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JOURNAL OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE, COMMUNICATIONS AND CONFLICT

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JOURNAL OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE, COMMUNICATIONS AND CONFLICT

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to the *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict,* formerly entitled *Academy of Managerial Communications Journal*. The journal is owned and published by the Allied Academies, Inc., a non profit association of scholars whose purpose is to encourage and support the advancement and exchange of knowledge, understanding and teaching throughout the world. The *JOCCC* is a principal vehicle for achieving the objectives of the organization and its name change is designed to more fully indicate the types of research which is featured within its pages. The editorial mission of the *journal* is to publish empirical and theoretical manuscripts which advance knowledge and teaching in the areas of organizational culture, organizational communication, conflict and conflict resolution. We hope that the *journal* will prove to be of value to the many communications scholars around the world.

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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ARTICLES

ARTICLES FOR VOLUME 6, NUMBER 1

A SURVEY OF WORKFORCE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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Bill Kordsmeier, University of Central Arkansas
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ABSTRACT

Interpersonal and communication skills could make or break career success in the office of the future. Technology innovations will continue to provide the opportunity for workers to communicate more rapidly, more often, and with greater numbers of people. What communication skills are needed by today's workforce? Which communication skills are or will be the most valuable skills for the future? Employers were asked to assess the importance of oral communication skills, written communication skills, diversity/multicultural communication skills, electronic communications skills, communications climate, and corporate demographics. Participants indicated that oral communications skills and communications climate were the most important communication skills for employees to possess. Although not rated as high as these, written communications skills, diversity/multicultural communication, and electronic communication skills were also rated as important.

INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal and communication skills make or break your career success in the office of the future according to conclusions drawn from research conducted by Office Team, an international staffing firm. Office Team reports that by 2005 technology's transformation of the workforce will not only place a premium on technical competencies, but strong people skills will be needed (TMA Journal, 1999).

Netzley (1999) comments that today's graduates are heading into a dramatically different workplace. He suggests to succeed in a knowledge-intensive environment, employees must work cooperatively, generate and archive knowledge, and communicate effectively. These facts are not too surprising since major advances in cellular telephone, e-mail, audio and video teleconferences, and digital communication devices will require users to posses effective verbal and writing communication skills. Higher order communication skills are discussed by Sandra Allen (1999). Ms. Allen states that experience and know how are important to gaining a position, but it is only the beginning when it comes to effectiveness on the job. She suggests that 'negotiating savvy, gaining recognition for your recommendations, and managing emotions during conflict' are important to the success of a manager.

The word, communication, comes from the Latin word, communicatus, which means 'to make common.' The dictionary defines communication as 'fostering understanding' (Bethel, 2000).

Since 80 percent of a managers time is spent communicating (Polloch, 1999), it is expected that all employees should be able 'to make common' or 'foster understanding' through their written or oral skills.

What communication skills are needed by today's workforce? Which communication skills are or will be the most valuable skills for the future? Messmer (1999) concludes that technology innovations will continue to provide the opportunity for workers to communicate more rapidly, more often, and with greater numbers of people.

Peggy Lee, Senior Director of Child Nutrition Services for Norfolk Virginia Public Schools reflects on communication skills in her office. She states that, "computers and word processing programs seem to have given college students a false sense of security about their writing, specially in the areas of spelling and grammar." Ms. Lee checks all printed materials leaving her office. She states: "Now I realize that spelling and writing don't come naturally to everyone. But if an employee lacks skills in these areas, that employee should at least be aware of it." Ms. Lee has referred employees who have serious written communication problems to adult education programs (Schuster, 2000).

An article in Business Communication Quarterly by Waner (1995) emphasizes that the need for excellent communication skills in the workforce is mentioned in many research projects, but the research does not state which skills should receive the most emphasis. Although her sample was small and could not be generalized, her research can serve as a basis for general understanding of the most important communication skills needed in the workplace. The writing skills which rated at the top of the list include: writes well, writes confidentiality, organizes information, edits and revises documents, writes naturally, writes on the readers level, and uses effective techniques in writing reports. Oral and interpersonal skills considered important were listening effectively, maintaining eye contact, and using voice effectively.

Goby and Lewis (2000) report that listening is one communication skill that is often overlooked. They suggest that listening could be described as the 'neglected skill because of its absence from business communication courses.' Wolf (1996) states that communication by telephone, video conference, and in person requires effective listening and speaking skills if total communication is to be achieved. Listening can serve as a stimulant for innovative thinking. In spite of the documented need for increased effectiveness in listening, educational institutions give little attention to it. (Timm, Aurand, & Ridnout, 2000).

Employers as well as faculty at institutions of higher learning widely acknowledge the need for oral and written communication skills (Wardrope and Bayless, 1999). The International Association for Management Education (AACSB) identifies that importance of written communication abilities as well as the importance of demographic diversity and the global aspects of communication. Messmer (1999) explains the need for effective communication abilities because of the changing roles professionals play. He explains that people skills become more important with the continued expansion of the globalization of business and the use of interdepartmental teams. Messmer mentions that cultural and linguistic ambiguities sometimes interfere with effective communication. Lack of cultural awareness, lack of foreign language skills, not understanding non-verbal cultural differences, and even gender differences are constantly causing communication problems in the increasingly diverse workforce.

Bean and Chaney (2000) discuss several aspects of the nonverbal communication styles of Canadian, Mexican, and U.S. Americans employees. They state that without a clear understanding of the purpose and intended meaning of specific communication styles, one may engage in gestures and body language that send mixed messages. For example, direct eye contact is quite important in some countries as a means of establishing respect. Yet, in some cultures, direct eye contact is considered rude and intrusive. Bean and Chaney conclude that to be successful in an international business transaction, all parties to the transaction must consider foreign culture communication styles.

METHODOLOGY

The University of Central Arkansas University/Industry Partnership Advisory Committee wanted to determine the importance of specific oral and written communication skills for employees in the Central Arkansas area. The findings are currently being used by the University of Central Arkansas faculty to develop curriculum and class presentations to better prepare students for today's workforce.

A research instrument was developed with seven distinct sections: Oral Communication Skills, Written Communication Skills, Diversity/Multicultural Communication, Electronic Communications, Communications Climate, Corporate Involvement, and Corporate Demographics. The communications sections of the instrument contained 41 items which were rated on a five-point, Likert-type scale. The instrument was field tested by a panel of researchers at the University of Central Arkansas, and was revised before being sent to the research sample. Surveys were sent to 192 employers in the Central Arkansas area and 40 completed surveys were returned for a return rate of approximately 21 percent.

FINDINGS

Respondents were asked to assess the importance of oral and written communications skills in their organizations. The following is an analysis of results in each of the seven distinct sections: Oral Communication Skills, Written Communications Skills, Diversity/Multicultural Communication, Electronic Communications, Communications Climate, and Corporate

DEMOGRAPHICS

Oral Communication Skills

The grand mean of all 11 items in the Oral Communication Skills section was 4.4. Thus, indicating that all items were assessed as valuable skills for employees to possess. Results for Oral Communications Skills are detailed on Table 1. The skills rating highest were: Following Instructions 4.93, Listening Skills 4.86, and Communicating with the Public 4.52.

Table 1: Oral Communication Skills	
Skill	Average Score
Following Instructions	4.93
Listening Skills	4.86
Communicating with the Public	4.52
Conversational Skills	4.43
Handling Customer Complaints	4.43
Giving Feedback	4.38
Conflict Resolution Skills	4.36
Presentation Skills	4.24
Taking Customer Orders	4.12
Facilitation During a Meeting	4.07
Negotiation Skills	4.05
Grand Mean	4.40

Written Communication Skills

The grand mean of all 12 items in the Written Communication Skills section was 3.92. Thus indicating that, although written Communication skills were considered important by employers, these skills are not as important as are Oral Communication Skills. Table 2 details the Written Communication Skills section. The skills ranking highest were: Grammar 4.45, Using Words Effectively 4.40, Writing Skills 4.38, and Spelling 4.31.

Diversity/Multicultural Communication Skills

The grand mean of all 5 items in the Diversity/Multicultural Communications section was 3.68. Thus, indicating that the employers surveyed did not consider Diversity/Multicultural Communication Skills as being as important at were oral and written communications skills. Table 3 details Diversity/Multicultural Communication Skills. Skills ranking highest were: Cultural Awareness 4.19, Communication Across Genders 4.19, and Communicating Ideas Clearly to Diverse Audiences.

Electronic Communications

The grand mean for all 5 items in the Electronic Communications section was 3.68. Thus, indicating that employers surveyed do not consider electronic Communications as being as important as Oral and Written Communication Skills. Results of the Electronic Communications

Section are detailed in Table 4. Skills rated highest were: Proper Uses of E-mail 4.24, Writing and Responding to E-mail Messages 4.19, and E-mail Etiquette 4.07.

Table 2: Written Communication Skills	
Skill	Average Score
Grammar	4.45
Using Words Effectively	4.40
Writing Skills	4.38
Spelling	4.31
Use of E-Mail	4.21
Using Techniques of Style Correctly	3.95
Writing Short reports (less than 3 pages)	3.86
Writing Routine and Pleasant Letters and Memos	3.79
Writing to Persuade	3.57
Writing Formal Reports (more than 3 pages)	3.45
Writing Agendas for Meetings	3.33
Writing Minutes of a Meeting	3.33
Grand Mean	3.92

Table 3: Diversity/Multicultural Communication Skills	
Skill	Average Score
Cultural Awareness	4.19
Communications Across Genders	4.19
Communicating Ideas Clearly to Diverse Audiences	4.05
Non-Verbal Communications Across Cultures	3.24
Foreign Language Skills	2.71
Grand Mean	3.68

Communications Climate

The grand mean for all 6 items in the Communications Climate section was 4.34. Thus indicating that employees surveyed considered Communications Climate to be second in importance only to Oral Communication Skills. Communications Climate data is detailed on Table 5. The skills rated highest were: Learning Skills 4.69, Decision Making Skills 4.67, and Interpersonal Skills 4.57.

Table 4: Electronic Communications	
Skill or Attribute	Average Score
Proper Uses of E-Mail	4.24
Writing and Responding to E-Mail Messages	4.19
E-Mail Etiquette	4.07
Video Conferencing Skills	2.98
Desktop Conferencing Skills (NetMeeting)	2.90
Grand Mean	3.68

Table 5: Communications Climate	
Skill	Average Score
Learning Skills	4.69
Decision Making Skills	4.67
Interpersonal Skills	4.57
Negotiation Skills	4.10
Self-Promoter	4.05
Diversity/Multicultural Communication Skills	3.98
Grand Mean	4.34

CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY

Employees surveyed indicated that oral communications skills and communications climate were the most important communication skills for employees to possess. Although not rated as high as these, written communication skills, diversity/multicultural communication, and electronic communication skills were also rated as important. The sample for this study was limited to employers in the Central Arkansas area, who recruit from the University of Central Arkansas. The research determined the importance of specific oral and written communication skills for employers hiring graduates from the University of Central Arkansas. Thus, the sample was limited in scope.

The extent that survey results were skewed by the limited geographic diversity of survey participants is not known. However, the authors recommend that the study be replicated using an international randomly selected sample. The availability of the expanded data would make possible comparisons of regional, national, and international communications skill requirements.

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COMMUNICATING CRITICAL MESSAGES IN A MULTI-CULTURAL WORKPLACE: THE NURSE MANAGER AS INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATOR

Jerry D. Estenson, California State University, Sacramento

ABSTRACT

Intercultural communication skill is becoming a threshold competence in the selection of nurse managers. This study explored the intercultural communication competence of a population of nurse managers in three Northern California hospitals. The staff nurses who spoke English as a second language (ESL) viewed managers who spoke English only (EO) or ESL to be equally competent communicators. The creation of a common language through nurse development programs may provide a model for other intercultural management programs. The hospitals in this study employed significant numbers of ESL staff nurses. The following questions were examined:

(1) Do EO and ESL nurse managers place similar values on joint agreement of job-specific terms?
(2) Do ESL and EO staff nurses perceive any differences in the communication climate at work?
(3) Do ESL staff nurses perceive EO and ESL nurse managers to be competent communicators?

The study indicates that when a manager is leading a linguistically diverse workforce, care needs to be taken to ensure that agreement is reached between all workforce members on the meaning of terms used to communicate critical messages. The study also supports the need to create a supportive communication climate when working with a diverse work group.

BACKGROUND

Workplace communication challenges are presented to nurse managers in California as a result of immigration patterns, social policies, global economics, and skilled nursing shortages. This combination of forces has changed the demographic profiles of hospital patients and their licensed and unlicensed staffs (Rakich & Darr, 1992). In large hospitals, nurse managers operate as the primary management representative responsible for coordinating the activities of several staff nurses. This is accomplished through the use of various hierarchical communication structures employing head nurses, lead nurses, nurse supervisors, and nurses with various titles as part of the management team. As senior management representative working with staff nurses and patients, the nurse manager is at the nexus of issues created in this a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual environment and has primary responsibility for creating responsive communication systems for staff nurses.

Nurse managers have traditionally combined bureaucratic communication systems (Freidson, 1989)] with parallel systems of interpersonal relationships based on professional training and similar

work experiences (O'mara, 1995, pp. 513-541) to coordinate their management team and to supervise staff nurses. In the current health-care environment, the cultural diversity of patients and staff challenges nurse managers to create new communication systems and to learn new communication skills. Lack of training in management of diverse work groups has caused some managers to become frustrated and engage in defensive communication behaviors such as formality, control, masking, or depersonalizing messages (Gibb, 1961, pp. 141-148). In addition, the lack of well-constructed selection criteria, which includes skills in intercultural management or adequate training in complex intercultural issues, may affect a manager's ability to communicate effectively in a multicultural environment.

This study examines the perceived ability of English Only (EO) speaking nurse managers to create agreement on the meaning of critical messages communicated to English Second Language (ESL) and EO staff nurses. It further probes staff nurse perception of communication climates and their relationship to nurse manager communication competence.

Research Questions

Attempts to define intercultural communication competence create difficulties similar to those associated with measuring communication competence in general. Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) found 136 distinct conceptual labels attached to factors empirically derived and associated with competence. Hammer, Gudykunst, and Wiseman (1978, pp. 382-393) moved toward uniformity in measuring intercultural communication competence, but did not provide the rigor necessary for general usage.

In attempting to find a more universal definition of competence, Lonner (1990, pp. 143-204) identified several common concepts that can be used to integrate research from several domains. Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) proposed that multiple dimensions of competence operate under the overarching concepts of appropriateness and effectiveness. These dimensions were used to define intercultural communication competence in this study. Thus, nurse managers perceived to be competent in intercultural communication would behave in a manner appropriate to the context of the message (appropriateness), and the message would be received by staff nurses in a manner that would lead to behavior appropriate to completing job assignments (effectiveness) (Estenson, 1997).

The present study examined communication skills of nurse managers in three Northern California hospitals employing significant numbers of staff nurses who spoke English as a second language (ESL). The study examines the following questions:

1	Do nurse managers who speak English only (EO) and staff nurses who speak ESL place similar values on joint agreement on job-specific terms?
2	Do ESL and EO staff nurses perceive any differences in the communication climate at work?
3	Do ESL staff nurses perceive a difference in EO AND ESL nurse managers' communication competency?

Two communication skill instruments were used to derive numeric measures of staff nurses' perceptions of the intercultural communication competence of their nurse managers. Study findings provide a perspective on intercultural communication in a high-risk environment and have implications for selecting and developing nurse managers and supervisors.

METHODS

Sample

Volunteers for the study included 112 staff nurses, 27% ESL and 73% EO, and nine nurse managers, two ESL and 7 EO working at two teaching hospitals and one private medical center in Northern California. Senior nurse administrators selected the cohorts to be studied. Cohort selection attempted to include work units, which employed significant numbers of ESL staff nurses and ESL nurse managers. The search revealed only two ESL nurse managers in a population of 102 nurse managers working in the three hospitals.

Among staff nurses, 40.2% had earned the Associate of Arts as their highest nursing degree; all others had Bachelor of Arts degrees or higher. All nurse managers had undergraduate degrees, with four Masters of Arts and one Master of Business Administration. The study population also had a high level of professional experience. Among staff nurses, 90.2% had more than five years' experience with 71.5% having had more than 10 years' experience. All nurse managers had more than 10 years' experience, with 33% having had more than 20 years' experience (Estenson, 1977 pp. 128-132). Because of study limitations a comparison of the study population to the entire nurse population in the three hospitals was not accomplished.

Instruments

Prior to distribution of instruments the Primary Researcher (PR) met with the Nurse Administrator (Senior Nurse in the Facility) for each hospital involved in the study and acquired her support for the project. Subsequent meetings were held with nurse managers whose departments would be part of the study. Follow up meetings with staff nurses were used to explain the purpose of the study.

Once the purpose of the study was communicated to all involved and agreement to participate was acquired, the PR distributed instruments to appropriate workstations. As discussed, instruments were only provided to hospital departments with a significant number of ESL staff nurses. The uncompleted instruments were placed in unsealed envelopes addressed to the primary researcher. Once the staff nurse completed the survey he or she placed it in the envelope and mailed it directly to the PR.

Staff nurses completed two instruments: one that measured communication competence and one that identified common language systems. Nurse managers completed the common language instrument. Both groups completed a demographic survey that identified 14 variables, including first language, second language, and intercultural training.

The communication competence and common language instruments were used to test Spitzberg and Cupach's communication competence dimensions (1984). To evaluate Spitzberg and Cupach's cognitive or effectiveness dimension, nurse managers and staff nurses were asked to complete a word importance survey defining the manager's ability to create joint understanding of ten terms used in directing the work of staff nurses. The ten terms were developed using a Delphi group consisting of five senior nurse managers working in different organizational settings in California. Subjects rated the urgency of joint agreement on the meaning of the following terms: critical values, skills, vital signs, performance expectations, assessments, standard, responsibility, laboratory values, accountable actions, and patient outcomes. Subjects ranked the importance of joint agreement on each term with a score ranging from 1 (unimportant) to 5 (important). They were also asked to predict how their counterpart (nurse manager or staff nurses) would evaluate the criticality of joint agreement on each term.

Staff nurses also completed a second instrument, a communication climate inventory (CCI). The CCI consisted of 36 statements designed to measure staff nurses' perceptions of supportive or defensive communication by their managers (appropriateness) and 10 statements designed to measure the staff nurse's degree of satisfaction with the quantity of job-specific information received from the nurse manager (effectiveness). The statements used to measure supportive or defensive communication climates were modeled after a communication climate survey constructed by Costigan and Schmeidler (1984, pp. 112-118). The Costigan survey provided metrics to analyze communication climates discussed by Gibb (1961). The Costigan survey is part of the public domain and has been used by the PR in public, private and not for profit organizations to assess their communication climates. Data from the Costigan survey places responses into two categories: Defensive or Supportive. Defensive responses relate to the climate reflecting behaviors related to evaluation, control, strategy, neutrality, superiority, and certainty. Supportive response relate to the climate reflecting behaviors which are provisional, empathetic, equal, spontaneous, problem oriented, and descriptive.

An additional dimension was added to the Costigan survey by adding ten statements used to determine effectiveness (quantity of job-specific information). These statements were based on a survey designed by an International Communication Association (ICA) study group to measure different managerial communication attributes (Goldhaber & Krivonos, 1977, pp.41-55). Both the Costigan statements and the ICA statements were modified in minor ways to better reflect communication issues in the hospital environment.

The instrument was tested for ease of use and understandability by sixty undergraduate students at California State University, Sacramento, College of Business (CSUS, CBA). Content validation was conducted by the Delphi group previously discussed and two faculty members at CSUS CBA teaching in the field of organizational behavior.

