.e. they contain both temporality and a plot) and non-narratives. Employee M&A announcements seem to be an underutilized, but potentially illuminating, source of information because since they are not based on media accounts and are not a researcher-induced account (Culp & Pilat, 1998) they have the potential to provide a rare, "inside view" into an organization's internal mergers and acquisitions narratives. Also, while these announcements may be an imperfect proxy for the actual organizational narratives, I would argue that the announcements are correlated with the organization's "true" narratives – for if not, they would lack narrative fidelity (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001) and would not resonate with employees. And while there remains the possibility that firms do take liberties with what they write in these announcements, even if that is the case, these may be the same "liberties" the firm takes in their actual discourse, which are then being captured in the announcements. However, it would be critical to examine the extent to which this internal communication is positive and truthful and how closely it aligns with how external observers would characterize organizational events².

Concluding Remarks

If this paper's propositions find supported then this is further evidence that narrative's role in organizational communication, and in organizations in general, is more complicated than commonly believed. Specifically, this paper suggests that narratives are not only a tool for making sense of organizational experience but also a means for exacting legitimacy from employees. If this is the case, then from the employees' perspective organizational narratives are a type of double-edged sword: employees who embrace such narratives may be able to assuage their uncertainty – but at the price of at least some of their (cognitive) control.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ I kindly thank an anonymous reviewer for this insight.
- ² Once again, I thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing this point to my attention.

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MANAGERIAL COMMUNICATION: THE LINK BETWEEN FRONTLINE LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

Frontline managers (FMs) are able to establish a positive rapport with their staff through the use of effective communication. Managerial communication (MC) is one mechanism that can assist FMs with cultivating an environment of mutual respect and high productivity, thus, achieving organizational goals and objectives. In this study, the related literature is reviewed. The emergent theme throughout the research conducted is that, managerial communication (MC) is one of the most important tools that FMs can utilize to influence goodwill among employees. MC assists in crafting healthier relations between FMs and their employees and the entire organization ultimately benefits from this relationship. We make a series of recommendations for FMs, who seek to establish and retain good relations with their staff.

INTRODUCTION

Employees make significant contributions to the overall success of an organization, and their contributions are valuable in both public and private entities. Research shows that organizational performance markedly improves when communication is permitted to flow uninterrupted and employees are empowered, provided incentives, and given the necessary resources to perform at an optimal level. Managers at the technical core of an organization are obligated to develop good working relations with their staff by providing them with a comfortable work environment and swiftly resolving issues that could possibly hinder performance. In addition, FMs play a pivotal role in inspiring their subordinates to maximize efficiency and enhance productivity. The spirit of teamwork among employees correlates with the inspirational leadership role of management. FMs should lead and motivate their staff to perform at a level that inspires them to achieve the goals and objectives set forth by the organization. A general definition of leadership is the ability to motivate subordinates to do their jobs willingly, without coercion or harm to themselves or to others. The practice of effective communication is a leadership attribute that facilitates FMs in becoming the

prospective leaders of their organizations. In this paper, we view communication from a transmission perspective—meaning, communication can be seen as a linear relationship between a source and a receiver.

Bell and Martin (2008, p. 130) define managerial communication as “the downward, horizontal, or upward exchange of information and transmission of meaning through informal or formal channels that enables managers to achieve their goals.” The performance of visionary organizations is linked to their FMs’ efficient and effective use of communication, which inculcates confidence in employees. It is imperative that FMs in organizations, both large and small, understand the significance of establishing meaningful relationships with their employees. Moreover, beneficial relationships can be established through achieving organizational goals, providing performance feedback, and engaging in formal and informal communication networks. Non-supervisory employees are the face of modern organizations; therefore, involving them in the decision making process is one form of empowerment that is both motivating and inclusive. Offering incentives and adhering to a fair reward system positively contribute to an increase in employee morale and to the organization’s bottom line. Our research is focused on the role of communication as an energetic process used to motivate and engage employees in the workplace environment. We explore frontline leadership through the communication process.