Staff nurse respondents rated the 36 statements on communication style on a Likert scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). These ratings were combined to produce an overall rating of the degree to which the nurse managers' communication behaviors were perceived as defensive or supportive. The 10 questions about the quality of job-specific information were scored separately to generate an ICA score.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows nurse managers' perceptions of ESL and EO staff nurses and ESL and EO staff nurses' perceptions of nurse managers' communication competence. These data show the following:

(1) Nurse managers and ESL and EO staff nurses had a high level of agreement on the need for joint agreement on critical terms. Word error scores were low throughout the population.
(2) ESL staff nurses thought their nurse managers had a supportive communication style. ESL staff nurses surveys generated low supportive communication (SUP) scores.
(3) Nurse managers received lower marks for supportive communication from EO staff nurses than from ESL staff nurses. EO staff nurses generated higher SUP scores than ESL staff nurses.
(4) ESL staff nurses were more satisfied than EO nurses with adequacy of job-related information provided by nurse managers. ESL staff nurses provided lower ICA survey scores than EO staff nurses).

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations for Scores Measured

Scale	Mean	Standard Deviation
Word error score	4.48	6.03
ICA score	2.21	0.71
Defensive communication score	66.13	15.43
Supportive communication score	38.39	14.57

Multiple regression analysis was used to evaluate similarities between EO nurse managers and ESL staff nurses perceptions of the importance of joint agreement on job-specific terms. From Table 2, it was predicted that high defensive communication style scores, low ICA job-specific information scores, and low supportive communication style scores would predict low word error scores.

Table 2: Correlations Among Scores and Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC)

Scale	High ICC	Low ICC
Word error score	Low	High
ICA score	Low	High
Defensive communication score	High	Low
Supportive communication score	Low	High

Word error scores and ICA scores were evaluated in relation to attributes of intercultural communication. Low supportive communication scores predicted low word error scores, independent of the other variables (word error score, 0.15; supportive communication score, -1.13). The supportive communication score predicted approximately 13% of the variability of the word error score. However, bivariate correlation analysis supported the direction of relationships described in Table 2.

Table 3 shows that subjects with the lower word error scores had lower ICA scores, higher defensive communication scores, and lower SUP scores.

Table 3: Correlations Between Predictors and Word Error Score	
Scale	*r*(107) value
ICA score	0.34**
Defensive communication score	-0.25*
Supportive communication score	0.36**
*p<0.01; **p<0.001	

Similarly, low supportive communication scores predicted low ICA scores, independent of the other variables. However, bivariate correlation analysis again supported the direction of the predictor relationships. As highlighted in Table 4, subjects with lower ICA scores had lower word error scores, higher defensive communication scores, and lower supportive scores.

Table 4: Correlations Between Predictors and Low ICA Scores	
Scale	*r*(107) value
Word error score	0.346*
Defensive communication score	-0.50
Supportive communication score	0.77
*p<0.001	

These data showed a statistically significant relationship between the instrumental (effectiveness) and affective (appropriateness) attributes of intercultural communication competence.

DISCUSSION

The data provides an interesting perspective of communication competence in a multi-lingual, multi-cultural environment. The data seems to run counter to the tendency for organizations to attempt to provide same language supervisors or interpreters for an ESL workforce (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1994). That the data indicates that when working within a multi-lingual population same language supervisors may be helpful but not critical to the creation of an effective

communication climate. Data from this study population indicates that when either EO or ESL managers utilize a supportive communication climate ESL workers will perceive that manager as a competent communicator. The data also indicates that the creation of a supportive communication climate will assist in agreement between management and line workers on the meaning of words critical to the accomplishment of the department's purpose.

The limited variability in word error scores and perception of manager's as competent communicators may be the result of several factors, including:

(1) limited number of study sites, all in Northern California,
(2) similar demographics of the nine cohorts,
(3) similar levels of formal education among staff nurses and nurse managers, and
(4) the significant amount of professional experience in the study population.

The relationship between supportive communication scores (affective) and word error scores (instrumental) may be explained by viewing the word error score as representing Spitzberg and Cupach's (1984) effectiveness dimension, which indicates the strength of messages. This relationship between scores indicates that the strength of a message (how valuable the receiver perceives the information contained in the message) may be directly related to how the receiver feels or perceives the individual sending the message. In practice, nurse managers who construct a common symbolic system (language and messages) for their staffs using a supportive communication structure appear to help create agreement on word meaning across the work group. Data supports this explanation when the nurse manager's behavior is analyzed using Spitzberg and Cupach's (1984) appropriateness dimension, represented in this study as a supportive communication style score. The positive relationship between effective and affective scores supports the proposition that the use of a flexible and supportive communication style may help subordinates understand critical information and symbols used by nurse managers.

Although the limited scope of this study does not allow for generalization of results, these data do indicate that a receiver's acceptance of the strength of a message may depend on his or her perception that it was delivered in a supportive manner.

CONCLUSION

Nursing education trains nurses in a common language. Education appears to play a significant role in the high degree of agreement on the criticality of words used by ESL and EO staff nurses and nurse managers caring for patients at a variety of locations. It appears that the highly structured nature of domestic and international nurse education provides a learning system that provides common meaning to critical symbols and these symbols can be used to bridge cultural and first-language barriers.

This study indicates that nurse managers skilled in creating dynamic common symbol systems are more likely to succeed in cross-cultural communication and in creating communication climates perceived as supportive by both ESL and EO staff nurses than less skilled communicators.

The relationship between development of common symbols combined with supportive communication systems and attainment of organizational goals merits further study.

The finding that ESL staff nurses tend to accept greater responsibility for understanding a message and to view their managers as more supportive than EO staff nurses is worth considering when evaluating a work environment. A manager might perceive an ESL subordinate's satisfaction with communication style as indicative of an effective communication climate. However, the ESL nurses may be saving face rather than admitting failure to understand a message. Hall (1959) describes such behavior as typical in high-context cultures in which subordinates are responsible for understanding messages sent by the superior.

This study indicates that the power of common language, common goals, and a common view that the nature of the work performed has innate value, and a supportive climate help promote intercultural communication competence. Translating these findings into a metaphor may help in understanding how effective cross-cultural communication may work.

A look at the operation of "Velcro®" may provide such a metaphor: Velcro strips attach to one another by small similarly constructed hooks. A multi-lingual work force may also attempt to connect through similarly constructed language hooks (Estenson, 1997).

In a Velcro strip these miniature hooks are engineered and produced in a way similar to other strips yet each strip and hook is slightly different. In a multicultural work group, each hook (individual) is formed through a combination of group, organizational, and cultural experiences. When it is necessary for a connection to take place, hooks on a strip (groups of diverse individuals) are brought together. Connection and bonding with other Velcro material (work group members) occurs because of the similar construction of the hooks.

The results of this study indicate that common communication hooks development has occurred in the nursing profession. One place to look for this development is in the basic and advanced education of ESL and EOL staff nurses and their nurse managers. The educational process created common symbols (medical language), common views of humankind, and common agreement on the primary goal of reducing human suffering.

A manufacturer of Velcro attempts to create strips with similarly designed and shaped hooks that form a strong bond under pressure. Like the Velcro manufacturer, nursing education process allows for individual nurses to form a common language (hooks) which is used to form a strong bond under the pressure of critical work (promoting patient survival), congruent goals (professional standards of behavior), or external forces (skills shortages, affirmative action, ethnic marketing programs).

Velcro is unique because it comes together to form a cohesive bond while allowing each hook to retain its individuality. A diverse, cross-cultural workforce may have similar characteristics: each individual contributes special attributes to basic group goals, individual uniqueness is valued, and the cohesion of similar elements allows for a greater strength than that of an individual. Thinking about a multi-cultural environment as operating similar to Velcro allows individual to separate after the need for joint effort has past. After the separation the individual remembers the shared goals, symbols, and common learning systems created by the contact.

Velcro like behavior can be found in children from different cultural backgrounds who attend school. During school hours they socialize to create a common language and interact in a number

of different ways. The combination of common intellectual and social interaction not only facilitates learning but also starts to form a language community. Once school is out they return to their home culture, which may in some way conflict with the school culture (Cushner, 1990). This ability to role shift allows the child to function in apparently conflicting worlds and hold multiple identities and skill sets. Similar behavior may be found in police officers that work in the culture of law enforcement and then return to a family. At an even higher level of intensity Velcro communication and behavior patterns can be found in the military. General Henry H. Shelton shared with the author the story of his visit to the aircrews flying missions into Kosovo from their base in Italy. The crew would leave their family at 5:00 PM check into the base for briefing, fly their very high-risk mission and return to their families eight hours later. General Shelton indicated there was a high level of stress was felt by those crews because of the rapid change in their behaviors and communication patterns. He said that in previous conflict soldiers and aircrews would be deployed for extended period of time and could develop a more permanent set of behaviors. Today we ask multi-cultural workers, police officer and service personnel to become very fluid in their communication behaviors. Conceptualizing this relationship between work, home, and personal life as an episodic but critical connection may assist in forming communication and job design strategies.

Clues in how to create communication climates which allow these connection to occur may be found in the training and professional development of nurses. The nursing profession seems to:

Attract individuals who are responsive to the higher or Superordinate goal of your organization (saving lives in the nursing profession)
Select individuals who are trained using a common technical language
Create clear boundaries which define acceptable communication behaviors
Create multiple opportunities for personal interaction between individuals from different cultures
Develop a set of critical competencies for managers working with a multi-cultural workforce.
Train managers to utilize supportive communication behaviors

Nurses tend to be drawn to the profession by the Superordinate goal of relieving human suffering. This reminds us that intrinsic motivational factors are important and a competent intercultural communicator would provide linkage between the tasks assigned and accomplishment of a worthy organizational purpose.

Nurses worldwide are trained using the same medical terminology. In other contexts efforts by organizations to ensure that technical and professional schools train future employees in key terminology and concepts may provide longer benefits. Failure of education institutions to provide this language places the burden on organizations to develop a common language community using internal training programs.

Nurses work in an environment where behaviors are controlled by law and professional ethical standards. A manager directing the work of a multicultural work force may need to establish clear behavior boundaries for employees. These boundaries will send the message that racism, sexism, and outside inter-cultural conflicts will not be tolerated.

Training and the work of nursing tend to be performed in an environment with a high level of contact with other nurses and managers. Managers outside of nursing may need to set up opportunities for members of the diverse group to interact. This will help reduce the social isolation, which appears to be a significant inhibitor of intercultural group performance.

Nurses tend to be trained to exhibit a universal set of skills, knowledge and abilities. Managers of diverse employees may be required to set up fundamental skills and knowledge building courses. The courses could include writing, oral presentation, interpersonal skills as well as skills unique to assigned tasks.

Managers need to create a supportive communication environment in which they can ensure that their messages are heard, understood and accepted. This environment requires a communication style which is provisional (flexible, experimental, and creative), empathetic (manager attempts to listen and respects employee feelings and values) equal (does not make employee feel inferior), spontaneous (communications are free of hidden motive), problem oriented (manager defines problems while not giving solutions and remains open to discussion), and descriptive (clear about their perception and describes situations fairly).

It is becoming apparent that intercultural communication skill is a threshold competence in the selection of nurse managers and managers in other fields. Those interested in managing and leading will need to build the skills discussed in this article. Those who lack the skills will be well served to explore new learning opportunities. A model for the operation of an effective cross-cultural communication style may be found in the supportive communication system created and used by nurse managers in this study. The value of the supportive model comes from it opening of the communication system while celebrating both the similarity and differences of individual nurses.

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AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO WRITING ASSIGNMENTS IN THE BUSINESS CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT

The need for writing assignments in business courses has become an issue of interest to both faculty and administrators. Increasingly, administrators and potential employers of our students are asking faculty to help improve students' writing skills. This results in pressure on faculty to include writing assignments throughout the curriculum. Instructors attempt to develop meaningful assignments and to fit these assignments into an otherwise crowded semester. Also, instructors often have difficulty finding time to grade these writing assignments.

This paper outlines one approach to meeting these demands. The approach has students write summaries of newspaper and magazine articles that relate to the subject matter being discussed in the course. Students read and summarize each article, which enhances their reading skills, writing skills, knowledge of the subject matter, and their general knowledge of current events in the area.

INTRODUCTION

Administrators and potential employers of students are asking faculty to include elements in their courses that can help improve students' writing skills. Often, administrators place pressure on faculty to include writing assignments in all of the courses they teach. Some schools have adopted formal writing requirements for all courses. Other schools have established specific courses in which they enforce specific writing requirements.

Business school faculty have responded to these calls for increased emphasis on writing with varying levels of enthusiasm. Some business faculty argue that they are unqualified to teach writing or to grade writing assignments for grammar, punctuation, and style. Other faculty argue that their courses are completely filled with content and that their courses have no room for the teaching of writing or for additional writing assignments. In this paper, we outline one approach to providing students with a content-relevant writing experience that places minimal demands on faculty time and expertise in writing.

PRIOR LITERATURE

In the past, teaching writing and writing assignments were the responsibility of the English department. As it became more important that students develop specific types of writing skills for

specific disciplines (Zinsser 1998), and as researchers discovered that an excellent way to improve student writing is to have them write (Ballenger and Lane 1989), the teaching of writing and the requirement of specific writing assignments were added to individual courses within specific disciplines. Some researchers worked to establish that business writing differed from other types of writing, such as novels or newspapers (Seigal and Connolly 1999), and provided support for administrators who were pushing the instruction of business writing into business school curricula. A number of research studies have concluded that communications skills, especially written communications skills, are important for students to have when they apply for their first jobs and as they move forward in their careers (Curtis, Winsor, & Stephens, 1989; Dirks & Buzzard, 1997; Maes, Weldy, & Icenogle, 1997; Ray, Stallard, & Hunt, 1994; and Scudder, 1989). Edelstein (1991) includes an excellent list of reasons to improve writing. Braham (1998) provides evidence that the quality of persons' writing is a direct reflection of themselves. Writing can also help students clarify their thoughts (Klauser 2000).

Instructors began to develop meaningful assignments for business writing, and to fit these assignments into an otherwise crowded semester. Instructors quickly realized that finding time to grade writing assignments was also an issue. In addition to the time it took away from other course material, many business instructors found themselves to be uncomfortable relying on their own knowledge as they undertook detailed grading of their students' writing. Some researchers argued that the new emphasis on writing could only be accommodated in courses by having faculty completely change the way they teach (Hansen, 2001). Rogers and Rymer (2001) examined the use of analytical tools to diagnose problems in the writing of MBA students at the University of Michigan and concluded that a significant amount of time and money was required to create the environment and the support staff that could administer and interpret the results of such instruments. Others have questioned the devotion of resources to writing that could be applied to content mastery (Cohen and Spencer, 1993).

To summarize, the prior literature strongly supports the idea that including writing assignments in business courses is a good thing, with benefits to students that will continue throughout their working careers. However, the literature also suggests that the consumption of class time, instructor time outside of class, and support staff time can be significant. Thus, a need exists for an approach that minimizes the investment of time and resources yet includes a substantial writing activity. We propose one approach that we have found meets that need in our practice of teaching. The next section includes a rationale for our approach. It is followed by sections that provide the details of our approach.

RATIONALE FOR OUR APPROACH

This paper suggests having students write summaries of newspaper and magazine articles that relate to the subject matter being discussed in the course. For example, an accounting course could use an article on the accounting treatment of the AOL Time Warner merger. Given the number of useful business publications that appear today on the Web, and that are often available at no cost to the student, the task of locating appropriate material for this type of writing assignment is easier than ever. Students read and summarize the article. This read-and-summarize activity can enhance

students' reading skills, writing skills, and knowledge of the subject matter (Baird, Zelin and Ruggle 1998). The activity can also increase their general knowledge of current business events.

Incorporating writing in courses using this approach provides students with relevant timely course material, yields positive feedback from students regarding the assignment, and helps create an evenly paced work load for students and for the instructor. It is helpful if the instructor motivates the students to improve their writing. This can be accomplished by communicating to students the positive rewards that they can reap by improving their writing. The specific details of the writing assignments that we use are described in the following sections.

ASSIGNMENT TIMING

The assignment can be introduced on the first day of the course or later in the term. An advantage of this type of writing assignment is that the work for the instructor and the student can occur evenly throughout the semester, compared to a term paper where most of the work is done at the end of the term. This evening out of the workload occurs for both the student writing the paper and the instructor grading the paper. The instructor can require a set number of summaries due each week or can require a set number of summaries for the term, with the requirement that they be evenly spaced throughout the term. This even spacing prevents students from submitting all of their assignments for grading at the end of the term.

ARTICLE SELECTION

The instructor can select the specific articles for the students to read and summarize, or the instructor can have the student select the articles. The choice depends on the amount of time the instructor allocates for the assignment and the motives of the instructor. To make it more efficient for students, the instructor can name specific articles for them to read and summarize. Instructors can even copy the articles (subject, of course, to the relevant copyright laws) and hand them out to students if they wish. However, if one of the goals of the course is to have students become more aware of a variety of current events, we recommend that the instructor have students skim business periodicals and newspapers and locate articles themselves. A compromise is for the instructor to follow the latter approach, but periodically suggest good articles that have appeared in the news recently. Students can obtain some articles on their own and use some articles that the instructor recommends. If the instructor selects the articles the assignment is less time consuming for students; however, the student does not gain knowledge by scanning newspapers and periodicals and thus picking up general knowledge about the subject matter of the course.

SUBJECT MATTER OF ARTICLES

The subject matter of the articles selected should relate to the course and subject taught. For example, an accounting course would allow articles relating to accounting, auditing, fraud, costing, and similar topics. Recent articles in the news include the Financial Accounting Standard Board statement on purchase accounting, the accounting scandals at Lernout & Hauspie and Aurora Foods,

and accounting for the AOL and Time Warner merger. The instructor can elect to limit student article selection to topics or sources that relate very specifically to the course. For example, an instructor teaching consolidation accounting might only allow students to select articles on business mergers. This approach does not make the project as palatable to students and can add an element of frustration; however, if you have students conduct Internet searches for articles, this approach becomes easier for students.

The subject of Internet searches brings up another issue. Internet searches typically return information only on the specific subject area requested, limiting the learning and reading to that area. As students browse newspapers and magazines, they will see and perhaps read articles on other subjects that might interest them, expanding their knowledge in a number of areas.

Internet searches have advantages and disadvantages, however. An alternative to having students use Internet search engines is to give them a list of the uniform resource locators (URLs) of a number of business periodicals and newspapers and encourage them to browse those Web sites. For example, The New York Times on the Web includes a business section page with dozens of recent articles (www.nytimes.com/pages/business/).

A marketing class might include articles on the controversial areas of marketing to children, marketing alcohol, or marketing tobacco. A marketing instructor could also include topics such as announcements of advertising campaigns or ad agency changes. Instructors of operations management classes might include articles on implementing new technologies, locating manufacturing facilities, and managing supply chains. Finance classes might include articles on current initial public offerings, new bond or stock issues, or the latest in derivative instrument design. Professors in all business disciplines can find plenty of articles in their fields. The variety of topics within each discipline can help students see the practical implementations of the theories they are studying. By making the relevance of the course content to the actual business world easy to see, professors can make their courses come alive.

SOURCES OF ARTICLES

Many instructors recommend that their students read The Wall Street Journal, Business Week, the business sections of The New York Times, the local newspaper, and other business periodicals to find articles relating to their study. Newsweek and Time also run business articles frequently. In most of our classes, we do not restrict the sources that students may draw upon to select articles, but we do guide them to the best sources to get them started. We do prohibit students from reporting on wire services that often turn up in searches of library databases such as the Dow Jones Interactive News Service or the Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe service. Many of these wire service reports are only a few hundred words. We explain to students that we would like them to read articles that are longer than the reports we ask them to make after reading the articles!

LENGTH AND NUMBER OF ARTICLE SUMMARIES

The length of each article summary and the number of articles read and summarized during the term will vary depending upon your goals for the course. If the writing assignment is a major

part of the course grade, we require more article summaries. If the writing assignment is a smaller part of the grade, we require only a few articles.

We hesitate to make a specific required length for one of the article summaries because we want to reduce the writing anxiety for the students. We find that when no specific word demands are placed on the students they do not procrastinate about doing the assignment, tend to have a more favorable attitude toward it, and typically write more than we would have asked them to write. When we stress that each summary has to be a specific number of words, we find that students become concerned about the assignment and experience stress. Also, the length of the summary naturally varies with the length of the article.