FMs (persons of influential status operating at the technical core of organizational subsystems) seek this type of knowledge. FMs, both in the public and private sectors, will find this essay beneficial if their goal is to establish for a culture conducive to achieving both long-term as well as short-term objectives. The importance of the FM’s role has to be valued by top management in order for organizations to create and maintain a competitive advantage in this global business landscape. They play a pivotal role in motivating employees through the effective use of leadership and managerial communication. The top echelons of any organization should bestow confidence in their FMs by clearly communicating the vision, core ideology, and giving them leeway to affect change. The challenge in many companies is that top management often fail to provide FMs with advanced training needed to perfect their leadership and interpersonal skills. The consequence of failing to do so is that the cycle inadequate leadership and ineffective communication is repeated when FMs are given the opportunity to lead their organizations.

PROBLEMS IN PRACTICE

Leading and motivating employees to perform at a level that achieves organizational objectives is primarily tied to MC. Many leaders/managers are not successful due to their authoritative leadership styles, resulting in increased communication gap with their employees. Such leaders are unable to earn the respect and loyalty of their employees, who simply follow their orders because of their authority. Accordingly, there is a greater possibility of turnover and absenteeism by the valuable workforce.

Barnard (1968) explained that the decision as to whether an order has authority or not lies with the person to whom it is addressed, and does not reside in the persons of authority. In order to arrest this trend, managers should change their authoritative mindsets and make a commitment to build strong working relationships with employees by bridging the communication gap and building an environment of trust. This is accomplished by devising clear and concise communication policies, strategies, and processes, as evident in the literature.

RELATED LITERATURE

The effective use of MC within organizational subsystems is a fundamental component that must be present in order for an organization to create and sustain a competitive advantage. Success, irrespective of an organization's size or the products/ services it provides, is intangible when FMs and employees fail to work collaboratively. Not for profit organizations are just as, if not more committed than for profit organizations, to ensuring that the mission and objectives set forth are carried out. Brewer's (2005) research proves that in federal agencies FMs' supervisors are more optimistic and positive than non-supervisors. A lack of optimism amongst employees in non-supervisory positions can have detrimental effects on an organization's performance, and can ultimately lead to its demise. Although managers significantly influence organizational performance, Bal (2008) believes that performance improvements are accomplished by the efforts of the team itself and have very little to do with the management team's efforts. In other words, employees are the major players in many facets of organizational success; therefore, the solicitation of their knowledge and feedback is essential when evaluating the successes, failures, and future aspirations of the organization.

The flow of smooth information without barriers is a critical element of effective MC. High-performing, well-respected organizations are built on the principle of sharing information freely and timely. Beslin and Reddin (2004) shared some of the best practices from CEOs and senior HR executives, which included building trust among employees and managers within all tiers of the organizational structure. Trust can only be established and sustained if information is permitted to flow uninterrupted, regardless of the chosen channel. Employees that have a positive relationship with their supervisors feel obligated to reciprocate hard work and dedication to their respective organizations. As a result, employees have a high regard for the organization and its stakeholders, which is evident in the quality of their work and their overall commitment.

THE KEY ROLES OF LEADERSHIP

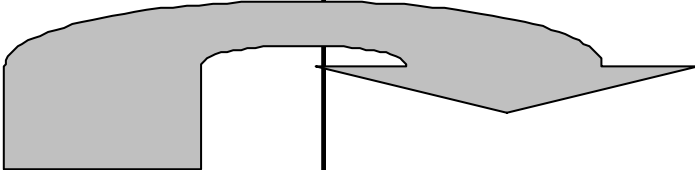
Leadership quality is one of the greatest virtues of management. Managers create the vision for their organizations and are responsible for implementing strategies to ensure that targets and objectives are met. A successful organization values the affirmative roles of its leaders and provides

a work environment, where leaders can perfect their leadership skills. Leadership demands a lot of hard work, effort, training, education, willpower, integrity, persistence, responsibility, decisiveness, and above all, effective communication skills. When you lead a corporation, you accept all the implications of that trust (Hindery, 2005); therefore, the organizations should focus on leadership development through such techniques as on the job training, mentoring, teaching, and so forth.

Education, offered by colleges and universities, provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in their careers. Such formal education, in its current form, is not enough to provide the skills, attitudes, and behaviors considered to be essential for the leaders of the twenty-first century. The organization needs to devise a unique and focused training program for employees, keeping in view its current and future requirements (Mathews & Edwards, 2005). Such endeavors facilitate in developing visionary leaders.

Leaders have distinct visions, values, and standards, which allow them to manage their organization with a great level of comfort and confidence. It is not only obligatory for an organization to have a realistic vision, but it must be communicated effectively to all employees for purposes of achieving growth and profitability. A clear and well-defined vision gives employees confidence, by improving their perceptions of the organization. Cornelius (2004) described that vision as one that could help employees to feel better and stay well informed by keeping their eyes on bigger picture. Vividness and clarity of vision help leaders to modify the behaviors of their staff. One purpose of leadership is to influence the attitudes of employees by setting good examples demonstrated by their own actions. Most leaders are high achievers and they invariably set their targets high, and optimistically expect the best from themselves and their subordinates. In addition, leaders empower others to achieve their desired expectation levels by inculcating trust while simultaneously exuding firmness when enforcing rules and regulations.

Leaders are required to ensure that proper protocols are followed and they must evaluate the performance of employees against clearly defined expectations. In addition, leaders must provide their employees with immediate assistance when requested. Therefore, communication must be permitted to flow freely, absent of interruption. The success or failure of transforming the attitudes of employees is determined to be a byproduct of the leadership's style to gain support of the change from their employees (Appelbaum, Berke, Taylor, & Vazquez, 2008). Leadership style is the way to coach or work with the employees. Leaders employ various leadership styles such as directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating. The directing style of leadership provides specific direction with a close monitoring of the task accomplishment. Whereas, coaching continues to direct, closely monitor task accomplishments, and also explain decisions. Similarly, the supporting leadership style facilitates and supports people's efforts toward task accomplishment and shares responsibility for decision-making. Finally, the delegating style delegates responsibility for decision-making and problem solving to the employees. The leadership styles appropriate for various development levels (an adaptation of the Blanchard, Zigarmi, and Zigarmi model, 1985) are shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Leadership Styles Appropriate For Various Development Levels


DEVELOPMENT LEVEL	APPROPRIATE LEADERSHIP STYLE
DIRECTOR Some too Low Competence and High Commitment	DIRECTING High Directive and Low Supportive Behavior Structure, organize, teach, and supervise
COACH Some too Low Competence and Low Commitment	COACHING High Directive and High Supportive Behavior Direct and support
SUPPORTOR Moderate to High Competence and Variable Commitment	SUPPORTING High Supportive and Low Directive Behavior Praise, listen, and ask
DELEGATOR High Competence and High Commitment	DELEGATING Low Supportive and Low Directive Behavior, Turn over responsibility for day-to-day operation

These four styles consist of different combinations of two basic leadership behaviors that a manager could use while influencing others, that is, directive and supportive behavior. Blanchard, Zigarmi, and Zigarmi (1985) mentioned words like structure, organize, teach, and supervise to define directive behavior and praise, listen, ask, explain, and facilitate for supportive behavior, as mentioned in Table 1.

DISCUSSION ON COMMUNICATION IN PRACTICE

Communication from a managerial perspective can be defined as the downward (top management to bottom workforce), horizontal (among peers/ colleagues), or upward (bottom to top echelons of management) exchange of information and perception of the meaning through informal and formal modes/ channels that enable the FMs to accomplish the organizational objectives. FMs should deliver clear, concise, and brief instructions to their subordinates in order for the accomplishment of tasks to the expected level of performance. Successful delivery of the manager's message is determined by the perception and interpretation by the employee (Hynes, 2008). Messages should be decoded by the FMs and encoded by the employees in a context of shared experiences without any interference. It is the recipient, who accepts the message as communication

and not the sender. Therefore, FMs should provide employees with succinct and precise information to avoid noise and any distractions that could potentially hinder the communication process.