Many institutions have adopted rules about the quantity of writing that must occur in a course. Instructors who need or want to ensure that students write a certain number of words or a certain number of pages can specify the number of words or pages without specifying the number of articles that a student must write to attain that goal. A student could then choose to write many article summaries of a few words each, or a few article summaries with many words. Again, we find that this contributes to a lessening of the level of stress experienced by each student regarding each writing assignment.

SUMMARY OF THE SUMMARIES

To reduce their workload, instructors can require their students to keep track of each article summary submitted in a "summary of the summaries." Students turn in their summaries of the summaries upon completion of the assignment and lists each article summary turned in, the length of the summary, and the date on which it was submitted. This helps the instructor determine that each student has turned in the required work without maintaining current records as the summaries themselves are submitted.

ARTICLE DUE DATES

An advantage of this type of writing assignment is the ability to pace the students' workload (and your grading workload) at any time during the term. Students particularly like this feature of the writing assignment because it allows them to get the bulk of the work done before the end of the semester when their work load is typically heavier. In many classes, the workload increases near the end of the semester with term papers and projects coming due all at once.

The instructor using our approach can start handing out articles on the first day of class for the students to summarize, or can have students begin finding their own articles during the first week of class. This approach also allows instructors to spread out the work of grading the assignments.

REWRITES

Because the writing assignments can be scheduled to occur predominantly during the beginning and middle of the term, instructors can allow rewrites if they wish. The typical term papers that students turn in late in the academic term do not allow for this flexibility. We find that

students appreciate the opportunity to rewrite, and we find that rewrites are where much learning takes place. Instructors can communicate to students what is wrong with their papers and allow them to make corrections. Before we adopted this approach to writing assignments, we found that many students never picked up their papers, and therefore did not learn from the corrections and feedback. In most cases, we find that students' writing steadily improves as the term progresses.

GRADING

Grading writing assignments is always a chore. Grading can be made more pleasant because the assignments come in evenly throughout the semester, which evens out the work load. We find it more manageable to grade several one- or two-page writing summaries than one long term paper.

Even when the instructor allows rewrites, the grading is easier because even the worst papers gradually turn into a readable paper in an acceptable format. We recommend that instructors use a pass-fail grading system for this assignment. Once the writing on a summary is acceptable, a student receives all of the points for that summary. The pass-fail grading technique greatly reduces the ambiguity that has often been associated with grades on writing assignments. Overwhelmingly, our students react positively to pass-fail grading on these assignments.

REFERENCE SOURCES

Some instructors may wish to teach writing skills such as punctuation, grammar, or style in their courses. We seldom find that we have the time to do much teaching of writing in our courses. Students can use reference books to improve their writing. Some books that our students have used with success include Hopper, et al. (2000), Tichy (1988), and Rozakis (1997). These books are very clear and concise and can greatly reduce or even eliminate the need for the instructor to spend time teaching writing skills.

ATTACHMENT OF ARTICLES

An added benefit of our approach is that instructors can have students do some of their work for them. That is, instructors do not have to read as many newspapers and periodicals to keep updated on current events in their fields. By reading the students' article summaries instructors can become more current regarding information in their fields. For this reason, some instructors may choose to require students to attach a copy of the article or the article itself to the article summary. Requiring the attachment of the original article (or a copy) can also help you monitor students' work for possible plagiarism. Some instructors find that keeping the article summaries on file can help them as they work on future independent studies with students or their own research papers.

SUMMARY

As more and more instructors struggle with finding ways to include writing assignments into their courses, they must find solutions that avoid overly burdening students and themselves. Our

approach to writing assignments "kills two birds with one stone" by teaching writing skills and current course content issues at the same time. This assignment is uniformly met with positive feedback from students. In many cases, even after the course is over, we find that students continue to read business periodicals regularly. Feedback from students also indicates that the knowledge they gain through these writing assignments is very helpful when they are interviewing for their first jobs. In many cases, students' ability to talk intelligently about current business events with hiring firms' recruiters was an important element in students' ability to obtain job offers from companies in which they were truly interested.

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READABILITY OF BUSINESS COLUMNS VERSUS OTHER COLUMNS IN MAJOR U.S. NEWSPAPERS

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ABSTRACT

The readability of business columns when compared with other newspaper sections in five major metropolitan U.S. areas was examined utilizing traditional readability indices. Findings showed considerable deviation from the generally accepted sixth- to eighth-grade reading level attributed to newspaper writing.

Business articles were commonly written at lower readability levels than regular news stories, editorials, or opinion columns. Readability grade levels for the five newspapers varied from 10.7 to 13.2. In addition, the Gunning Fog Index yielded mean readability results essentially one grade level higher than the Flesch-Kincaid Formula or the MS Word Flesch-Kincaid application formula.

INTRODUCTION

Many business communication textbooks discuss the need for checking readability of written documents, and several provide at least one methodology for determining the readability of documents (Bovee & Thill, 2000; Guffey, 2003; Lehman & DuFrene, 1999; Locker, 1997; Ober, 2003). Furthermore, software developers have considered readability an important enough concept to include programs to gauge readability. Microsoft Word, the most popular word processing software available, includes such a feature; it uses the Flesch-Kincaid Formula. Writers who use MS Word should be cautioned, however, that reading grade level calculations are truncated at grade 12. Thus, anything written above that level will not be reported accurately.

Business writers have long been concerned that their audience be able to read and understand their messages. In fact, it would be difficult to find even one communication teacher who disagreed that ease of readability was critical to any business communication. But what about business journalists? Do writers of business columns in major U.S. newspapers write at readability levels that are appropriate for their reading public?

It has generally been accepted that U.S. newspapers were written at about the sixth- to eighth-grade reading level. Casual observation of specific newspaper items might cause readers to think otherwise. Opinion columns, in particular, often appear to be written at a higher level, even above high school reading level. Is the same true for regular news stories, editorials, and business columns?

RELATED LITERATURE

Hart (1993) points out that many newspaper stories have readability scores of 13 or higher, and these scores exceed the reading ability of the average U.S. adult. He suggests that since the average adult in the U.S. has finished 12.7 years of education, newspapers can serve their clientele better by offering "cleaner, clearer, and more direct writing" (p. 5). No suggestion is made that newspapers should be "dumbed down" to meet reader requirements-simple writing does not have to be simplistic. However, the implication is that most people prefer reading at about three grade levels below their actual grade level completion.

Fletcher (2002) relates his experience with a manufacturing firm that asked him to rewrite an instruction manual. He determined that the manual, although intended for use by unskilled laborers with a fifth grade education, was actually written at the reading skill level of a college senior. Fletcher also cites a study by the Federal Drug Administration stating that three out of four adults who are 60 or older find it hard to understand most information in newspapers.

Although readability formulas are not perfect, Kalmbach (1989) advises that they can predict the average difficulty of reading material for general readers. He cautions that unique vocabularies and interests of groups or individual readers cannot be taken into account using mathematical formulas. Therefore, the reading audience should be considered carefully when communicating in writing.

Burton (1991) investigated the readability of 30 consumer-oriented bank brochures from five major banks and 26 major daily newspapers. Results showed that 62 percent of American adults would have trouble understanding the bank brochures, and 67 percent would not be able to comprehend the newspapers. Clearly, bank managers should be concerned with providing information that the vast majority of their customers can understand.

Regardless of the medium used-reports, brochures, proposals, or newspaper business columns, business writers must be vigilant in their attempts to communicate effectively with their reading public.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this research was to compare the readability of business columns with other sections of newspapers in five major metropolitan U.S. areas. Specifically, the research sought to determine whether business columns were written at a higher or lower reading level than other newspaper sections. Since many newspaper readers have less than a college education (and may read at an even lower level), columns should be written at a level comprehendible by most readers. And because vast numbers of business people and consumers alike make decisions based on information found in newspaper business sections, writers of these articles, especially, should be careful to consider the reading abilities of their readers. Do business writers consider the reading levels of their potential readership? Application of readability formulas to selected articles should provide an answer.

READABILITY DEFINED

Readability refers to the ease with which a document can be read. Several mathematical formulas have been developed to assist writers in measuring the readability of their writing. Most formulas (indexes) include sentence length and some measure of syllabic intensity as major components. Other factors, such as sentence structure, graphic presentation, and font faces may affect readability; however, these are very subjective in nature and extremely difficult to measure. Popular readability indexes include the Flesch Readability Formula, developed by Rudolf Flesch; the Fry Readability Graph, created by Edward Fry; and the Gunning Fog Index, conceived by Robert Gunning. Each is similar to the other; however, the Gunning Fog Index was developed specifically to help business writers gauge their writing to their audience and to write more clearly (Gunning, 1952).

METHODOLOGY

The first step was to identify major metropolitan areas in the U.S. from which to select newspapers for the research. An Internet search located the Demographia web site, which listed major U.S. metropolitan areas by population density in 1998 (Demographia, 2001). The top five metropolitan areas were chosen because they appeared to characterize a broad geographical representation of the U.S. Selected metropolitan areas included, in order of population, New York; Los Angeles; Chicago; Washington, DC; and San Francisco. Newspaperschosen from the respective areas were The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune, The Washington Post, and San Francisco Chronicle. Business acquaintances in each of the five areas were contacted and asked to supply copies of the Sunday, July 15, 2001, issues of the particular newspapers, which were used for this research. To ensure a broad representation of authors and narrative content, all stories beginning on the front page of the regular news and business news sections were included in the research as were all editorials and columns written by newspaper columnists.

Because the Gunning Fog Index was developed to assist business writers, it was selected as the readability tool for analyzing articles. In brief, the steps for using this index include (Gunning, 1952):

1. Count the number of words in successive sentences. If the piece is long, select several samples. Count the number of sentences in the selection. (Note: independent thoughts, such as those in compound sentences, are counted as a sentence.) Divide the number of words by the number of sentences to determine the average sentence length.
2. Count the number of words with three or more syllables. Do not count words that are capitalized or are made by combining two easy words (bookkeeper) or that are made three syllables by adding ed or es. Divide the number of three-syllable words by the total number of words and multiply by 100. This gives the percentage of hard words.
3. Add the average sentence length (step 1) to the percentage of hard words (step 2) and multiply the result by 0.4. The result is the Fog Index, which indicates the reading grade level necessary for understanding a selection.

In total, 77 regular news stories, business stories, editorials, and opinion columns were analyzed. Sentences, words, and words with three or more syllables were counted in each article. Random numbers were then generated based on the number of actual sentences in an article. Three sample selections of approximately 100 words were chosen from each article based upon the random numbers. The three samples were combined and the Gunning Fog Index was subsequently applied to determine readability levels.

A second analysis was completed using the Flesch-Kincaid Formula. This formula is the United States Government Department of Defense standard (DOD MIL-M-38784B). The government requires its use by contractors producing manuals for the armed services (Readability, 2001). Ten of the 77 articles were randomly selected as a basis for comparing results of the two readability formulas. Both formulas are similar, given that they provide a reading grade level; however, Flesch-Kincaid uses average number of syllables per word in addition to number of words and average sentence length. The Flesch-Kincaid Formula is:

$$(L \times 0.39) + (N \times 11.8) - 15.59$$

where L = average sentence length and N = average number of syllables per word

(Readability, 2001).

A final analysis of the 10 articles was performed using the spelling and grammar feature of Microsoft Word. As an overwhelmingly popular word processing software, this feature is likely used by many authors to evaluate their writing. Although the algorithm used to compute readability is not shown, the software provides several data items, including a score for the Flesch Reading Ease scale and the Flesch-Kincaid reading grade level.

FINDINGS

Mean reading levels were computed for the 77 business articles, front-page news stories, editorials, and opinion columns. Table 1 summarizes the results of analyses using the Gunning Fog Index.

Comparing articles within individual newspapers, business articles, generally, were written at a lower reading level than the other three article categories. The Los Angeles Times editorials and the San Francisco Chronicle opinion columns were written at a slightly lower reading level than business columns. Overall averages for all newspapers revealed a similar outcome. Business columns, on average, were written at approximately 1.5 reading grade levels below other article types.

When all article types were combined for each newspaper, overall readability grade level means ranged from 10.7 to 13.2. Table 2 shows the combined data.

TABLE 1
Mean Readability Grade Levels Using Gunning Fog Index

Newspaper	Business	Front Page	Editorial	Opinion Column
Washington Post	9.9	12.3	10.2	12.7
New York Times	12.4	13.3	14.3	13.0
Chicago Tribune	8.7	12.5	10.9	9.7
LA Times	11.1	11.5	10.3	13.6
SF Chronicle	11.1	12.5	15.8	10.7
Overall Averages	10.7	12.3	12.1	12.1

TABLE 2
Combined Readability Grade Level Means for All Column Types
(Gunning Fog Index)

Newspaper	Readability Grade Level
Chicago Tribune	10.7
Los Angeles Times	11.6
The Washington Post	11.6
San Francisco Chronicle	12.1
The New York Times	13.2

In general, there was less variation in the readability scores of front-page articles than in other sections of the papers. Overall, business articles had the next to smallest variation, as well as the lowest readability scores. The consistency of overall readability was similar for all of the papers except the San Francisco Chronicle, which had a standard deviation considerably larger than the other papers. This was due primarily to the extremely low variation within editorial columns and the extremely high variation within the opinion columns.

TABLE 3
Standard Deviations

Newspaper	Front Page	Business	Editorial	Opinion Column	Overall
Washington Post	1.452	2.058	3.517	3.046	2.457
New York Times	1.847	2.388	2.371	3.987	2.524
Chicago Tribune	1.709	2.335	1.222	1.556	2.240
Los Angeles Times	1.483	2.438	1.283	3.965	2.472
San Francisco Chronicle	1.566	1.599	0.542	5.232	3.322
Overall	1.591	2.281	2.970	3.716	

In an effort to corroborate the results of the Gunning Fog Index, a random sample of ten articles was further evaluated using the Flesch-Kincaid Formula. Each article was initially input into Microsoft Word for analysis using the spelling and grammar feature. After several articles had been analyzed, it was noted that more than one article had a reading grade level of 12.0. Further analysis showed that, no matter how difficult the material, reading grade levels above 12.0 were not displayed. Since it was obvious some of the columns were written at a higher grade level than 12.0, the ten articles were then evaluated using manual counts and calculations and applying the Flesch-Kincaid Formula. Table 4 shows a comparison of the ten articles using the three evaluation techniques.

TABLE 4
Comparison of Readability Levels Using Different Formulas/Indexes

Article	Gunning Fog Index	Flesch-Kincaid Formula	Flesch-Kincaid (MS Word)
1	6.6	5.6	5.6
2	10.2	9.7	12.0
3	13.7	13.4	12.0
4	13.7	12.6	12.0
5	13.6	15.2	12.0
6	10.8	9.3	11.9
7	10.5	9.4	10.1
8	10.5	9.5	10.0
9	13.3	8.3	9.0
10	13.0	14.7	12.0
Averages	11.6	10.8	10.7

Although the reading grade level averages would appear to be almost identical for all ten articles applying the Flesch-Kincaid Formula and using Flesch-Kincaid in MS Word, what can not be accounted for is the fact that MS Word apparently truncates at reading grade level 12.0. In this analysis, fully 40 percent of the readability levels using Flesch-Kincaid exceeded 12.0. Thus, business writers should be cautioned that MS Word may not present a true readability picture.

Even though there were exceptions, the Flesch-Kincaid Formula appears to gauge readability approximately one grade level below the Gunning Fog Index. Comparing means for the ten articles shows this to be true as well. Overall readability grade level means for Gunning and Flesch-Kincaid were 11.59 and 10.77, respectively.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Sample results clearly indicate that the generally accepted concept of a sixth- to eighth-grade reading level for newspapers is erroneous. Test means in every case exceed this range. In fact, front-page, editorial, and opinion column readability grade level means all exceeded twelfth-grade level. Only business articles had a mean readability level less than the twelfth-grade level. None of the front-page readability means was below 11.5 while all but one of the business means were below 11.5. All sections except business had articles with reading grade levels that exceeded the average educational level (Hart, 1993) of American adults.

There was considerable difference in mean readability grade level among the five newspapers. The New York Times sample, in fact, was written at a sophomore college level (13.2). The New York Times had either the highest or second-highest mean in all sections studied. This resulted in the Times having the highest combined readability grade level. Three of the five newspapers (Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, and Washington Post) had a mean readability grade level less than twelfth grade.

Apparently, a major factor in the difference between Flesch-Kincaid Formula as defined by Rudolf Flesch and as implemented by Microsoft Word is the method for counting sentences. Flesch requires: "In counting sentences, follow the units of thought rather than the punctuation," while MS Word apparently counts traditional sentences ending with periods, question marks, or exclamation points (Flesch, 226-227).

These tools, then, while not precise, give a general indication of the readability of the material. If the intent of the articles is to present the material at a readability level suitable for the masses, writers of business articles are closer to the mythical goal of sixth- to eighth-grade level writing than other newspaper section writers. If the goal of the newspapers with their various readability grade levels is to address the needs of differing readerships, this research would indicate they are meeting those goals.

For business communication teachers the challenge is to convince their students that readability of their documents is critical. Whether they are involved in writing company annual reports, press releases, or business columns for their local newspapers, writers must consider audience composition. For example, The New York Times may well be reaching its target audience for business columns with its 12.4 reading grade level. Assuming its primary readers are business professionals, it might be expected that most would hold college degrees. The Chicago Tribune, on the other hand, may be targeting a broader range of business consumers with its 8.7 grade reading level.

Business communication teachers should also make students aware of the need to tailor their writing to specific audience interests. For instance, an article discussing pros and cons of a 401(K) retirement plan might be of interest to a broad spectrum of readers with varying educational backgrounds. Alternatively, an exposé on the ramifications of a merger of two multinational manufacturing conglomerates might be of interest to a more limited but more business savvy group. Recognizing these differences and considering audience needs may well determine the success of any communication.

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DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES IN STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE OF ELECTRONIC RÉSUMÉS

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ABSTRACT

To determine demographic differences in students' knowledge of guidelines for preparing electronic résumés, a survey of 452 students at a Mid-South university was conducted. ANOVA results revealed statistical differences between the ten guidelines provided and all four demographic factors. Two guidelines showed significance ($p<.05$) by age, five by classification, one by gender, and one by status.

INTRODUCTION

The increased use of technology has brought about numerous changes in the recruiting practices of many businesses (Charles, 2000; Quible, 1995). One such change is the increased acceptance of electronic résumés (Jennings, Carnes, & Whitaker, 2001). Electronic résumés are résumés that are formatted so that they may be scanned by computer or transmitted via e-mail (Eyler, 1999).

According to Roever (1997), scanning technology has had a significant impact on the way businesses process résumés. Many companies are currently using automated applicant tracking systems, which involves the use of résumé-scanning software (Eyler, 1999). These systems are designed to search for key words that represent the qualifications of the employee they are seeking (Ream, 2000).

Résumés submitted should, therefore, be scanner friendly. In other words, they should be formatted so that the scanner will read the information correctly (Solly & Fischer, 1996). Because today's job seekers are very knowledgeable about computers and use them regularly as a communication and research tool, this trend toward increased employer acceptance of electronic résumés provides applicants with an efficient process for expediting the job search (Jennings et al., 2001; Quible, 1995).

The new technologies have had a significant impact on the job search process. In addition to increased communication between employers and prospective employees via electronic mail, job seekers are accessing corporate Web sites and Internet job boards, such as E-span, Monster Board, and Job Trak (Curry, 1998; Ream, 2000). To use the technology effectively, job hunters must have a knowledge of the correct format for electronic résumés.

ADVANTAGES AND USE OF ELECTRONIC RÉSUMÉS

Many employers are realizing the advantages of investing in résumé-scanning systems. These advantages include the speed with which employers are able to identify potential employees who have the qualifications needed for the open position and the cost savings of being able to screen job applicants electronically rather than manually. Recruiters and hiring officials are aware of the time and effort saved by using technology in employee recruitment and selection (Charles, 2000).

Job seekers are also recognizing the advantages of using electronic résumés, which include the exposure to numerous prospective employers and the objective nature of the initial screening. Applicants also know that their résumé will receive wide exposure through Websites of companies and professional associations, through bulletin board services, and through résumé banks. In addition, job seekers, by sending their résumés electronically, are demonstrating a knowledge of technology, which may be viewed positively by some employers (Bonner & Chaney, 2002; Gunner, 2000).

Use of the Internet in the job search has increased markedly in the last decade. According to Criscito (2000), "in 1995 only 5% of the 8,000 résumés Microsoft received monthly were sent electronically. In 1999, that number had changed to 50%, and the number of résumés had increased to 10,000 a month" (p. 2). The impact of electronic résumé-management (ERM) systems on the employment process has been the subject of a number of studies. A 1993 study (Yate, 2000) determined that 78% of firms surveyed were using automated résumé-tracking systems. Baker, DeTienne, and Smart (1998) examined the use of ERM systems by Fortune 500 companies and reported that 36% of responding firms used such systems. In an earlier study conducted in the mid-90s (Kennedy & Morrow, 1995), almost all firms with a minimum of 1,000 employees had automated applicant-tracking systems. In a study conducted in 1996 (Roever, 1997), none of the 236 companies located in rural Missouri reported the use of résumé-scanning software. Thus, a marked difference seems to exist in the use of these systems by large and small companies. A more recent study of 46 companies of various sizes (ranging from fewer than 25 employees to over 1,000) reported that 85% of employers surveyed accept electronic résumés. Over two-thirds of the companies that accept electronic résumés also store them in a database for future reference (Jennings, Carnes, & Whitaker, 2001).

Projections are that online recruiting "is expected to grow from $411 million in 1999 to $4 billion by 2005" (Criscito, 2000, p. 2). Faced with these projections, students will need to update their job search skills to keep up with the changing job market of the 21st century. Since U.S. Department of Labor statistics show that today's average worker will change jobs nine times between the ages of 18 and 34, students need to be prepared for the use of technology in the employment search (Criscito, 2000).

GUIDELINES FOR FORMATTING ELECTRONIC RÉSUMÉS

Because some typographical embellishments often used in formatting résumés can cause difficulties in scanning, job seekers should follow these guidelines for the process to work effectively:

The width of the page should be set to read a maximum of 60 characters across (Ream, 2000).
The space bar, rather than tabs, is used where spaces or indentions are desired (Ream, 2000).
Asterisks (*) or plus signs (+), rather than bullets, are preferred for highlighting key points (Quible, 1995). While round, solid bullets will often scan, hollow or unusually shaped bullets will not (Criscito, 2000).
Standard typefaces, such as Courier and Times New Roman, should be used; font size of 10 to 12 points is recommended, except for Times 10 point (Criscito, 2000; Eyler, 1999).
All capital letters and/or boldface is recommended for section headings; italics and underlining should be avoided (Eyler, 1999). While the newer optical character recognition software can read italics, it is not as readable (Criscito, 2000).
Abbreviations should be used judiciously; common abbreviations for degrees and certifications (BBA, MS, CPA) and state names are read by most résumé-scanning systems.
Acronyms commonly used in certain professions, such as A/R and A/P on an accountant's résumé, are usually accepted (Ream, 2000).
Vertical lines and boxes should be avoided; few horizontal lines should be used (Eyler, 1999; Yate, 2000).
The applicant's name and address should be centered at the top of the résumé (Quible, 1995). The font size used for the name should not be larger than 20-point (Criscito, 2000). The telephone number and e-mail address should be placed on separate lines.
A section labeled Keyword Summary should be placed after the applicant's name and address; this list of keywords should be nouns and noun phrases rather than verbs that are recommended for traditional résumés. In other words, the position, Computer Systems Manager, rather than managed computer systems, would be used (Gunner, 2000). Since every job has its own jargon and terminology, applicants should examine national employment publications for Help Wanted listings in their field of specialty (Criscito, 2000). Further, general keywords should be selected to reflect the applicant's interpersonal skills and other qualifications widely considered desirable, such as languages spoken, willingness to travel or relocate, and computer, communication, and team skills (Charles, 2000; Eyler, 1999). The Keyword Summary section should cover such areas as degrees, university granting the degree, major, certifications, special skills/knowledge, and employment history, including job titles and duties performed. Concrete descriptions, such as C, C++, and Java, should be used for computer language skills (Criscito, 2000). This Keyword Summary should be limited to 50 words (Baker, DeTienne, & Smart, 1998).

Résumé preparers should remember that some sections usually included on traditional résumés, such as References and Special Interests, are not typically found on electronic résumés (Criscito, 2000; Eyler, 1999; Quible, 1995). They should also remember to avoid including detailed information on employment beyond the last ten years since more concise job information is preferred. In addition, the length should be kept to one or two pages, with the candidate's name at the top of each page (Ream, 2000; Roever, 1997). The résumé may be created using any word processing software so long as it is saved as an ASCII text file to accommodate the software used for scanning and retrieval. When a hard copy is mailed for scanning, the résumé should be printed in black ink on standard 81/2- by 11-inch white, off-white, or light gray paper, printed on only one

side, and mailed flat in an envelope with no stapling or paper clips (Criscito, 2000; Eyler, 1999; Gunner, 2000; Yate, 2000).

SURVEY PROCEDURES

To determine students' knowledge of guidelines for preparing electronic résumés, a survey of 452 students enrolled at a Mid-South university was conducted. Students surveyed were enrolled in a lower division course in Introduction to Business, upper division courses in Business Communication and Organization and Management, and a graduate course in Executive Communication. Students were provided ten guidelines related to correct typeface and font size and the appropriateness of using such formatting features as bullets, bold-faced type, and underlining. Also included were such content-related questions as inclusion of references and placement of the section Keyword Summary.

As shown in Table 1, the largest percentages of respondents were female (55.3%), below 25 years of age (74.1%), classified as Junior/Senior (63.5%), and business majors (72.5%).

Table 1
Demographics of Respondents

Demographic Factor		Frequency	Valid Percent
Gender	Female	250	55.3
	Male	202	44.7
Age	Below 25	335	74.1
	25-39	86	19.0
	40-54	28	6.2
	55 and above	23	.7
Classification	Freshman/Sophomore	116	25.7
	Junior/Senior	287	63.6
	Graduate student	19	4.2
	Unclassified	29	6.4
Status	Business major	326	72.1
	Nonbusiness major	126	27.9

Statistical analysis was run using SPSS, Version 10. Frequencies and percentages of students' responses are shown in Table 2. The question with the highest number of correct responses was related to recommended font size, while the guideline missed by the largest percentage of students was related to the use of underlining. The guideline marked "Don't Know" by the largest number of students was related to the location of the section Keyword Summary.

Mean responses and standard deviations are shown in Table 3. The guideline with the highest mean response was related to recommended font size, while the guideline with the lowest mean response was related to the location of the section Keyword Summary.

Table 2: Students' Responses: Frequencies and Percentages

Guideline		Correct Response	Correct		Incorrect		Don't Know	
			f	valid %	f	valid %	f	valid %
1	Courier is a suitable typeface for an electronic résumé.	Correct	161	35.6	101	22.3	190	42.0
2	The recommended font size for an electronic résumé is 10 to 14 points.	Correct	337	74.4	47	10.4	67	14.9
3	A bullet, rather than an asterisk (*), is used to highlight a key point.	Incorrect	252	55.8	96	21.2	104	23.0
4	The space bar, rather than tabs, is used where spaces or indentations are desired.	Correct	121	26.8	210	46.5	121	26.8
5	Bold-faced type should not be used.	Incorrect	131	29.0	203	44.9	118	26.1
6	Underlining may be used where appropriate.	Incorrect	255	56.4	86	19.0	111	24.6
7	Verbs, rather than nouns or noun phrases, are preferred for keywords. (Ex: "Administered Survey" not "Survey Administrator")	Incorrect	164	36.3	137	30.3	151	33.4
8	The applicant's name and address should be the first lines on the résumé, with each line centered.	Correct	323	71.6	44	9.8	84	18.6
9	Keyword Summary is usually the first section after the applicant's name and address.	Correct	130	28.8	105	23.2	217	48.0
10	References are commonly included on electronic résumés.	Incorrect	198	43.8	128	28.3	126	27.9

Table 3: Students' Knowledge of Selected Electronic Résumé Guidelines

Guideline		Mean	S.D.
1	Courier is a suitable typeface for an electronic résumé.	.94	.88
2	The recommended font size for an electronic résumé is 10 to 14 points.	1.60	.73
3	A bullet, rather than an asterisk (*), is used to highlight a key point.	1.33	.83
4	The space bar, rather than tabs, is used where spaces or indentations are desired.	1.00	.73
5	Bold-faced type should not be used.	1.03	.74
6	Underlining may be used where appropriate.	1.32	.84
7	Verbs, rather than nouns or noun phrases, are preferred for keywords. (Ex: "Administered Survey" not "Survey Administrator")	1.03	.84
8	The applicant's name and address should be the first lines on the résumé, with each line centered.	1.53	.79
9	Keyword Summary is usually the first section after the applicant's name and address.	.81	.86
10	References are commonly included on electronic résumés.	1.16	.83

ANOVAs were conducted to examine the differences between mean responses and demographic factors. The .05 level was used to determine significance. As shown in Table 4, ANOVA results revealed significant differences between certain guidelines and all four demographic factors: two showed significance by age, five by classification, one by gender, and one by status.

Table 4
ANOVA Results: Demographic Factors and Responses to Guidelines

Guideline		Age		Classification		Gender		Status	
		F	P-value	F	P-value	F	P-value	F	P-value
1	Courier is a suitable typeface for an electronic résumé.	1.134	.335	1.774	.151	6.722	.010*	0.17	.897
2	The recommended font size for an electronic résumé is 10 to 14 points.	1.723	.162	6.218	.000*	1.370	.242	2.683	.102
3	A bullet, rather than an asterisk (*), is used to highlight a key point.	2.532	.057	11.749	.000*	.495	.482	5.431	.020**
4	The space bar, rather than tabs, is used where spaces or indentations are desired.	.898	.442	.809	.489	.416	.519	.328	.567
5	Bold-faced type should not be used.	2.168	.091	.144	.933	.235	.628	.008	.930
6	Underlining may be used where appropriate.	.701	.552	5.600	.001*	.272	.602	.790	.374
7	Verbs, rather than nouns or noun phrases, are preferred for keywords. (Ex:"Administered Survey" not "Survey Administrator")	1.054	.368	2.376	.069	.186	.667	.337	.562
8	The applicant's name and address should be the first lines on the résumé, with each line centered.	3.001	.030**	4.453	.004*	.366	.545	3.370	.067
9	Keyword Summary is usually the first section after the applicant's name and address.	5.669	.001*	4.118	.007	1.728	.189	.113	.737
10	References are commonly included on electronic résumés.	1.578	.194	2.692	.046**	6.815	.009	1.034	.310

* Significant at .01 level; ** Significant at .05 level

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

ANOVA results revealed statistical differences between all four demographic factors and students' responses. Responses to two of the guidelines differed by age: The applicant's name and address should be the first lines on the résumé, with each line centered was answered correctly by more students age 25 - 39 (mean of 1.76) than by students below 25 (mean of 1.48); Keyword Summary is usually the first section after the applicant's name and address was answered correctly by more students age 25-39 (mean of 1.13) than by students below 25 (mean of .72).

Responses to five guidelines differed by classification. Post-hoc analysis revealed that The recommended font size for an electronic résumé is 10 to 14 points was answered correctly by more graduate students (mean of 1.84) than by either Juniors/Seniors (mean of 1.68) or by those who were unclassified (mean of 1.21). A bullet, rather than an asterisk (*), is used to highlight a key point was answered correctly (lower mean) by freshmen/sophomores (mean of .97) than by juniors/seniors (mean of 1.48). Underlining may be used where appropriate was answered correctly (lower mean) by freshmen/sophomores (mean of 1.06) than by juniors/seniors (mean of 1.43). The applicant's name and address should be the first lines on the résumé, with each line centered was answered correctly by more juniors/seniors (mean of 1.64) than by freshmen/sophomores (mean of 1.32). While References are commonly included on electronic résumés showed significance, Scheffé post-hoc analysis revealed no significant difference between any two groups. Responses to only one guideline differed by gender: Courier is a suitable typeface for an electronic résumé. Males had a higher mean response (1.05) than did females (.84). Only one guideline showed significance by status: A bullet, rather than an asterisk (*), is used to highlight a key point. Nonbusiness majors answered the question correctly (had a lower mean response of 1.18) than did business majors (mean of 1.38). (The correct answer was Incorrect so the lower mean response was indicative of a correct response.)

Based on these findings, the conclusion can be drawn that demographic factors of age, classification, gender, and status are not major indicators of students' knowledge of correct formatting guidelines for electronic résumés. While student classification showed significance in the largest number of responses, perhaps the only conclusion that can be drawn is that students who have completed more hours toward graduation are more knowledgeable about guidelines for preparing electronic résumés. At least students seem to be more aware of the importance of keeping up with technological changes that affect the job search. This comment written by a freshman student summarizes students' awareness of the importance of staying abreast of these changes: "I need to increase my knowledge of electronic résumés. I'm sure they are becoming more and more common."

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EDUCATORS

Teachers should demonstrate their knowledge of current technologies used in the job search. Following these recommendations will convey to students that the teacher stays abreast of technological changes associated with the employment process and is interested in helping students avail themselves of every opportunity in their quest for the best possible job:

Teachers with computer/projection capabilities in their classrooms can demonstrate the process of changing a traditional résumé to a scannable résumé. The traditional résumé (filename TResume) is copied into a new file (filename SResume). The font style and size are checked and changed as needed to comply with scanning guidelines. For example, tabs are removed and replaced with spaces where indentations are desired and bullets are replaced with asterisks. In addition, a section of 25 to 50 words entitled Keyword Summary is inserted below the applicant's name and address and references are deleted.
Educators, especially business communication teachers, may wish to include as an assignment that students send the teacher a scannable résumé via e-mail. This would, of course, be in addition to preparing and submitting a hard copy of a traditionally formatted résumé printed on appropriate paper.
As a research activity, teachers can ask students to conduct a computer search of recent articles on electronic/scannable résumés and prepare a list of references using APA style (or the style specified by the teacher).
An additional assignment related to the previous one is assigning oral reports on various articles related to the use of scannable résumés by businesses or to guidelines job seekers should follow in preparing electronic résumés.

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DOUSING THE FLAMES: REDUCING WORKPLACE AGGRESSION THROUGH CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

"The easiest, the most tempting, and the least creative response to conflict within an organization is to pretend it does not exist." The only problem with this approach is that conflict will not go away on its own. The word "conflict" conjures up feelings of anger, threat, and fear. Yet, conflict is not all bad. Through conflict, people learn how to resolve issues, understand different points of view, and make better decisions. On the other hand, conflict also can be destructive. This paper will discuss the reasons why conflict occurs, describe bullying bosses and coworkers, discuss workplace violence, outline communication techniques to resolve conflict, and tell what employers can do to help resolve conflict in their organizations.

INTRODUCTION

> *"Now, I give you fair warning! shouted the Queen, stomping on the ground as she spoke.*
> *"Either you or your head must be off, and that in about half no-time! Take your choice!"*
>
> Alice In Wonderland

Life would be easier if everyone saw things in the same way; we don't. Whenever two or three are gathered in any community, for any reason, at any time, there will be some dissension, difficulty, or difference of opinion. Because people come from such divergent backgrounds, think so differently, and communicate so uniquely, conflicts are highly probable (Booher, 1999). Thus, conflict in the workplace can be normal and healthy. A workplace devoid of tensions is ultimately dull and stagnant, unlikely to foster creativity and growth (Blackard, 2001).

Yet, when the word "conflict" comes to mind, most people envision anger, harsh words, hurt feelings, or damaged relationships. However, not all conflict is bad. Disagreeing on solutions can lead to more creative problem solving and better outcomes. The destructive conflicts are those in which the real agenda of the conflict is a personal one. These are conflicts in which the purpose of the interaction is to harm someone physically, psychologically, or both (Lloyd, 2001).

WHY CONFLICT OCCURS

> **"The quickest way to kindle a fire is to rub two opposing opinions together."**

Conflict occurs for a variety of reasons including a lack of communication, a misunderstanding, a failure to meet expectations, and stress (VanDer Wall, 2000). In addition, as rational adults, we expect that when we present an idea at work, we will have consensus. Because each of us has a different perspective, however, we support only those views closest to our own. Opinions and ideas grind against each other until a resolution is reached (Fernberg, 1999).

In addition, people bring their own baggage to work. There are people who are easy to get along with who, when put together, do not have a synergistic response. As a result, conflict ensues. Also, every workplace has pockets of negative people whose dissatisfaction sabotages both the efforts and morale of the people around them. Another sources of conflicts are swelling workloads, shrinking staffs, low budgets, strained relationships, self-destructive behaviors which create a volcanic environment. Add poor management, and eruptions are imminent (Fernberg, 1999).

The first thing a person must do is determine the nature of the conflict. Conflicts can be divided into five categories:

1	*Conflicts Over Personalities* – this occurs because one is an introvert and one is an extrovert. Even those with similar backgrounds and experiences have conflicts because of personal habits and idiosyncrasies.
2	*Conflicts Over Goals* – this occurs when driven professionals pursing certain objectives run headlong into other professionals pursuing other objectives.
3	*Conflicts Over Values* – these are the most difficult to resolve. Values have taken root in a person's life and are difficult to change.
4	*Conflicts Over Circumstances* – these occur when two employees want to take vacation the same week and both can't be gone at the same time.
5	*Conflicts Over Facts* – this involves differences in sources, authorities, and definitions (Booher, 1999).

In addition to recognizing the nature of the conflict, it is essential to recognize that destructive types of conflict have predictable patterns. This pattern is called a "drama triangle." In this triangle, there are three principle players: The first player is the Persecutor – The person assuming this role will use aggressive behavior toward another person attacking the intended victim. The attack can be physical, verbal or both. It can be direct or indirect. The second player is the Victim – People who assume the victim role use nonassertive behavior to invite others to see them as "not okay." The victim will feel inadequate, helpless, sad, scared, or guilty. This behavior invites others to either rescue or persecute the victim player. The third player is the Rescuer – Those who take on this role use either nonassertive or aggressive behavior. Sometimes people become rescuers because they won't say "no" and reluctantly take on the responsibility of trying to solve the victim player's problem. In addition, someone may assume the role of rescuer as a way to demonstrate superiority to the victim player (Lloyd, 2001).

Not surprisingly, bosses are positioned in organizations to receive the almost unconditional respect from their subordinates. Yet, many individuals suffer at the hands of their Boss who is brutal and who is a Bully.

BULLYING BOSSES AND COWORKERS

"Keep your Temper" said the Caterpillar

Alice in Wonderland

Broadly defined, bullying is any behavior that intimidates, humiliates or demeans a person. Sometimes it is directed at one employee in particular; other times it is a part of a hostile or poisoned work environment (Bernardi 2001). Bullies often target people who come from races, religions, gender, or sexual orientations (Atkinson, 2000). There are three categories of brutal bosses: (1) Dehumanizers – remove any and all human elements of an employee and deal with a faceless figure. The dehumanized employee becomes an entity that does not require respect. (2) Blamers – cast responsibility on the employee for deserving such mistreatment. (3) Rationalizers – view their behavior as a means to an end (Monahan, 1999). One brutal boss found it hard to believe that an employee deserved sick days for emergency surgery and asked to see the incision. Another kept an employee in an all-day meeting even though the employee's mother was on her deathbed. A third, a chronic yeller, used an employee as a go-between with his ex-wife (Terez, 2001).

The consequences of brutal bullying on subordinates and coworkers are many. There are both health and work consequences for employees who are repeatedly subjected to abusive treatment. Health consequences include gastrointestinal disorders, headaches, dermatological reactions, sleeplessness, and sexual dysfunction. Low self-esteem, anxiety, and frustration have consequences for the workplace. These factors affect the bottom line. Unhappy employees take longer to solve problems and do so in less creative ways (Monahan, 1999). Not surprisingly, victims of bullying blame themselves, doubt their self-worth, are less productive, and are at greater risk of alcoholism or suicide. Bullying behavior in the workplace can lead to higher turnover and absenteeism, decreased morale, losses in productivity, and legal costs incurred to defend claims brought by employees (Bernardi, 2001).