Information and communication are two distinct but interdependent entities. The selective and apposite flow of information is desirable for an effective communiqué. The overflow of information results in an increased communication gap between the management and employees (Katz & Kahn, 1966). This in turn enhances the autistic hostility leading to the distortion of the communication process (Newcomb, 1947). FMs can bridge the gap by polishing communication skills and adopting better techniques. There should be greater focus on the objectivity, content, and brevity of messages, which assists in the building of trust and respect between FMs and their employees.

Communication is an effective weapon in building trust and confidence between FMs and their staff. Leaders can develop good relations with the employees by creating an environment of free, fair, and informal communication networks. These networks encourage and motivate employees to speak out and adopt a participative approach, which helps to develop a profitable organization. Beslin and Reddin (2004) conducted a study of best practices used by executives in order to establish trust with employees and stakeholders. It may be mentioned that trust needs to be earned and sustained, which is reflected in the systems of developed and respected entrepreneurs. The mutual dialogues within an organization facilitate in building the edifice of shared values and trust. FMs should employ interactive communication channels with employees. These channels consist of both formal and informal meetings, such as group discussions in boardrooms, meetings over coffee, or huddle room gatherings, and the like. FMs should engage their employees in an effective dialogue process to resolve their issues by selecting the most appropriate communicative channels.

There are four communication methods, that is, oral methods (the spoken word), written methods, visual methods, and audio or sound methods (Smithson, 1984). Messages can be passed through a variety of media, for example, circulars, memoranda, policy letters, notices, forms, reports, emails, telephone, fax, paging, face-to-face interaction, interviews, power point presentation, pictures, and more; each one of these has merits and demerits. FMs should identify and select the most appropriate channel to communicate with their employees, taking into consideration both social and cultural barriers that may exist. Alleviating these barriers, improves the flow of communication, which in turn has a positive impact on the growth and profitability of an organization.

Communication should be used as a strategy to achieve organizational goals. FMs ought to be the strategic communicators to influence the employees. The plethora of communication does not give any guarantee to meet target FMs' accomplishments relative to the proper translation of messages, implementation of strategies, and provoking dialogues with the employees to attain the corporate objectives. FMs should understand the cultural contexts and field of experiences of their employees in order to craft a comprehensive strategy for organizational growth. They are required to prioritize various actions systematically and use relevant information to influence their

employees. Through eloquence and articulacy, FMs are able to identify key persons among employees who act as opinion makers. They arrange meetings with such opinion makers and hold discussions on their thoughts terminating clichés and subtly modify their visions for the betterment of the organization. So, they need to analyze the context, visualize a strategy, act like an elite commando to implement strategy, and agitate like a talk-show host to provoke dialogue (Clampitt, Brek, & Williams, 2002). FMs, in their supervisory positions, have a pivotal role in their respective organizations to ponder the concerns and issues of the staff and offer mutually acceptable solutions.

IMPORTANCE OF FRONTLINE MANAGEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

FMs significantly contribute to the growth and development of public sector organizations. They are required to bridge the disconnect between the top management and frontline employees. FMs send messages and receive feedback regarding the organizational performance. They are responsible for the growth of federal agencies by ensuring that clients of these agencies receive satisfactory services. There is no doubt that FMs are important assets in public offices. The organizations, which fail to appreciate their vital roles, face threatening consequences in the form of poor performance and high turnover of talented public servants. Brewer (2005) opined that FMs play a key role in organizational performance and effectiveness, and supervisory management was an important determinant of high performance in federal agencies. These organizations cannot afford to surrender their precious workforce, so they tend to have skillful FMs, who empower the employees by enabling them to realize their important contributions.

It is difficult to terminate poor performing employees. There are certain procedures and protocols that must be followed before proceeding with termination. In the private sector, the hiring and firing of staff is based on the draconian management philosophy; good workers are rewarded, but insubordinate workers are released. Motivation is directly linked to better communication networks with the employees, professional training, good salary, incentives, and a pleasant work environment. Riccucci (2005) mentioned that good policy and law would certainly incentivize workers to achieve the desired goals and objectives of any organization. Further, the optimistic approach of supervising helps in energizing employees by following an open communication policy and being abreast of laws that affect the way in which leaders supervise their staff.