Brutal bosses and coworkers can also suffer from "desk rage." Desk rage is defined as inappropriate displays of anger in the workplace. Such displays consist of yelling, swearing, throwing things, and slamming doors. In addition, those who are suffering from desk rage might blame others for their own mistakes, demand that they be treated as an exception, and get even with others in secretive ways (Brown, 2001).

To get even, frustrated employees may commit sabotage. The derivation of the word sabotage – from the actions of French mill workers who threw their wooden shoes, or "sabots" into the gears of the machinery in protest – is very telling of why people use this behavior to vent their feelings of anger about their employment situations. Employee sabotage is actually a rarely discussed form of workplace violence. Angry, bitter, envious, and resentful employees are taking

out their aggression on their employers for inequities they have experienced. It is usually misconduct tinged with an edge of revenge, and the sabotage is directly proportionate to the way in which a company treats its employees unfairly (Gleninning, 2001). Desk rage and sabotage should not be taken lightly. If not addressed, both can lead to workplace violence

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

"Passions are generally roused from great conflict."

Titus Livius

Violence is the ultimate form of conflict in the workplace, and an employer can no longer afford to ignore it. According to a report by the U.S. Department of Justice in 1998, approximately 1,000 employees are murdered yearly while performing their work duties. The same study noted that there are two million incidences of workplace violence reported, including one million simple assaults and 400,000 aggravated assaults. And reported is the key word; the vast majority of workplace assaults and other forms of aggression go unreported (Atkinson, 2000).

Homicide is the second leading cause of death among American workers and the leading cause of death for female workers. Workplace violence was 10 times more prevalent in the 1990s than in the 1980s (Flynn, 2000). Since about one-third of our lives is spent at work associating with people whom we have not chosen to be with, it is little wonder that disagreements abound and resentments fester day after day. In fact, on-the-job suicides and murder statistics have caused the National Center for Disease Control to classify workplace violence as a national epidemic (Laplaca, 2001).

In addition, the cost of violence in the workplace is high. For example, the average direct cost to employers of a single violent episode is $250,000 and the aggregate cost to employers has been estimated to be as much as $36 billion. The indirect costs resulting from these incidents, which can include decreased productivity, increased stress, and greater employee turnover, significantly adds to the burden on employers (Flynn, 2000). Not surprisingly, it is better to resolve conflicts than to let them escalate into an episode of workplace violence.

COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES TO RESOLVE CONFLICT

"If passion drives you, let reason hold the reins."

Benjamin Franklin

Strong interpersonal skills are needed to resolve conflict. For example, there are many skills an employee can use to douse the flames of conflict. Employees can use active listening techniques to summarize points, to rephrase inappropriate attributions into more positive language, and to demonstrate interest in, and understanding of the problem. Active listening also helps communicate

that you understand both the content and the emotion being expressed (Cohen, 1999). In addition, body language is a powerful communicator, and people are more persuaded by attitude than by logic. As an employee struggles to say the right words, s/he should consciously relax the body. If possible, s/he might assume a stance similar to the position of the angry person. Keep the voice low and the speech evenly paced. When sitting across a table, lean forward on your elbows to invite communication. Tilt your head and acknowledge that you are listening by nodding or making encouraging sounds like "Uh-huh" (Laplaca, 2001).

A employer might also want to consider being proactive rather than reactive. Rather than interceding, the employer may hope the parties will work it out themselves. Unfortunately, conflict, left alone, does not go away on its own. And, finally, don't expect miracles. Not every problem can be resolved quickly. It takes time to build communication and trust between parties, but this is vital to building commitment to the eventual solution. Meet several times to resolve complex or particularly difficult problems. During the process, the parties develop the relationship and the skills to solve their dispute. This initial investment of time will produce better results (Cohen, 1999).

WHAT EMPLOYERS CAN DO TO HELP

"The fibers of all things have their tension and are strained like the strings of an instrument."

Henry David Thoreau

There is much an employer can do, even if the manager is the bully.

Train managers/supervisors/employees how to recognize signs of conflict and how to defuse hostility before it gets out of hand. While employers cannot radically change employees' behaviors, they can modify and influence their behaviors through responsible supervision (Atkinson, 2000).
Develop a comprehensive conflict resolution/violence prevention plan. A good plan combines resources from various parts of the industry and requires teamwork, communication, ongoing assessment, and training (Meyer & Bosner, 1999)
Employers should consider offering confidential employee assistance programs to help workers cope with stress and manage anger. These programs are often able to resolve potentially serious problems before they become disruptive or lead to violence.
Employers should develop policies designed to encourage communication in the workplace. Effective examples might include scheduling regular meetings in which employees can express concerns and grievances without fear of retaliation, implementing complaint resolution procedures, establishing confidential hot lines, and allowing employees to leave anonymous notes for HR representatives or supervisors (Flynn, 2000).
Require exit interviews of terminated employees. This is an excellent resource for finding out if there is a Bully in your midst.
Hire the very best people in the first place. Keep communication lines wide open at all times, and take time to celebrate good work and results.

CONCLUSION

We spend more of our waking lives at work with people we don't particularly care for than we do with our family and friends. Dousing the flames of conflict is essential so that the conflict does not escalate into bullying, desk rage, sabotage, and/or workplace violence. Employees are tired of being abused by either their manager and/or their coworkers, and companies have come to realize that conflict seriously affects its bottom line. Employing excellent communication skills can defuse conflict long before it escalates into a volcanic eruption. There is an old saying "Do it now or do it later; either way, it will have to be done."

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TOUGH TERMINATION QUESTIONS: WHO, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, AND HOW

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ABSTRACT

Termination is often referred to as "capital punishment in the workplace" (Segal, 2000). When the termination or separation process is improperly managed, the traumatic nature of the situation escalates. The purpose of this paper is to provide policy suggestions on what an organization can do to minimize the occurrence of workplace aggression during employee termination procedures.

In the first eight months of 2001, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported a net decrease in total national employment of 33,000. In the last four months of 2001, the decrease was 1,098,000. Some of these cuts were in firms that had long maintained policies that promised employees job security such as Hewlett Packard (Fortune, 2001). The reasons given by employers for the dismissals are general business or industry downturns, efforts to improve financial and operational efficiency, and competitive pressures (Gross, 2001; Peter, 1997). Workforce reductions have been accepted as a strategy to cut costs by lowering overhead, eliminating bureaucracy, and reducing surplus employees. Alternatively, downsizing can be used to seek favor with investors and financial analysts, and stock prices tend to rise in response to workforce reduction announcements (McKinley, Sanchez & Schick, 1995).

Recent studies have raised serious questions concerning the long-term effects of downsizing as a strategic response to competitive pressures. An American Management Association's study reported that only 43 percent of firms increased operating profits, and only 30 percent increased worker productivity (Peter, 1997). The AMA study also documented a profound decrease in morale with those who survive the downsizing that could result in higher turnover in the future (Peter, 1997). According to Gross (2001), the results of the empirical research suggest that "downsizing does not appear to be in the best interest of the corporation, its employees, or its shareholders." The general state of the economy, plant closings, layoffs, and downsizing are listed as high risk factors for workplace violence (Nigro & Waugh, 1996). The "death of job security" has created feelings of powerlessness and frustration in the workplace that could lead to aggression and thus workplace violence (Filipczak, 1993). Although the declining economy has been blamed for violence, there is evidence that layoffs or terminations do not provoke violence in and of themselves. Violence may be more the result of wounded pride and humiliation that occur when the termination or separation is improperly managed. According to the results of one study, displaced workers did not complain about termination decisions rather "the manner the termination was handled." That is, the dehumanizing way the termination action was implemented (Bensimon, 1994; Schweiger,

Ivancevich & Power, 1987). Perhaps the Golden Rule can guide who, when, where, why, and how to conduct the termination interviews and thus alleviate the violence (Mantell, 1994; Rothman, 1989).

INTRODUCTION

On April 11, 2001, a month after being terminated, a postal employee returned to the job site, stabbed four of his former coworkers, and was killed by the police (Charlotte Observer, 2001). Termination is often referred to as "capital punishment in the workplace" (Segal, 2000). When the termination or separation process is improperly managed, the traumatic nature of the situation escalates. Most managers are aware of employees who react violently upon learning that their services will no longer be needed. In fact, media stories of employees' aggressive responses to termination news have become so commonplace that the term "going postal" has become a normal part of the business vocabulary. The purpose of this paper is to provide policy suggestions on what organizations can do to minimize the occurrence of workplace aggression during employee termination procedures. The goal is to offer guidelines to prevent future employees from "going postal" during the separation process.

BACKGROUND

During the last twenty years, major layoffs of employees have become ordinary events. In the first eight months of 2001, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported a net decrease in total national employment of 33,000. In the last four months of 2001, the decrease was 1,098,000. Some of these cuts were in firms that had long maintained policies that promised employees job security such as Hewlett Packard (Fortune, 2001). The reasons given by employers for the dismissals are general business or industry downturns, efforts to improve financial and operational efficiency, and competitive pressures (Gross, 2001; Peter, 1997). Workforce reductions have been accepted as a strategy to cut costs by lowering overhead, eliminating bureaucracy, and reducing surplus employees. Alternatively, downsizing can be used to seek favor with investors and financial analysts, and stock prices tend to rise in response to workforce reduction announcements (McKinley, Sanchez & Schick, 1995).

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Whether called downsizing, rightsizing, or restructuring, the results are the same--people lose their permanent jobs. One of the most unpleasant responsibilities of a manager is handling involuntary separations and delivering the bad news. Managers fear employee terminations because

they do not know how employees will react. Employee responses range from passive acceptance, to emotional outbursts, threats, lawsuits, and acts of violence (Karl & Hancock, 1999).

The recent economic downturn lead to another round of corporate downsizing and increased tension and animosity associated with layoffs and terminations. This antagonism might result in increased anger being expressed in the workplace. In Alabama, three employees were murdered by an employee laid off due to "economic downsizing" (Air Conditioning, Heating & Refrigeration News, 8/16/99). Media reports of high profile incidents of violent behavior by former employees have stimulated a great deal of attention. The AFL-CIO has gone so far as to propose that April 28 be declared Workers' Memorial Day to honor workers killed at work (Wall Street Journal, 1999).

Downsizing is a strategy to accomplish cost reduction, but the resulting workplace aggression can increase costs. The impacts on the cost of medical and psychiatric care, liability suits, lost business and productivity, repairs and clean-up, and higher insurance can be staggering. One study estimated the cost of violent acts perpetrated against employees at work between $6.4 and $36 billion in lost productivity, diminished public image, insurance expenses, and increased security (Baron & Neuman, 1998). From an employee relations perspective, the death or injury of valued employees or co-workers can have a devastating impact on the climate of the work environment.

The general state of the economy, plant closings, layoffs, and downsizing are listed as high risk factors for workplace violence (Nigro & Waugh, 1996). The "death of job security" has created feelings of powerlessness and frustration in the workplace that could lead to aggression and thus workplace violence (Filipczak, 1993). Although the declining economy has been blamed for violence, there is evidence that layoffs or terminations do not provoke violence in and of themselves. Violence may be more the result of wounded pride and humiliation that occur when the termination or separation is improperly managed. According to the results of one study, displaced workers did not complain about termination decisions rather "the manner the termination was handled." That is, the dehumanizing way the termination action was implemented (Bensimon, 1994; Schweiger, Ivancevich & Power, 1987). Perhaps the Golden Rule can guide who, when, where, why, and how to conduct the termination interviews and thus alleviate the violence (Mantell, 1994; Rothman, 1989).

POLICY SUGGESTIONS

Separations resulting from mergers, downsizing, and closings are now a regular occurrence. Terminations for cause can be on a continuum ranging from an employee's inability to adapt to new computer software to situations where employees put others at risk. Companies need termination policies that ensure that the goodwill of the firm stays intact, the remaining employees feel secure, and the departing employees feel empowered (Bayer, 2000).

Whatever the reason for employee separation, few workplace situations are dreaded more than a face-to-face meeting to break the news that someone is being dismissed. Termination should be handled in such a way that both the terminated employee and the organization are empowered to go forward (Bayer, 2000). The key to minimizing workplace aggression during the separation procedure is defusing the highly charged emotional environment associated with delivering negative

feedback. Basic policy issues with the termination process should focus on who, when, where, why, and how to communicate the decision to separate an employee from the organization.

WHO

Who should deliver the employment termination decision? Whoever has been supervising the employee should be responsible for communicating the termination/separation decision. After all, it is the supervisor's expectations that have not been satisfied (Segal, 2000). Most experts agree that the immediate supervisor should be the one who delivers the bad news rather than the Human Resources Director (Walker, 1987). However, a third party should also be present so that the termination news is not be delivered by a sole individual (Jesseph, 1989). The third party serves as a witness, provides support for the anxious manager or the employee, prevents emotions from becoming uncontrollable, and diffuses anger away from the manager (Preston, 1982; Scanlon, 1996; Sweet, 1989; Yeargin, 1996; Segal, 1996).

WHEN

When should the termination decision be communicated? On one hand, waiting until late in the week may be appealing to the decision maker. On the other hand, it is generally agreed that Friday afternoon, the traditional time to fire employees, is the worst possible time. However, giving the employee the news early in the week allows the employee time to do something constructive about their situation such as set up interviews, apply for benefits, or make contacts. As a result, Monday or Tuesday is recommended as the best days for planned terminations. Experts concur that the terminee's emotional and physical resources are their "lowest" at the end of the week and firing on Friday allows the employee extra time to brood about the implications of job loss (Finnie, 1993; Jesseph, 1989; Sweet, 1989). Terminating on Friday "leaves employees with the weekend to obsess on the perceived wrong done to them and denies them the opportunity to do anything constructive about it" (Segal, 2000).

Some experts subscribe to the idea that the time of the day for termination is as important as the day of the week. One suggests, "If at all possible, you should allow the employee the courtesy of being able to clean out a locker or desk while other employees are not present. The best time for this would be probably the end of the workday" (Rothman, 1989). Another expert recommends that a private time to clean out the work area could be after hours or on a weekend (Jesseph, 1989).

WHERE

Where should the employment termination occur? The best place to conduct the termination process is in a neutral location such as a conference room or empty office. Conference rooms should be large enough to allow some distance between parties and multiple exits are best suited to ensure safety. It is generally suggested that those involved in the termination delivery should have an unobstructed exit away from the location (Segal, 2000). Neutral sites allow the manager to exit the

termination interview gracefully and give the fired employee a few moments to collect their thoughts privately (Rothman, 1989; Sweet, 1989).

Generally, the manager's office is not recommended as the employment termination place. If the meeting is held in the manager's office, the manager will not be able to wrap up the meeting by leaving. If the fired employee starts to argue or protest the action, ending the meeting from the manager's office would be more difficult (Walker, 1987). Others recommend the employee's office as the best place for the termination interview so that the fired employee would not have to face co-workers when leaving (Karl & Hancock, 1999).

WHY

Why was the employee terminated? The why issue of the employment separation process involves the reason for the employee's termination. The reason for the separation of employment should be obvious and clear to the terminated employee. In theory, the guidelines for termination would be the concepts of job relatedness and equity. The termination should be due to poor performance on the job. Too often managers fail to provide honest performance ratings or provide critical comments with respect to employee performance. Managers' failure may be due to attempting to avoid the unpleasantness of providing negative feedback and confrontations with employees. This failure can lead to one of the worst termination mistakes which is a "surprise" firing (Frank, 1996).

Organizations should establish clearly defined standards of behavior and performance and enforce progressive discipline. These standards should be plainly communicated to all employees. Ideally all employees would be informed when their performance is unsatisfactory and when their behavior is misaligned with company standards. Employees should understand that unsatisfactory performance would result in termination. Managers should be trained and retrained on the importance of providing honest job-related feedback to employees on a continuous basis. To maximize the effectiveness of progressive discipline, managers should be trained to not avoid letting poor performance or inappropriate behavior go unnoticed and then suddenly coming down hard. Problem employees may then feel persecuted and to explode in anger (Athey, 2000). If employees know the standard for performance and receive negative feedback when their performance does not meet the standards, there should be fewer "surprise" firings.

The equity issue deals with the fairness or justice of the process, procedure, and outcomes for handling terminations. Employees should feel that any employee would be treated equally regardless of their identity. Managers have numerous opportunities to cultivate a work environment that promotes equity and minimizes problems with employee performance and discipline. The first opportunity is during the interview, the second is during the orientation, and opportunities continue during the day-to-day operations. Interviewers must inform applicants what conduct is required of future employees and inquire as to whether the applicants can perform that conduct. An effective organizational orientation is a formal opportunity to communicate the rules and expectations on which employees will be evaluated. The rules and expectations will be the standards for the evaluation of employees on a daily basis and on performance appraisals. An environment where all

employees understand their obligations should result in fewer discipline problems and less difficulty if termination becomes necessary (Oliver, 2000).

HOW

How should the termination be communicated? Proper termination requires careful preparation, and termination procedures must be imbedded in written policy and instilled in culture. Managers should be trained and sensitivity is required. People's lives and futures are at stake, and the company's image is on the line. Accordingly, managers and HR officers must be trained to listen attentively and respond to human distress (Bayer, 2000). Some suggestions for handling the termination meeting are as follows:

♦	Carefully prepare a positive yet flexible script
♦	List employee's contributions and strong points that have been valued
♦	Prepare all severance arrangements--such as monetary packages
♦	Review guidelines for manager's behavior to handle terminations
♦	Review ERISA, Family Medical Leave Act, and COBRA requirements
♦	Describe career counseling and outplacement services
♦	Keep the termination brief
♦	Discuss issues such as professional references
♦	Allow departing employees to save face and maintain self esteem
♦	Respect privacy
♦	Collect keys or other access devices to prevent unauthorized access
♦	Listen for fallout

The termination meeting should be brief, to the point, and factual. The focus of the meeting should be the job related reasons for the separation. Losing a job may create and exacerbate an already extreme personal hardship. Providing severance pay and extending health care benefits can help ease the stress associated with separation. While another manager should be present at termination, ensuring privacy in the process is critical. "Public executions" for the most part are not socially acceptable in the United States. Publicity can also lead to celebrity status for the fired individual in the minimum and violence at the maximum. Escorting individuals off the premises in front of colleagues and friends is rarely needed and should also be avoided (Connor, 2000).

The managers should avoid arguing with the individual to be terminated and should listen attentively for clues for future problems. Fallout statements are remarks such as "I'm going to get

even" or "You'll be sorry for this." All those involved in the separation meeting need to understand the importance of taking these types of fallout remarks seriously.

When the fired employee makes threats to the managers, the threats should not be returned. Instead managers should attempt to disarm anger by listening and showing empathy (Frank, 1996). Employees often want to know what went wrong and are empowered to go forward if provided with an explanation. Employees are listening for a kind word about their past performance and are concerned about how their departure will be portrayed to the remaining workforce. Managers should be prepared for the question, "How will I survive?" The explanation of severance benefits should be prepared with the same care as it is handled with new hires (Bayer, 2000).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

While the separation process can provide the catalyst for an act of aggression in the workplace, developing policies and practices aimed at the separation process may not be enough. The goal is creating a work environment where employee safety is a high priority. Common policy suggestions include:

♦	A "zero tolerance" policy on violence, threats, intimidation, and other disruptive behavior in the workplace
♦	Specific examples of behavior that will be viewed as violence, including but not limited to physically threatening statements, gestures, and expressions
♦	A statement that employees who commit such acts may be removed from the premises and subjected to disciplinary action and criminal penalties
♦	Guidelines encouraging employees to report violent behavior
♦	Assurances that reports of workplace violence will be investigated promptly and thoroughly (Athey, 2000).

Utilizing the above guidelines with effective Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) can help organizations identify the employee "time bombs" and be more proactive in getting the individuals some help before an explosion at the time of separation from employment occurs.

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FRAMING DECISIONS TO COMMUNICATE CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

The communication of change decisions influences an organization's attitude toward and resistance to change. To illustrate the importance of communication in managing change, this paper draws upon the literature on risk preference and preference reversal for individuals facing uncertain decisions. We define framing as the communication process by which organizations explain change. It encompasses the strategies of managers to present change and the perspective employees have to understand change. The manner in which a change decision is communicated or framed will influence individual resistance to change. Specifically, when communicating change, resistance is lowered when the cost of maintaining the status quo is articulated. When the reference point is the loss associated with not changing, then resistance to change and uncertainty decreases. If the reference point focuses on the benefits and gains of the status quo, then resistance to change is increased. Therefore, within an organization managers determine the response to change through the frame selected.

INTRODUCTION

When an organization is undergoing change, the manner in which change decisions are communicated determines the nature of the perceived risks involved in the change process and the extent of resistance to change. To illustrate the importance of communication in managing change, this paper draws upon the literature on risk preference and preference reversal for individuals facing uncertain decisions. Based upon the manner in which a change decision is communicated or framed individuals will alter their resistance to change alternatives. Framing occurs when the context or presentation of a decision creates a climate that influences the decision. In general, the issue of framing occurs when decision-makers evaluate a proposition on the context in which the outcome is presented, not just on the underlying outcomes (Parker and Spears, 1999).

Framing in the communication of human relation decisions is important for an organization facing restructuring, job loss, or change. Framing has been used to explore questions involving the importance of perceptions on insurance, gambling, and medical decisions. Experimental studies have documented that decision-makers react differently to the same proposition depending upon the manner in which it is presented. This phenomenon is known as preference reversal and violates a strict expected utility analysis of decision making (Machina, 1987). Framing is one aspect of the growing literature in behavioral finance. This research specifically recognizes the influence of

psychology on the behavior of financial practitioners (Shefrin, 1999). Furthermore, framing is influenced by individual factors such as personality types and gender (Parker and Spears, 2002).

A survey instrument is used that parallels the classic framing of disease and death to analyze the framing of restructuring and job loss. This approach permits us to determine that framing within the communication of human relation decisions exhibits the preference reversal phenomenon for corporate restructuring issues. Since framing is a significant factor for decisions involving restructuring and change, the communication of change decisions will influence an organization's attitude toward and resistance to change. It is the purpose of this paper to explore the link between framing and managing the organizational change process.

THE COMMUNICATION OF CHANGE

Communication is an important aspect of organization design, change, and strategic management. Managing the communication of change is of vital importance to the organization and determines how organizations adapt to the environment (Daft, Bettenhausen, and Tyler, 1995). Communication by managers after both internal and external decisions are made is as big a part of a strategic initiative as gathering information is prior to decision-making. For example, the news of a Fortune 500 company making a large number of employee layoffs can be framed quite differently by internal and external communication sources. Is the company in trouble and destined for failure, or is the company making strategic changes that will strengthen the organization? Consequently, an announcement of layoffs may result in either increases or decreases in the stock price of the company depending upon the frame accepted by investors.

The framed structure can be defined as the configuration of information and control systems within an organization as well as the formalized configuration of roles and procedures for managing the communication process (Ranson, Hinings, and Greenwood, 1980). To be successfully objective about what change is required, a new frame has to be viewed. Since it is difficult to correctly identify cause-and-effect relationships, there is a blurring between "success" and "failure" as results become interpreted using personal perspectives and frames of reference (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995, Van de Ven, Angle, and Poole, Van de Ven, Dooley, and Holmes, 2000). Management controls the implementation process by influencing the personal networks, personal relationships, and organizational frame created among employees.

Although change is a natural process and instability is a normal state, employee resistance is the cause for most failures of organizational change initiatives (Critchley, 1996). "For change to succeed, it has to be accepted by the workforce physically, intellectually and emotionally" (Spiker, Lesser 1995, p. 18).

Poole, Van de Ven, Dooley and Holmes (2000) and Johnson and Blanchard (1998) conclude that resistance to new ideas is expected and that those who champion the change must embrace this philosophy as evidence of innovation and progress. Mintzberg (1994) indicates that planning and change represent a calculating style of management, but should represent a communication style that engages people in an undertaking that everyone helps to shape.

FRAMING AND PREFERENCE REVERSAL

When the emotional context that is communicated rather than the outcome drives managerial decisions, the issue of framing arises. A reference point may influence the manager. For example, it is the issue of whether change is communicated as a source of loss or gain that provides a reference point. The frame of reference influences whether an uncertain choice is perceived as a gamble, (with a chance to win) or as insurance (where the certain choice limits loss) and influences the subject's decisions (Schoemaker and Kunreuther 1979; Hershey and Schoemaker 1980; McNeil, Pauker, Sox, and Tversky 1982; and Slovic, Fischoff and Lichtenstein 1983). To demonstrate this concept, alternate scenarios are presented with the same expected value outcomes. Tversky and Kahneman (1981, 1986) present the following classic decision for a life or death scenario:

> *"Imagine that the U.S. is preparing for the outbreak of an unusual Asian disease, which is expected to kill 600 people. Two alternative programs to combat the disease have been proposed. Assume that the exact scientific estimates of the consequences of the programs are as follows:*
>
> *If Program A is adopted, 200 people will be saved.*
>
> *If Program B is adopted, there is 1/3 probability that 600 people will be saved and 2/3 probability that no people will be saved.*
>
> *Versus*
>
> *If Program C is adopted, 400 people will die.*
>
> *If Program D is adopted, there is 1/3 probability that nobody will die and 2/3 probability that 600 people will die."*

If presented with saving lives through choices A and B, 72% choose the certain outcome A, however when phrased in terms of deaths 84% were willing to gamble on Program D. The resistance to the treatment described by Program B and D varies greatly depending upon whether the issue is communicated in terms of certain death for the alternative.

FRAMING TO COMMUNICATE ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

These same types of influences play an important role in decisions involving human relations. A survey instrument was developed and included multiple decisions in the face of radical change and potential loss including the classic framing question listed above. In order to investigate

the sensitivity of organizational decisions to framing a question on job loss was included. The following question illustrates the framing of organizational loss:

The manufacturing division of a U.S. company is having problems competing in the global marketplace. The company must decide how to reorganize this division of 12,000 U.S. workers. Two strategies have been proposed.

A *By contracting operations overseas 4,000 jobs will be saved.*

B *With an internal reorganization of U.S. operations there is 1/3 probability that all 12,000 jobs will be saved and a 2/3 probability that no jobs will be saved.*

Versus

C *Operations can be moved out of the U.S. eliminating 8,000 jobs.*

D *With an internal reorganization of U.S. operations there is 1/3 probability that nobody will lose their jobs and a 2/3 probability that all 12,000 will be unemployed.*

METHODS

This research extends the analysis of framing and organizational loss by directly analyzing the extent of framing among managers and human resource professionals. The question is to what extent the framing results are found in an analysis of employed professionals.

An institutional survey was mailed to a sample of 635 full time employed business professionals with either a MBA or BS degree in business administration. The survey topic involved performance appraisal, training, and organizational change. In addition, the two framing research questions presented above were included in the survey instrument. The respondents were randomly assigned one of the two sets of survey scenarios. The survey instrument was formatted and designed to yield a high response rate. A total of 283 surveys were returned for a response rate of 44.6%. A total of 260 respondents answered each framing question by selecting one of the two strategies.

FRAMING LIFE AND DEATH DECISIONS

The results for the sample of working professionals are similar to the results for framing found elsewhere. Overall, when faced with a life or death choice, 68% of respondents preferred the gamble to the certain outcome. As shown in Table 1, there is apparent framing based upon the presentation of the question.

When the certain solution was expressed in terms of lives saved, 46% were willing to select the certain decision and 54% were willing to gamble on the uncertain strategy. However among those respondents who were faced with the certain solution stated in terms of deaths, only 16% selected the certainty answer while 84% were then willing to gamble on a better outcome.

An F test was performed to determine whether the two groups of respondents for this question exhibited the same variance. The table further reports the results from that test. The sample variance was statistically different between the two groups of respondents. Hence, a t test for samples with unequal variances was performed to determine the statistical significance of the framing behavior exhibited. The results from this study indicate that decisions involving the loss of life are framed. The framing is statistically significant at the 99% level.

Table 1
Framing the Loss of Life

	Lives Saved	Deaths	Total
Certainty	46.21%	16.41%	31.54%
Gamble	53.79%	83.59%	68.46%
N	132	128	260
F-Test Two-Sample for Variances			
Death		Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean		0.537313	0.839695
Variance		0.250477	0.135643
Observations		134	131
df		133	130
F		1.846589	
t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances			
Hypothesized Mean Difference			0
df			244
t Stat			-5.61056

FRAMING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

An analysis of the questions regarding the loss of jobs shows that framing is evident although not as dramatic for issues involving the loss of jobs. Overall when faced with decisions regarding job loss, 43% selected the certain outcome while 57% were willing to gamble. As Table 2 illustrates there is framing apparent, based upon the manner in which the decision is presented.

Table 2 Framing the Loss of Jobs			
	Jobs Lost	Jobs Saved	Grand Total
Certainty	38.64%	47.66%	43.08%
Gamble	61.36%	52.34%	56.92%
N	132	128	260
F-Test Two-Sample for Variances			
Jobs		Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean		0.613636	0.527132
Variance		0.238897	0.251211
Observations		132	129
df		131	128
F		0.950979	
t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal Variances			
Pooled Variance			0.244983
Hypothesized Mean Difference			0
df			259
t Stat			1.41167
From sample responding to satisfied.			

When faced with an organization decision communicated in terms of jobs saved, 47% chose the certain outcome and 53% selected the gamble. However, when phrased in terms of job losses, the respondents displayed a stronger appetite for risk. When communicated as job losses the number of respondents selecting the uncertain strategy increase to 61%. Correspondingly, the number selecting the certain choice declined to 38%.

An F test was performed to determine whether the two groups of respondents for this question exhibited the same variance. The sample variance was not statistically different between the two groups of respondents. Hence, the hypothesis that these respondents were pulled from the same sample cannot be rejected. Consequently, a t test for samples with equal variances was performed to determine the statistical significance of the framing behavior exhibited.

The results from this study indicate that decisions involving the loss of job are framed. The framing is statistically significant at the 90% level. Attitudes depend on the manner in which decisions are presented or framed.

FRAMING IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGERS

The understanding of framing offers insight into response to proposals involving change or loss. Framing is a part of managerial decision-making and influences decision-makers' attitudes toward acceptance or resistance to change. The reference point communicated is shown to be a key determinant of whether individuals are resistant to a strategy with uncertain outcomes. Individuals are more willing to gamble to prevent loss. If the certain strategy is seen as saving something, then the uncertain strategy will be resisted. If the certain strategy is shown to be associated with losses, then individuals are willing to gamble on an uncertain strategy to prevent loss.

Since framing is a significant factor, the communication of change decisions influences an organization's attitude toward and resistance to change. Specifically, when communicating change, it is important to articulate the cost of maintaining the status quo. When the reference point is the loss associated with not changing, then resistance to change and uncertainty decreases. If the reference point focuses on the benefits and gains of the status quo, then resistance to change is increased. Therefore, within the organizational change process managers determine the response to change through the frame selected.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This paper illustrates the importance of communication in managing change. Business professionals do exhibit framing when presented with hypothetical scenarios involving organizational change. The research method employed was based upon hypothetical scenarios and does not necessarily reflect the extent of framing behavior when the organizational change is the individual's own company. The proximity of the change to the individual's well being may further enhance the framing effect. A natural extension of this research would be to develop a case analysis of specific organizational change decisions and the extent to which framing apparently occurred or was influenced by the managerial change process.

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COMMUNICATING EMPLOYEE VALUE IN FLEXIBLE EMPLOYEE BENEFIT PLANS: AN APPLICATION OF THE SPECIAL CONSTRAINED MULTIPARAMETRIC LINEAR PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

Flexible benefit plans are becoming increasingly popular for both employee and employer alike. Unfortunately, a large percentage of employees are less than satisfied with the manner in which organizations are communicating these plans. From an employee's viewpoint, the process of trying to optimize the value of one's benefits can be time consuming, confusing and very frustrating. While most organizations explain the costs and variety of benefits, few provide individualized benefit planning programs. And, none offer the employee an opportunity to assess strategic value. This study presents a Special Constrained Multiparametric Linear Program (SCMLP) as a communication device that demonstrates how benefit values change with an array of personalized variables and, as such, offers an opportunity to optimize value based on an individual's short and long range needs.

INTRODUCTION

Recent surveys indicate that over seventy-six percent of all organizations offer flexible benefit plans (Hunt, 2000). Typically, these flexible benefits or cafeteria plans are arrangements in which employees can tailor their benefits package to their specific needs. Employees can select the benefits they value most and may forgo benefits of lesser importance to them. In most plans, employees have the opportunity to choose from a variety of health care and insurance options (e.g., life, accident, disability) as well as flexible spending accounts. A few plans offer dependent/elder care, adoption assistance, legal assistance benefits and even pet insurance. Some plans even permit employees to "sell" vacation and sick leave days to buy other benefits or to take cash in lieu of benefits. In short, the employees receive the benefits they want along with a significant tax savings.

The reasons companies implement flexible benefit plans are less than altruistic. They expect to improve the recruitment, retention and motivation of employees while enhancing the organization's image and reducing operating costs/taxes (Famulari & Manser, 1989; Meisenheimer & Wiatrowski, 1989). Research, however, suggests that these purposes are not achieved because of inadequate communication between the organization and its employees (Hunt, 2000). Generally, these communication failures fall into two categories. First, organizations fail to communicate the choices and implications of the flexible benefit plans in a user friendly manner (Barringer &

Milkovich, 1998). Second, both the employees and employers fail to understand the true value (and cost) of these plans (Lea & Mullen, 1998; Simmons, 2001). For example, a survey conducted by Hewett Associates (1995) indicated that seventy percent of the employees eligible for flexible benefits continue to select traditionally packaged options rather than tailor benefits to their needs because of an inability to determine and optimize strategic value. Similarly, O'Donovan's (2002) survey of 2,800 employees at 282 firms indicated that 67% were very dissatisfied with the organization's manner of communicating of flexible benefits and 52% indicated that they were unable to make informed choices. As such, employees and employers are losing the opportunity for significant savings and cost avoidance. The purpose of this paper is to offer a solution to these communication problems through a rather robust application of decision science.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS COMMUNICATION

The most frequent method for communicating employee benefits is still the employee benefits handbook (Milkovich & Newman, 2002). Many companies, however, augment their benefits handbook with video tape programs and a computer generated personalized benefits statement. These tailor-made reports provide a breakdown of package components and list selected cost information about the options. However, even with these additions, surveys indicate that employees are still having a difficult time understanding the true value of various plans (Hewitt Associates, 1995).

We believe an effective benefits communications package must have two elements. First, the communication program must have clear and measurable objectives. A survey by Towers, Perrin, Foster, and Crosby (1988) indicates the following are typical program objectives: (1) increase the understanding of the plan, (2) increase employee appreciation of the benefits program, (3) increase employee knowledge of the cost of providing benefits, (4) obtain employee cooperation in controlling benefit costs, and (5) encourage employees to take responsibility for their own financial security. Second, the program should use of the most effective presentation mediums and offer the flexibility for individuals to determine optimum value through "what if" analyses. We believe both of these elements are most effectively accomplished through an interactive computer program by which employees can enter objectives/goals questions and have the computer provide basic and advanced benefits counseling along with cost-value statements. Recent, surveys conducted by Ambrose (2001) and Prince (2002) indicate that the use of interactive computer programs are the most effective at improving employees' understanding of flexible benefit programs. Along this same line, Towers Perrin (2002) has suggested that Human Resource (HR) department start to shift to Web-centered information systems and portal technologies for the efficient and cost-effective delivery of service.

THE MODEL

Determination of employee benefits can be affected by both qualitative and quantitative factor. Qualitative factors are those that are not directly measurable. Whereas the quantitative factors include measurable variables such as benefit cost and retirement contributions. However,

as this paper demonstrates, qualitative factors and quantitative factors can be evaluated simultaneously in a single model without converting the quantitative data to an ordinal scale. This model will be identified herein as the Special Constrained Multiparametric Linear Program (SCMLP).

The SCMLP allows for the maximization of some quantitative variable subject to preferences regarding various qualitative factors. The model is expressed as:

$$\begin{aligned} &\textit{Maximize} && ct \\ &\textit{Subject to:} && A_t < b \\ & && t > 0 \\ & && G_c < d \\ & && c > 0 \end{aligned}$$

(Wibker, 1980)

The SCMLP model allows for the decision variables (t) to be optimized while simultaneously solving for the coefficients in the objective function (c). The $A_t < b$ represents the constraints placed on the decision variables (t). The $G_c < d$ represents the constraints placed on the coefficients in the objective function (c). This type of formulation allows sets of constraints to be derived which reflect preferences toward various qualitative factors while simultaneously maximizing some quantitative factor associated with the different choices of flexible benefits. This model suggests which mix of flexible benefits best satisfies both the quantitative objective and the qualitative constraints. Thus, the results from this study provide valuable input for employees in determining flexible benefits options while simultaneously considering both quantitative and qualitative factors.

FLEXIBLE BENEFIT DECISIONS USING THE SCMLP

The remainder of this paper is a demonstration of how employees in making decisions regarding their preferences for four different flexible benefit options may use the SCMLP. For example, suppose a company decided to implement a flexible benefit plan that allowed employees to upgrade their current benefits package by selecting from four different additional options (A, B, C, and D). For the purpose of this paper, these four options are identified below:

Option A: Increase in employer contribution to pension fund
Option B: Salary increase
Option C: Additional paid vacation days
Option D: Employer paid health insurance packages.

The determination of which option and/or combination of options to choose may depend on many different variables. Family structure and income may heavily influence employee choices. For example, a young employee with small children may favor more vacation days. However, if this employee is on the bottom of the salary scale, he also may have a strong preference toward a salary increase to enhance current cash flow. On the other hand, other employees with different family

structures and income levels may opt for the increase in pension and/or health benefit packages. Some employees may choose a percentage of different options if allowed by the company.

In this paper, the quantitative variable to be maximized is the dollar value for each additional benefit option. For example, one alternative may allow the company to contribute up to an additional $900.00 per year for the pension fund, while another option would require the company to pay $800.00 of the employees annual health insurance premiums. Even though the pension plan is valued higher, some employees would prefer the health insurance option in order to improve their current cash flow. The monetary value of other options may depend on a percentage of employee salaries such as additional paid vacation days and salary increases. Of course, the company would have a maximum limit for the total cost of an employees benefit package.

Many employees are more concerned about their current financial situation and more likely to select options that give immediate monetary benefits. Whereas, other employees are not as concerned about increasing current cash flow may lean toward improving their future benefits by increasing the employer contribution to their retirement. Yet, other employees may have more medium range goals that reflect both short term and long term needs. Therefore, the qualitative variables, which serve as constraints in the model, will be employee's preference toward short-term goals and long-term goals. For the purpose of this paper, the short-term goals will be called "liquidity" goals and the long-term goals will be called "investment" goals.

Implementation of the SCMLP model requires that the employee either ranks or places subjective weights on the two qualitative variables of liquidity and investment, which are defined as c_1 and c_2 respectively. The sum of the weights or rankings must equal one. For example, an employee might place a simple ordering such as $c_1 < c_2$, which implies that current financial needs are not as important as long term financial needs. Once all the preferences for the qualitative variables have been established, these relationships form the set of constraint called $G_c < d$.