The introduction of the ‘Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act’ has changed the attitudes of welfare personnel in such a way that they not only perform their jobs diligently, but also go a step further in solving problems for their clients. Good public management policy, in conjunction with open communication, motivates employees to do their best to achieve the goals of the organization. Management should subsume the FMs’ role in influencing workers’ attitudes and behaviors to encourage exemplary performance for the benefit and satisfaction of customers.

Government organizations have to rely on experienced FMs to be the prospective executives due to a rapidly aging population. Emphasis should be placed on the significance of MC as an important tool to establish upward, downward, and horizontal linkages with top managements, peers, and operational level workers respectively. FMs of public sectors should be entrusted with necessary authority, responsibility, and proper training due to their optimistic and constructive roles to monitor the non-supervisors in federal agencies. Moreover, they are required to develop a willingness among the employees to work for the organizational growth of the company.

FMs should appreciate the fact that the matter of authority is indirectly rested with the perception of the employees (Drucker, 1974). They hold de facto power but the employees have de jure power. The sagacious use of authority is required to win the confidence of the employees instead of pressurizing them. It is desirable that employees should be delegated necessary power and authority to get prepared for their potential roles in higher management. In this way, employees contribute to enhancing the performance of their respective organizations.

ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

The 21st century business landscape can be characterized as complex, dynamic, and rapidly changing. Successful companies, in their respective industries, are able to adapt internally to their external environment with the assistance of effective MC. The use of MC is a tangible tool organizations can use in order to gain a competitive advantage in this new age of innovation. Arguably, frontline organizational subsystems benefit significantly from the utilization of effective MC.

Katz and Kahn (1966) viewed communication as a social process of the broadest relevance in the functioning of any group, organization, or society. Simply interpreted, without effective MC, an organization can neither function nor attempt to create and maintain a competitive advantage. FMs and their subordinates play an essential role in the success of an organization; therefore, the way in which they interact with one another is a key determinant of organizational success. Establishing trust between employees and FMs is one of the first steps towards improving organizational performance.

Employees must have confidence in their managers in order to achieve organizational success. Trust is established when employees feel that their managers are both considerate and competent. Consideration includes understanding an individual's competency level and his/her ability to perceive the communication. A person's ability to perceive and understand a message is based on experience; and communication without perception is just noise (Drucker, 1974). Employees consider their managers as competent if the communicated message can be understood without any aberration. In the grand scheme of organizational performance, managers on the frontlines are just figureheads, tasked with encoding and decoding messages within the frontline organizational subsystem. Whether or not a task gets accomplished, is determined by employees'

trust in their managers, and a manager's ability to convince their subordinates to accept communication as authority.

Authority is the character of a communication (order) in a formal organization by virtue of which it is accepted by a contributor to, or member of, the organization as governing the action he contributes (Barnard, 1968). Simply stated, authority lies with the individual in which the communication is directed. It is important for managers operating within all tiers of an organization to understand Barnard's definition of authority, because clearly defined roles within the frontlines of an organization is an essential element in accepting communication as authority. For frontline individuals, changes can occur day-to-day, or hour-to-hour, depending on the operating environment. Organizations, despite their size, must be well equipped internally to handle these changes as ambiguity gives rise to confusion and chaos. As an example, let us imagine an officer of a platoon not having a clear understanding of his role in the heat of battle.

The outcome could possibly be the loss of many lives due to his inability to effectively communicate and failure to gain authority. Similarly, disjointed organizations would lose valuable customers. Not accepting communication as authority can be a major obstacle to the improvement of organizational performance, innovation, and change efforts (Longenecker & Fink, 2001). In addition to establishing authority amongst employees and manager, managers on the frontlines can seek the assistance of other organizational subsystems in order to improve organizational performance.