The next step is to derive an initial set of values for c_1 and c_2, which satisfies the $G_c < d$ constraints. The values chosen for the c(i) variables serve only as a starting point to derive an initial set of coefficients for the objective function. The employee then must examine the four benefit options as to their suitability with respect to their liquidity and investment goals. These variables are defined as follows:

Liquidity Goals	Investment Goals
w_1	x_1
w_2	x_2
w_3	x_3
w_4	x_4

The employee places weights or some simple ordering of their preferences with respect to liquidity and investment, and how the four benefit options correspond. For example, the employee may feel that Option A provides more advantages with regard to liquidity than option B, implying

that $w_1 > w_2$. The summation of the weights or rankings must equal one ($\sum w_i = 1, \sum x_i = 1$). These relationships form the set of constraints referred to as $A_t < b$. Thus, the model provides the employee with a weighted proportion of at least one of the four benefit options, as follows:

Option A: $w_1c_1 + x_1c_2 = BOA$
Option B: $w_2c_1 + x_2c_2 = BOB$
Option C: $w_3c_1 + x_3c_2 = BOC$
Option D: $w_4c_1 + x_4c_2 = BOD$

BOA is the weighted proportion placed on benefit option A given the employee's preference for liquidity and investment along with their perception of how option A ranks with respect to these two attributes. Accordingly, BOB, BOC, and BOD are defined similarly.

The w(i)'s (w_1, w_2, w_3, w_4); and x(i)'s (x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4) represent the eight decision variables derived from the initial formulation of the linear programming model. Multiplying c_1 and c_2 derives the initial set of coefficients (coi) for the decision variables for each benefit option shown as follows:

$c_1r_1 = co_1$	$c_2r_1 = co_5$
$c_1r_2 = co_2$	$c_2r_2 = co_6$
$c_1r_3 = co_3$	$c_2r_3 = co_7$
$c_1r_4 = co_4$	$c_2r_4 = co_8$

Whereas, r_1 = the total dollar value of option A, r_2 = the total dollar value of option B, r_3 = the total dollar value of option C, and r_4 = the total dollar value of option D. Next, the constraints for c_1 and c_2 ($G_c > d$) are reformulated in term of co as: c = co/r. Thus, the reformulation is shown as follows:

$c_1 = co_1/r_1$	$c_2 = co_5/r_1$
$c_1 = co_2/r_2$	$c_2 = co_6/r_2$
$c_1 = co_3/r_3$	$c_2 = co_7/r_3$
$c_1 = co_4/r_4$	$c_2 = co_8/r_4$

The $G_c < d$ constraints are actually reformulated in terms of co by substituting co/r in place of c. Accordingly, the $G_c < d$ constraints are redefined by $W_{co} < h$ and thus constraint the coefficients co(i) in the objective function. The weights or rankings initially placed by the company reflecting their preferences with respect to each attribute and how the four options correspond are the constraints $A_t \leq b$ for the decision variables (w_i and x_i) which are formulated as follows:

Maximize:	$co_1w_1 + co_2w_2 + co_3w_3 + co_4w_4 +$ $co_5x_1 + co_6x_2 + co_7x_3 + co_8x_4$
Subject to:	$A_t < b$
	$t < 0$
	$W_{co} < h$
	$co > 0.$

The simplex method can be used to solve the SCMLP formulation of the facility location problem. First the optimal w_i and x_i values are derived that the satisfy the constraints $A_t < b$, the formulation of which is shown as follows:

Maximize:	$co_1w_1 + co_2w_2 + co_3w_3 + co_4w_4 +$ $co_5x_1 + co_6x_2 + co_7x_3 + co_8x_4$
Subject to:	$A_t < b$
	$t > 0$

The optimal w_i and x_i values are then used as the objective function coefficients to find the optimal co values that satisfy the constraints $W_{co} < h$. The formulation of this linear program is presented as follows:

Maximize:	$w_1co_1 + w_2co_2 + w_3co_3 + w_4co_4 +$ $x_1co_5 + x_2co_6 + x_3co_7 + x_4co_8$
Subject to:	$W_{co} < h$
	$co > 0.$

Next, the new co values are used to find the optimal w_i and x_i values subject to the original $A_t < b$ constraints. This process continues back and forth until the solution to the simplex method yields the optimal co values, and wi and xi values that will maximize the original objective function. While these values are not guaranteed to be the optimal solution, the model does provide a solution which satisfies the necessary conditions of the model.

The weighted proportion for each of the four benefit options are determined by first converting the co values back to the original rankings on c_1 and c_2 as follows:

$$c_1 = co_1/r_1 \qquad c_2 = co_5/r_1$$

Next, the optimal solution to c_1 and c_2, and w_i and x_i are substituted in the following equations weighted proportions for each of the four benefit options. These percentages maximize the total dollar value of the options for the employee while reflecting his or her preference for liquidity and investment, as well as his or her perception of how each of the four options corresponds with respect to these preferences. Based on the weighted proportions, the employee could choose the option or combination of options that seems to best meet all of the decision criteria.

$$w_1c_1 + x_1c_2 = BOA$$
$$w_2c_1 + x_2c_2 = BOB$$
$$w_3c_1 + x_3c_2 = BOC$$
$$w_4c_1 + x_4c_2 = BOD$$

To apply this model does not require a Ph.D. in linear programming. Any linear programming software package such as Lindo would be capable of running this model. Human resource managers providing this method must be able to derive sets of constraints that reflect preferences by the employees. This process can easily be learned and applied, thus making the application of the SCMLP user friendly.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Given the rapid escalation in the cost of employee benefits over the past 15 years, organizations would do well to evaluate the effectiveness of their benefits adoption, retention, and termination procedures. Specifically, how does an organization go about selecting appropriate employee benefits? Are the decision based on sound evaluation of employee preferences balanced against organization goals and competitiveness? Do the benefits chosen serve to attract, retain, and/or motivate employees? In other words, is an organization paying millions of dollars of indirect benefit without any tangible benefit? The use of decision science applications on a company's intranet is a remarkably effective method to determine and communicate the answers to these questions. Further, research indicates that the company's objectives of job satisfaction, empowerment and administrative efficiency are significantly enhanced when employees are able to make educated decisions (Barber, et al., 1992; Lassila, 2002; Prince, 2002).

This study demonstrates that the SCMLP model can be used to assist employees in making flexible benefit decisions. The model allows for the maximization of the quantitative variables subject to endless preferences regarding various qualitative factors. The model provides an employee with a weighted proportion for at least one of the options under consideration. In short, this model would allow for employees to make benefit decisions more reflective of their true preferences. The model also would provide employees with "what if" analysis capability that may lead to significant tax savings. Administrators may benefit as well by reducing administrative costs and time requirements.

Lastly, more research is needed to understand employee values and whether employees are willing to consider strategic planning in favor of short- term benefits (e.g., cash and vacation days). As such, this model needs to be tested across a variety of employee profiles and organizational plans. The results may provide benefit planners and administrators with considerations for future designs. Additionally, it is our hope that this paper may inspire others to bring forward their models for use and testing.

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THE SUPREME COURT AND DISSENT: LESSONS LEARNED FROM JUDICIAL DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

Dissent is a recurring theme in the bibliography of organizational management. Dissent is also commonly appended to the legal decisions of Appeals and Supreme Courts. This essay is an unprecedented examination of how judicial dissent displays characteristics which are identical with traits researched by management scholars. It is an overlap which invites academe to reappraise the absence of judicial dissent from the organizational literature despite an evident comparison and applicability. The essay analyzes twenty-one Supreme Court dissents. These are correlated with the findings of such management experts as Charlan Nemeth, C. De Dreu, Michael Elmes, R. S. Dooley, Sami Abbasi and Lisa Cohen. The essay's conclusions address the impact of dissent upon organizational ethics, the interdisciplinary investigation of dissent, the undue restrictiveness of organizational categories devoted to dissent and dissent's apparent universality.

INTRODUCTION

Dissent is a defining characteristic of democratic society. One need only recall how freedom to dissent was denied to student protesters in Beijing's 1989 Tiananmen Square, or to the millions of victims who died in Stalinist gulags because their political or religious convictions were labeled non-compliant with the Soviet dictator's policies for his socialist enterprise. Indeed, American constitutional experts point with satisfaction to the fact that the citizen's capacity to dissent, to proclaim variance with the government's declared positions or practice, underscores the Bill of Rights, the Constitution's first ten Amendments. Those rights originated, so to speak, as the price tag for the Thirteen Colonies' ratification of the Constitution itself. The Constitution's seven articles were regarded as lacking provision to safeguard the right of the ordinary citizen to conscientiously oppose governmental action. The nation's founding citizenry retained acute awareness of how they and their ancestral forebears fared poorly at the hands of autocratic European political regimes. Not so in America, they determined. It was dissent from a tyrannical George III, as embodied in the Declaration of Independence (1776), which enabled the genesis of a distinct American republic. And it was a principle of dissent, as reflected in the aforementioned Bill of Rights (1791), which promised to preserve that republic's integrity of civil attitude, its equity in institutional processes and its resolve to solidify the bases for each person's fundamental liberty. (See McKay, 2000, 47-69.)

Among the many contexts in which the current role of dissent is seriously valued and assiduously studied, there are two which appear at first glance to exist in striking contrast. On the one hand, there is the example of corporate structures. The formal academic discipline of

organizational communications devotes considerable attention to assessing the influence of dissent upon board room decision making, directorship protocol, supervisory activity and such dynamics as participant morale, loyalty, productivity, accountability, sense of ownership, etc.. A second example derives from the judiciary. Appeals Court judges and Supreme Court justices are entitled to dissent in whole or in part with a majority's prevailing opinion. Unlike that majority's determination, a 'holding' of the court which enjoys subsequent binding authority, the dissent in any given instance has no inherent merit beyond the simple articulation of a contrary stance. But judicial dissent has become a crucial element of the American legal system. Extensive tomes have been penned which attempt to analyze the purported patterns of predictable cues which are said to describe justices' voting behavior. The total impact of such efforts; however, falls far short of an exact science. (See M. G. Hall & P. Brace, 1999.) Still, they attest to the fact that judicial dissent deserves not only scholarly respect, but a recognition that such dissent represents both a necessary latitude in legal reasoning and an alternative response to legal sources. Without either, jurisprudence would surely desiccate.

ESSAY OBJECTIVE

The literature on dissent provided by organizational research is vast. Similarly, as prior stated, modern legal theorists have yielded a no less impressive bibliography. But what is significant is that no known study addresses the issue as to whether there may be parallelism between the view of dissent espoused by these very different and yet very important spheres of inquiry. The intention of this essay is to examine this uncharted theme. It is the author's position that previous research on judicial dissent has entirely declined to consider implications of justices' dissent from the perspective of what is revealed about the specific nature of dissent expressed in the juridic setting. Because of that avoidance, there is a lack of opportunity for scholars to evaluate the legal species of dissent in terms of whether it is or is not compatible with characteristics of dissent put forth by communications' scholarship. This essay proposes to demonstrate that there is compelling evidence of definite correlation between how dissent is interpreted by law and by organizational management. The verification of such an affinity would argue that the phenomenon of dissent has a universality of content, whether within or beyond the American experience, and which is not dependent for meaning upon particularity of context.

METHODOLOGY

The most familiar and accessible dissents attached to legal cases are those proper to the United States Supreme Court. Cases decided by federal Appeals courts as well as by the upper-tiered courts within each of the fifty states do not embody a typology of dissent distinguishable from that of the national Supreme Court. Therefore, it is the federal Supreme Court which is this essay's primary focus. Otherwise, the number of cases would be staggering and serve no purpose other than repetitive corroboration. But even this narrow arena furnishes a lengthy lineage of cases. For example, a recent compendium of Constitutional law, that of Kathleen M.

Sullivan and Gerald Gunther (2001), selects some two thousand cases as an introductory survey of Supreme Court jurisprudence.

The cases chosen for this essay are representative. Nor are they arranged according to chronology. Rather, cases are aligned to specific themes. Again, neither the list of these themes nor the full spectrum of possible cases pertinent to each theme, is exhaustive. The overall themes are designated as Identity Determinants. They reflect how the Supreme Court has dealt with concerns that are intrinsic to various aspects of the identity of a person.

The format consists of summarizing the role of dissent in select cases which relate to a given identity trait; for example, the person as one who wills to produce (i.e. labor) and as one who wills to reproduce (i.e. contraception). From each brief though comprehensive synthesis, what emerges are explicit characteristics of judicial dissent. The next step is to indicate if each characteristic also resides among authors versed in organizational communications.

DISSENT: THE ISSUE OF TERMINOLOGY

Black's Law Dictionary (1990) provides a succinct definition of judicial dissent. The term is "used to denote the explicit disagreement of one or more judges of a court with the decision passed by the majority upon a case before them." *Black's* permits several deductions. (1) Judicial dissent is explicit. It is therefore unequivocal and directed towards a precise decision. (2) Judicial dissent is designed to be intentionally communicated. It is a public act and is not confined to concealed chambers or secret enclave. (3) Judicial dissent may denote the position of an individual judge or (4) the consolidated outlook of a plurality of judges. (5) Judicial dissent affects the capacity of the overall judicial body to achieve unity. (6) Judicial dissent's occasion of disunity influences the external image of that judicial body, and (7) the internal dynamics by which that body functions. (8) Judicial dissent is a freely-elected option. No justice is forced to embrace contrariety. (9) Judicial dissent is not perpetually assigned. Justices may join the majority in one instance and not in an other. Dissent does not cast justices in a mould of non-conformity. (10) Judicial dissent is always permissible. It is a presumptive allowance for the voice of a judicial conscience. (11) Judicial dissent is systemic. It is an accepted part of the very structure of the juridic mechanism.

Does *Black's* compare with definitions proffered by communications' expertise? In a word, yes. Robert S. Dooley and Gerald E. Fryxell (1999, 389) studied the pivotal decision-making teams of eighty-six U.S. hospitals. Their starting point is that "the field of strategic management has long embraced the notion of strategic choice." Recalling the 1972 research of J. Child, Dooley and Fryxell could well have been referring to *Black's* contention that dissent derives from the freedom of an intellectual and volitional act. Likewise, they imply that said choice - be it pro or con - is strategic. As with *Black's*, dissent then is seen as impacting the internal workings and external perceptions of a management organization.

C. K. De Dreu and N. K. De Vries (2000, 2451) insist, as does *Black's*, that minority dissent means "publicly advocating (a) challenge (to) the position or perspective" of a group's majority. For Michael Elmes (1990, 142), dissent preserves what a person "genuinely believes," and why they feel obligated to express that belief. Elmes might just have been addressing *Black's* allowance for conscience. Charlan Nemeth (ed. Worchel et al, 1992, 95), among the most prolific writers on the

subject of the link between management and dissent, refers to dissent as "opinion differences" which shape "group performance, and group decision making." According to Nemeth, such differences may eventually become convincing. Hence, they are proper to the very essence of a group, whether enunciated by a single individual or a coalition of its members. Insights similar to Nemeth's have already been attributable to *Black's*. And when De Dreu and West (2001, 1193) refer to dissent as defined according to 'instances', they imply, as does *Black's*, that dissent does not cast its adherents in a status of permanency. The conclusion is obvious. On the level of definition, judicial dissent portrayed by *Black's,* and organizational dissent depicted by foremost contemporary scholars, exhibit unmistakable congruity.

IDENTITY DETERMINANTS: CHARACTERISTICS OF DISSENT

The Person: Self-expression in Employment

Lochner v. New York, 198 U.S. 45; 25 S.Ct. 539 (1905). This case, a landmark in the labor sector, pertained to a New York law which prohibited bakery employees from working more than sixty hours weekly, ten hours per day. Lochner, the proprietor of a Utica bakery, was convicted for violating said law. The Supreme Court; however, decided that the state's police power (regulatory) "had been reached and passed in this case." Lochner's conviction was reversed. The justices sided with the contractual relationship between master and employee.

Justices Harlan, White, Holmes and Day dissented. They disagreed with Justice Peckham and the majority, asserting that the state's legitimate interest in safeguarding "the lives, health and well being" of citizens had been improperly assessed. Justice Harlan referred to the then trend of an eight-hour work day, and deplored the seriousness of prolonged exposure to flour dust as a health hazard for bakers. Justice Homes agreed, stating that the New York law was fundamentally reasonable "as a proper measure on the score of health." Additionally, he argued that *Lochner* was decided according to an economic theory which the greater segment of U.S. society had rejected. And that majority, said Holmes, has "the right….to embody their opinions in law."

Lochner later fell, and the dissenters' analysis became enshrined in the combined flow of eventual legislation and case decisions. What principle of dissent arises with *Lochner's* opposing justices? They demonstrate that **DISSENT IS A PRACTICAL MEANS TO AVERT GROUPTHINK.** Justice Peckham et al failed to realistically appraise the strength and legitimacy of alternative legal and social rationale.

A 1980 case, stemming from the State of New York, reinforces the necessity of offsetting groupthink tendencies (*Central Hudson Gas v. Public Service Comm'n,* 447 U.S. 557; 100 S.Ct. 2343;1980). New York's Public Service Commission prohibited electrical utilities from "promotional advertising designed to stimulate the demand for electricity," this being a period of fuel endangerment. The Court held that "in the absence of a showing that more limited speech regulation would be ineffective, we cannot approve the complete suppression of Central Hudson's advertising." Justice Rehnquist dissented. He reminded the justices that Central Hudson was a state-created monopoly. As such, it should not be "entitled to protection under the First Amendment." Rehnquist asserts that Justice Powell et al have improperly designated the "economic

regulation of business conduct as a restraint on 'free speech'." In doing so they have placed commercial and non-commercial speech on an identical par. "In a democracy," says Rehnquist, "the economic is subordinate to the political." A succession of legal cases wrestled with the tensions foreseen by Rehnquist. See, for example, the contrasting conclusions reached by *Metromedia, Inc. v. San Diego*, 453 U.S. 490 (1981) and *City of Cincinnati v. Discovery Network, Inc.*, 507 U.S. 410 (1993).

This function of dissent as an antidote to groupthink has been examined by numerous scholars of management communications. Janis and Mann (1977), Dooley and Fryxell (ibid, 389), Elmes and Gemmill (1990, 29-30), have examined how "groupmindlessness" need be balanced by "group mindfulness." Dissent, say Elmes and Gemmill, serves to "challenge the group's fixed frame of reference and (has) the power to transform it. (idem, 40)." Abbasi and Hollman (1991, 7-8), recalling data provided by Warren Bennis, note that business persons tend strongly "to conform to group norms." If dissent is lacking in an organization, the consequence often becomes a seriously problematic "narcissistic attitude among managers."

The Person: Entitled to Acquire and Retain Property

A constitutional debate that has long raised social ire refers to the "takings clause." Basically, the idea is that the common good may justify governmental 'taking' of personal property; for example, the 'taking' (at a supposedly fair market price) of a farmer's land so as to expand an airport. Several early twentieth century Supreme Court cases considered the issue, among them, *Pennsylvania Coal Co. v. Mahon*, 260 U.S. 393; 435 S.Ct. 158 (1922). Justice Holmes opined that plaintiffs were not entitled to compensation when a coal company mined beneath their property " in such a way as to remove the supports and cause a subsidence of the surface and of their house." Holmes reasoned that the protection afforded by the Fifth Amendment should not be extended. Plaintiffs had acquired only surface rights to the land they had purchased. Justice Brandeis' dissent commented upon the limits of the state's exercise of its police power. He observed that there could be merit to the argument that plaintiffs' land suffered a diminution of value, and that police power entailed "an average reciprocity of advantage" which was absent for plaintiffs. Justice Brandeis depicts the principle that **DISSENT REITERATES OLD TRUTHS AS IF TO ORIGINATE NEW TRUTHS.** The principle's result may be to raise the quality of group decision making.

One may argue that a later legal thrust in a direction opposite to *Pennsylvania Coal* is evidence of this kind of positive development in the Supreme Court's collective decision making. Possibly influenced by Brandeis' evaluation, the takings question was analyzed quite differently in *Miller v. Schoene*, 276 U.S. 272 (1928). We see that the Court continues to bypass the *Mahon* approach in a 1987 case where the facts are virtually identical. See *Keystone Bituminous Coal Ass'n v. Debenedictis*, 480 U.S. 470 (1987).