A manager working with human resource professionals to create ways to boost morale is an example of how employees can benefit from relationships across organizational subsystems. Human resource professionals are equipped with the training materials and other tools that can assist managers with improving organizational performance through the use of communication. In addition to the obvious benefits a human resource department can provide, such as benefit explanation and verification, they can also serve as a mediator between FMs and employees. Although authority ultimately rests with an employee perceiving and accepting communication, there are times when an employee feels uncomfortable with expressing his/her feelings to a manager. A third party entity, such as a human resource associate, can be enormously effective in serving as a mediator and taking into consideration the best interest of the manager, employee, and organization. The ability to listen is an essential attribute a manager must possess and human resource professionals can assist managers with developing this essential skill.

One of the most important determinants of organizational performance is a manager's ability to listen and respond to feedback. Top management, including the board of directors of a company, should implement a forum in which the solicitation of feedback from employees is both warranted and encouraged. Organizational strategy is only successful if feedback is actively encouraged from those who are directly responsible for implementing the strategy.

INSPIRATIONAL LEADERSHIP

One of the most important measures of a leader's success is determined by their employees' commitment to the organization. Successful leaders focus on managing in a way that builds employee trust, loyalty, and commitment. Worker commitment reaps benefits far beyond improved organizational performance. In addition, high levels of employee loyalty have been linked to an estimated 11% boost in productivity (Mayfield, 2002). Employees that are happy and satisfied with their jobs and leadership team, tend to put forth extra effort to achieve goals and meet expectations. Trust and loyalty come as a result of managers treating employees as people rather than working machines only onboard to get a job done. Teams respond and perform much better for leaders who take interest in getting to know them and understand what motivates them. The valuable benefits of employee loyalty and commitment can only be achieved through high levels of effective MC (Mayfield, 2002).

Employees behave according to what they see and hear from their leaders. Performance problems normally arise when mixed messages are prevalent in the communication channel leaders saying one thing and doing another. In order to earn the trust of employees, it is important that leaders walk the talk and instill confidence in their employees. Leaders must stay true to their words and do what they say they will do. Trust is something that must be earned and leaders should not take for granted the trust of their employees. The corporate function for building trust in organizations is communication. Companies can build a culture of trust by sharing information quickly and freely, and building relationships with employees and their stakeholders that enable their organizations to succeed (Beslin & Reddin, 2004). Employees are more motivated to perform for an organization when they are familiar with and understand the strategic direction of the company and how their contributions impact the organization's bottom line. It is important to develop the trust of the workers as people have a propensity not to follow leaders they don't trust; hence, productivity starts to decline. Trust is essential in building loyalty and credibility.

Measuring progress and seeking feedback on how well organizations have done at building trust are key to understanding what works. Formal measurements tend to require more planning and execution, but are well worth the effort of obtaining the opinions of the staff. Interviews, focus groups, and employee surveys are used as formal means of measurement to determine how satisfied employees are with the communication efforts of their leaders. It is believed, however, that informal ways of seeking feedback provide more specific and more frequent assessments in order for leadership to respond and make any necessary adjustments to the way in which the organization is functioning. Allowing employees to provide input gives them the impression that their opinions matter, giving an unquestioned belief that the leadership of the company actually has their best interests at heart. This contributes to the building of trust, and creates strong working relationships between the leaders and the employees, resulting in improved employee satisfaction.

To build strong relationships with employees and stakeholders, good leaders demonstrate the soft skills or social intelligence to engage with the employees on a personal level, showing genuine concern for them as humans rather than working machines only important for getting the job done. Social intelligence is a set of interpersonal competencies that inspire people to be effective (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2008). Many smart, knowledgeable, and experienced leaders have not been successful, not because they were not smart in the field they were responsible for leading, but because of their inability to get along socially on the job. Goleman and Boyatzis (2008, p. 138) provide six social qualities that exist in some of the top performing leaders of corporations which include:

Table 2: The Goleman and Boyatzis Social Qualities Imperatives With Best Communication Channel	
1.	Empathy: Knowing what motivates other people, even those from different backgrounds and having sensitivity to other's needs—Use a Face-to-Face Channel.
2.	Attunement: Listening attentively, thinking about how others might feel, and being attuned with the moods of others—Use a Face-to-Face Channel.
3.	Organizational Awareness: Appreciating the culture and values of the group or organization and understanding the social networks—Use newsletters, flyers, and emails.
4.	Influence: Having the ability to persuade others by engaging them in discussions and appealing to their self-interests or gaining the support of key people—Use Small Groups, Meetings, and the Telephone.
5.	Developing Others: Investing time and energy in coaching, mentoring, and developing the skills of others and providing feedback that is helpful to their professional development—Use a Face-to-Face Channel.
6.	Inspiration: Articulating a compelling vision to build group pride, foster a positive emotional tone, bringing out the best in people, soliciting input from everyone on the team, supporting all team members, and encouraging cooperation—Use all channels.

Managers must have a mind-set to think beyond their job titles and focus more on developing and inspiring employees to accomplish organizational goals. In the future, managers will understand that performance improvements have little to do with them and everything to do with their team and how well they can get them to work at full power. Bal (2008, p. 250) lists seven important points on how not to manage a team:

Table 3: The Bal Imperatives On Mismanaged Communication Corrective Communication Channels	
1.	Managers should stop being too busy to spend time motivating and energizing the people that work for them.
2.	Managers should stop trying to have all of the answers and allow employees to think for themselves. The beauty of diverse views is the opportunity to allow creativity. Be aware that people will make mistakes but be willing to coach them to improving in areas needing development.

Table 3: The Bal Imperatives On Mismatched Communication Corrective Communication Channels

3.	Managers should think beyond their job title and start actively developing their people.
4.	Eliminate poor communication so the team does not have to survive on rumors
5.	Don't make targets the only priority of performance as it initiates a competitive environment among the team.
6.	Don't allow performance to be driven solely from instructions because it causes the team to stop thinking.
7.	Don't set unrealistic goals that will bring about disengagement among the employees.

All of these points are important for managers to consider when inspiring a team to perform. Particular ways in which managers can inspire are by delegating more, trusting more, and giving their subordinates more responsibility. If managers relinquish some responsibility, stop trying to do everything themselves, and empower their employees to make decisions, the expectation is that employees will be more motivated to perform at an optimal level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To assist FMs in crafting healthier relationships and improving organizational performance, we make the following recommendations:

- ◆ To be a great leader, one must have the ability to motivate. FMs should work diligently to keep their employees motivated and focused on achieving the goals and objectives of the organization.
- ◆ Frontline Managers should to work craft good relations with their employees by establishing an environment of trust through fair, free, and informal communication networks. In addition, FMs should act as strategic communicators to provide relevant and valuable information to the employees for an objective communiqué.
- ◆ Empowerment involves inculcating confidence in and recognizing the contributions of employees. FM in both public and private organizations should seek the assistance of other organizational subsystems in order to gain access to the tools needed to empower employees and to enhance managerial communication on the frontlines.
- ◆ Lastly, FMs should establish both formal and informal communication channels in order to solicit feedback from their employees. We recommend that formal employee satisfaction surveys be conducted every 2 years to solicit feedback from employees about the workplace environment. Survey findings should be shared with

the entire staff. Similarly, interactive employee meetings with management should be arranged to compare business results and the performance of the organization against company goals and objectives.

CONCLUSION

The goal of this research is to outline how effective methods/approaches of managerial communication can assist with cultivating an environment of high productivity. Ineffective communication or a breakdown in the delivery of information often translates into a negative relationship between the supervisor and employee, which in turn, leads to a possible loss of profits and/or the stagnation of growth. What we have found is that through the use of effective communication, particularly, imparting the use of interpersonal skills and in understanding social networks, FMs have the ability to successfully influence their employees and provide better service to their customers. The exchange of information and selection of communication channels should be a priority of FMs, which according to Beslin & Reddin (2004) will ultimately strengthen their leadership role within the organization. The ultimate goal of an organization is to maximize shareholders' value and profitability, which is accomplished by integrating strong leadership with formal and informal communication networks. Moreover, frontline managers that stay abreast of and utilize the most effective forms of communication will find their employees responding positively to direction and performing in a way that is most beneficial for their customers/clients, for themselves, and for the organization.

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