A comparable application of the old truths-new truths paradigm is visible among organizational management authors. Lisa Cohen and Barry M. Staw (1988, 129) verify that "fact checking increases….accuracy." Thus, a product's quality may improve even while group cohesion may be reduced. This view certainly correlates with Justice Brandeis' advocacy of a judicial revisit of the state police power and takings clause legacy. Recall, too, that the *Miller* decision was

rendered by a unanimous Court. Group cohesion appears not to have suffered during the six year interval since *Mahon.*

Dooley and Fryxell (ibid, 392) point to the findings of Eisenhardt (1989), and whose research concluded that "the consideration of different alternatives in the presence of integrative decision-making processes increased the quality of decisions." De Dreu and De Vries (ibid, 2453) assert that dissent generates " better scanning of the environment, greater flexibility, and higher responsiveness to external change." Brandeis' legal environment was not an exception.

The Person: One Who Espouses Ideology and Belief System

The Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment became the basis of *Employment Division, Dept of Human Resources v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 872; 1105 S.Ct. 1595 (1990). Justice Scalia et al declared the impermissibility of religiously-inspired peyote use. Oregon criminally prohibited peyote usage. Scalia stated that any accommodation of minority religions "must be left to the political process." Justices Brennan and Marshall joined the dissent of Justice Blackmun. Blackmun's remarks cut a wide legal swath. He refers to Oregon's history as one in which the state "has never sought to persecute respondents," and has not made enforcement efforts "against other religious users of peyote." Blackmun continues by linking Smith's bid for religious exemption to the prior Yoder case. And he appeals to the protective obligations required by the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, 42 U.S.C., section 1996. Blackmun's approach is historical and developmental. Free Exercise should not be interpreted in isolation from relevant case precedent or from the manifest intent of Congress. For Blackmun, there is a progressive 'line' of legal understanding and from which *Smith* now departs. But the Blackmun dissent also proves that **DISSENT IS AN INDICATOR THAT DECISION-MAKING GROUPS ARE INHERENTLY DYNAMIC, NEVER STATIC.** Their discourse is a continual record of the malleability of their collective logic and deliberation. As with the Court, dynamism becomes a sign of organizational health.

Nemeth (ibid, 1992, 108) extols the necessity of scholarly regard for the interaction between dissenting and conformist group segments. "Groups are not static entities but develop….change members as well as respond to temporal and situational demands." Justice Blackmun would surely have agreed. And he would likely have agreed, too, with De Dreu and West (ibid, 1198). They conducted a case study of a Netherlands-based international postal service. And they determined that increased responsiveness from the organization's members actually stimulated the thorough and critical examination of dissenters' arguments and evidence. This meant a conspicuous benefit for the organization, given that a progressive evolution became more feasible.

The Person: Capable of Reassessment and Reform

It is common knowledge that the Supreme Court has overruled its own prior decisions some two hundred times. That yesterday's dissent becomes tomorrow's majority becomes a plausible maxim. A case which comes to mind is *Betts v. Brady,* 316 U.S. 455; 62 S.Ct. 1252 (1942). A petitioner was indicted for robbery in the Circuit Court of Maryland's Carroll County. He told the

judge at the arraignment that he could not afford to employ counsel. The judge refused petitioner's request that counsel be appointed on his behalf. The Supreme Court held that the Sixth Amendment's grant of the right to assistance of counsel applied only to trials in the federal court system. Justice Roberts et al also determined that the refusal of petitioner was not in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment's provision for due process of law. Justices Black, Douglas and Murphy dissented. They declared that the petitioner, because of abject poverty, was forced to defend himself. Not surprisingly, owing to his rudimentary formal education, he was found guilty by the Maryland Court and sentenced to eight years in prison. The Supreme Court's dissenters said that it was unacceptable to uphold the lower court decision. Their view was that Justice Roberts et al erred in their interpretation of both Amendments, and that such "a practice cannot be reconciled with common and fundamental ideas of fairness and right which subject" persons to dangers of conviction due simply to their adverse economic circumstances.

The validity of *Betts* stood until overruled by *Gideon v. Wainright*, 372 U.S. 335; 83 S. Ct. 792 (1963). Justice Black et al held that the Sixth Amendment's right to counsel did become obligatory upon the states with the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment. Alas for the petitioner in *Betts,* but entirely consistent with the mindset of that case's dissenting justices. There were no dissenters to Gideon. What is evident from this example is that **DISSENT MOTIVATES A CHANGE IN ATTITUDE WHICH ULTIMATELY CULMINATES IN CHANGE ITSELF.** Communications scholars eagerly endorse this same principle. For Dean Tjosvold (1991, 22), "exercising the right to dissent contributes to a conflict positive, effective organization." Instances of dissent are proven to have actually "forged a new policy and procedure. (idem, 20)" Charlan Nemeth (1994, 12), in research directed to minority influence, deduces that dissents "translate to the realm of attitude change." She acknowledges that her conclusion validates the "ingenious work" of such Italian social psychologists as Valpato, Mucchi-Faina and their associates.

The Person: Free from Unwarranted Intrusion

Griswold v. Connecticut, 381 U.S. 479; 85 S.Ct. 1678 (1965). Appellant physicians were found guilty of being accessories according to Connecticut statutes which forbade them to dispense medical information and advice to married persons concerning contraception. Justice Douglas, in reversing their conviction, asserted that "specific guarantees in the Bill of Rights have penumbras, formed by emanations from those guarantees that help give them life and substance." The Supreme Court thus ensured the integrity of both the health care professionals and the privacy of their patients. Justices Black and Stewart dissented. But neither was opposed to respect for privacy rights or to the expectation that physicians should accurately and effectively serve their patients. Rather, Justice Black argued that Justice Goldberg et al were approaching due process and the Ninth Amendment as if "to claim (the) power to invalidate any legislative act which the judges find irrational, unreasonable or offensive." For Black, such power properly belongs to the legislature. Moreover, the majority reverses the purpose of the Ninth Amendment, that being "to protect state powers against federal invasion." With *Griswold,* the Ninth is "used as a weapon of federal power to prevent state legislatures from passing laws they consider appropriate to govern (local affairs)." Justice Stewart added that, while Connecticut's "is an uncommonly silly law," it is inaccurate to

discard it by recourse to the Ninth Amendment. That Amendment simply attests to the fact that "the Federal Government was to be a government of express and limited powers." Justices Black and Stewart insisted that law should refuse to support the idea of deriving a satisfactory outcome from a faulty and erroneous method.

Justices Black and Stewart present the principle that **DISSENT IS A MEANS TO PROMOTE THE DETECTION OF CORRECT SOLUTIONS.** That same principle is echoed in a comparison of the cases of *Wolf and Mapp*. In *Wolf v. Colorado*, 338 U.S. 25; 69 S.Ct. 1359 (1948), Justice Frankfurter held that evidence which was obtained by "an unreasonable search and seizure" may be admissible in the proceedings of a state court as to a state crime. Such admissibility is not forbidden by the Fourteenth Amendment. The exact opposite view was espoused in the dissent of Justices Murphy, Rutledge and Douglas. The logic of Justice Murphy parallels the aforementioned later dissent of Justices' Black and Stewart. Murphy stated that "it is disheartening to find so much that is right in an opinion which seems….so fundamentally wrong." He reminds the majority that even the Supreme Court "is limited to the remedies currently available," and that "it cannot legislate the ideal system." Again, the reliability of juridic decision and methodology mean that both must harmonize. The 1961 case of *Mapp v. Ohio*, 367 U.S. 643; 81 S.Ct. 1684, agreed and overruled *Wolf*. Henceforth, evidence attained by a search and seizure in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment is equally inadmissible in state and federal courts.

Nemeth (ibid, 11) supports the image of dissent fostered by the preceding justices. She states that "minority dissent stimulates us to take in more information, to think about that information in more divergent ways….and to detect correct solutions that otherwise would have gone undetected." Her previous research, conducted with O. Mayseless, J. Sherman and Y. Brown (1990, 436), dealt with how exposure to dissent affects information recall. Their study determined that "exposure to minority views stimulates divergent cognitive processes that …. serve the detection of correct solutions."

The Person: Protected in Reputation and Professionalism

The concept of liberty remains highly controversial in the legal sphere. A significant query is how a series of cases in the procedural due process context seem to narrow the understanding of liberty, while substantive due process cases contain rather broad interpretations of liberty. Liberty is at issue in *Paul v. Davis*, 44 U.S. 693 (1976). Plaintiff maintained that, because local police had identified him as an active shoplifter in flyers distributed to neighborhood merchants, he therefore suffered a deprivation of liberty resultant from damage to his reputation. Justice Rehnquist, speaking for the majority, disagreed. Reputation is not a tangible interest in constitutional terms and so no deprivation of 'liberty' or 'property' is possible. Justices Brennan, Marshall and White dissented. Their review of precedent persuaded them that precedent had, in fact, been distorted by justice Rehnquist et al. The holding, they said, is "unduly restrictive in its construction of our precious Bill of Rights." The dissenters maintain that the Court has acted "by mere fiat and with no analysis." This is tantamount to the Court's uncritical acceptance of any official judgment which labels a person as Communist, traitor, deviant, etc.. Sullivan and Gunther (ibid, 597) refer to *Paul v. Davis* as rooted more in fear than anything else. There was a "fear of excessive Court interference

in the administration of state programs," along with Justice Rehnquist's fear of the Fourteenth Amendment's being read as " a font of that law to be superimposed upon whatever systems….already administered by the States." By contrast, the dissenters seem to reason from a more balanced and less biased probe of legal sources.

Board of Regents v. Roth, 408 U.S. 564 (1972). Roth was hired to teach in a one year appointment at Wisconsin State University. He had no tenure rights, and was not renewed. Nor was he given an explanation. Roth's suit claimed that this combined lack of explanation and opportunity for a hearing violated procedural due process as guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. Justice Stewart's opinion for the majority indicated to the contrary. Neither the respondent's terms of employment, nor statute, nor university rule or policy, legitimated his claims. None endowed him with a 'property' interest such as to demand that the university act otherwise than it did. Justices Marshall, Breyer, Douglas and Brennan dissented. Justice Marshall wrote that the 'property right' embodied in the Fourteenth Amendment means that an individual who applies for a government job "is entitled to it unless the government can establish some reason for denying the employment." Marshall maintained that it is not burdensome for the government "to give reasons when reasons exist." And procedural due process is most necessary "where the government acts improperly." Justice Rehnquist considered two subsequent cases, *Arnett and Laudermill*, as a departure "from the full breadth of the holding in *Roth* by (and that Court's) selective choice from among the sentences the …. legislature chooses to use in establishing and qualifying a right." *Roth's* dissenters have been hardly silenced.

When one reflects upon the majority's being quite probably influenced by fear in *Paul v. Davis* and being excessively restrictive in *Roth*, it becomes evident that **DISSENT MAY ELICIT BETTER RECALL AND BETTER STRATEGIES FOR RECALL THAN NON-DISSENT.** 'Recall' here refers to the handling of case precedent, intrinsic to the exercise of judicial responsibility. Competitive agenda appears to characterize *Davis* and *Roth* and suggests that the holdings of both Courts are suspect. Dissenting opinion seems less arbitrary and more compliant with case precedent's purpose and function.

These and other cases also suggest that **DISSENT IS CAPABLE OF STIMULATING CREATIVITY AND INGENUITY,** both internally and externally to an organization. For example, there is the freedom of press case of *Branzburg v. Hayes,* 408 U.S. 665; 92 S.Ct. 2646 (1972). Three journalists refused to identify their sources in situations involving their coverage of potentially criminal activity. Confidentiality was part of their notion of journalistic ethics and professionalism. Justice White et al replied with a refusal to sustain the journalists' interpretation. Requiring newspeople to testify before either federal or state grand juries does not abridge the First Amendment's guarantees of freedom of speech and freedom of press. Justices Stewart, Brennan, Marshall and Douglas dissented. Justice Stewart applied a single axiom; the right to publish means a right to gather news, which, in turn, implies "a right to a confidential relationship between a reporter and his source." The majority, says Stewart, leaves newsmen in the untenable position of "risking exposure by giving information or avoiding the risk by remaining (silent)." State legislatures responded to *Branzburg* by seeming to favor its dissent. Over half the states passed various versions of 'shield' laws to enable at least a qualified privilege permitting journalists the

confidentiality of their sources. The overall legislative reaction was prompt, efficient and ingeniously tailored to the specifics of states' history, needs and circumstances.

What correlation exists between these principles inspired by the Supreme Court; namely, those of strategy for recall and creativity, and the findings of organizational management scholars? There is an exact correlation. Three times in their 1990 essay (433, 435), Nemeth and her colleagues reiterate that "subjects exposed to consistent minority dissent had better recall than subjects in their control condition." Further, "individuals …. exposed to (said) dissent may use better strategies for recall" than those not exposed. Suffice it to say that such "dissent can stimulate better recall of information." This is precisely in keeping with Supreme Court dissenters' advocacy of a more exact 'recall' and application of case precedent. As for creativity of response, the same research shows that "the presence of an original minority proposal led to increased originality on the part of the (remaining) subjects. (429)" This is indeed comparable to legislative enactments pursuant to *Branzburg*. In a prior article (1998), co-authored by Nemeth and Cynthia Chiles (278-279), a possible rationale for creativity consequent to dissent is proposed. Dissent contributes to independence. Individuals who are willing to articulate their dissent can evince courage and behavior worthy of respect and emulation. The influence of dissenters is both informational and normative (promoting resistance to authority concerning a theme).

Improved strategy recall is also addressed by Nemeth and Rogers (1996, 74), in a study which concluded that dissent may motivate "a willingness to search for more information and to search it….in a relatively unbiased fashion." Original, unbiased and independent thought as being the yield of minority dissent was further validated in the 2001 research conducted by Nemeth, Connell, Rogers and Brown (55). Creativity and strategy diversity are reminiscent of Cohen and Staw's research (ibid, 125) and their recognition that dissent denotes a 'rich fabric'. Dissent offers significant variety "in the strength, direction and, manner of expression." Again, the "stimulation of better recall, or the generation of "multiple strategies in the service of performance," and these as a stimulus to "originality of thought," were deductions advanced by Nemeth in her 1994 essay, "The Value of Minority Dissent. (10)"

The Person: Actuality Realized in Self-determination

Among the most famous of modern Supreme Cases is that of *Cruzan v. Director, Missouri Dept. of Health*, 497 U.S. 261 (1990). Due to an automobile accident, 25-year-old Nancy Beth Cruzan was reduced to a persistent vegetative state. Her parents wished to discontinue tubal feeding. The trial court consented, asserting evidence existed which indicated that she would prefer to die. But she had no living will; nor had she designated someone to make decisions should she become incompetent. Both the Missouri Supreme Court and the federal Supreme Court insisted that there was a lack of "clear and convincing evidence" as to her true intent. Justices Brennan, Marshall, Blackmun and Stevens dissented. Justice Brennan stated that the State's was only a "general interest in the preservation of life;" an interest which "must accede to Nancy Cruzan's particularized and intense interest in self-determination in her choice of medical treatment." Justice Stevens noted that "the Constitution obligates the State to act in accord with respect (for) Cruzan's own best interests." The discussion arising from Cruzan is crucial for how America comprehends

the extent to which government may indeed presume to represent individuals 'best interests', competent or not. There are obvious implications; for example, for the controversial topic of assisted suicide. See *Washington v. Glucksberg*, 521 U.S. 702; 117 S.Ct. 2258 (1997).

The *Cruzan* case illustrates the twin principles that **DISSENT SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED AS A PRACTICE,** and that **DISSENT PROVIDES SAFEGUARDS FROM THE ACCEPTANCE OF PLAUSIBLE BUT MISLEADING OR INCOMPLETE INFORMATION.** Certainly, in *Cruzan* the 'best interest' framework was shown by the dissent to be an evolving category. Dissenters' voice keeps all of us alert. Next, consider the case of a corporate person, Greenmoss Builders. As a 'person', this construction firm was thwarted in its self-determination to expand by the error of Dun & Bradstreet, Inc.. The latter issued a private credit report to a board and in which Greenmoss was falsely said to have filed for voluntary bankruptcy. The federal Supreme Court affirmed the Virginia Supreme Court's award of damages owing to defamation, and based that decision upon a distinction between speech on matters of private and public concern. See *Dun & Bradstreet, Inc. v. Greenmoss Builders*, 472 U.S. 749 (1985). In their dissent, Justices Brennan, Marshall, Blackmun and Stevens argued that no distinction should be drawn between institutional media and other modes of communication. But they also argued that the majority had underestimated the fact that Supreme Court decisions have "consistently rejected the argument that speech is entitled to diminished First Amendment protection simply because it concerns economic matters."

The benefits of actually encouraging dissent within organizations are discussed extensively by Abbasi and Hollman (ibid, 7,10-11). Essentially, these authors view dissent as enhancing imagination and reducing the risks of management-centered and single option decision. They explicitly affirm the importance of dissent as a "safeguard….against the acceptance of plausible but….incomplete information (7)." Cohen and Staw (ibid, 106) state that organizations are well advised to design procedures which facilitate dissent, and "that managers should take actions to ensure the expression of….divergent views." De Dreu and West (ibid, 1192, 1200), demonstrate that dissent "appears to prevent premature movement to consensus." And they agree that "organizations need to foster dissent but also need to ensure high degrees of participation in decision making."

Supreme Court dissenters assuredly belong on any list designated as "high degree of participation." Research by Nemeth and Rogers (ibid, 73) confirmed that "under high relevance conditions, minority dissent stimulates a search for information." What is implied is a realization by the group that their information base may be incomplete though plausible. Nemeth, Connell, Rogers and Brown (2001, 49) cite five studies conducted between 1995 and 1997 which recommend promotion of dissent as a means to "thwart the rush to judgment and instead foster….a consideration of more alternatives and careful scrutiny of the available information."

LESSONS LEARNED: A SUMMARY CONCLUSION

Dissent proper to the twenty-one Supreme Court cases selected for Section V above leads to several significant conclusions.

Judicial dissent reliably corresponds to the nature of dissent located in very different and divergent settings, notably those of organizational management. Legal scholars definitely seem unaware of any such connection. They much prefer; for example, approaches which relate justices' dissent to the "conditional pursuit of their policy preferences." See Wahlbeck, Spriggs and Moltzman, 1999, 488. Even the most recent studies, like that of M. J. Richards and H. M. Kritzer (2001, 305), typify trends in the direction of engaging "a series of statistical tests using logistic regression" to investigate how justices mirror such political-legal attitudes as content-neutrality. But the character and implications of Supreme Court dissent are only rarely visited, and never with reference to how dissent operates in other contexts. By verifying that judicial and organizational dissent are comparable, the Supreme Court may be understood as nearer to the outlook and experience of those ordinary citizens in whose name it pronounces.

Organizational management scholarship does seek support in the political arena. For example, Michael Elmes (ibid, 1990, 148) assesses how the sheer force of Mikail Gorbachev's personality allowed him to positively fuse dissent with leadership. Abbasi and Hollman (ibid, 8-10) discuss that a failure to acknowledge and value dissent was as negative a factor in the Bay of Pigs dilemma, the Challenge disaster and the Watergate and Irangate scandals, as it was with the blunders of the Ford Pinto design flaws, Coca-Cola's original formula controversy, Beech-Nut's purity product suit and E. F. Hutton's brokers' "unnecessarily trading stocks….in the company's portfolio." Organizational experts have successfully associated political and managerial dissent. But they have not ventured into the domain of judicial dissent. This essay invites them to do so. Because judicial dissent behaves according to similar dynamics, it is thus an extensive and untapped resource to portray organizational elements and features.

Interdisciplinarity is esteemed within contemporary academe. But it is often disadvantaged by a prevalent though subtle misperception. For example, some readers may be familiar with seminars which treat sexual harassment in higher education. These generally involve presenters who discuss possible harassment among faculty, between faculty and administrators, administrators and support staff, faculty and their students, and multiple combinations of the same. But one does not learn how the analysis of sexual harassment in one of these sectors also broadens or influences or contributes to the development of sexual harassment doctrine in any of the other areas. This essay's investigation of Supreme Court dissent suggests that, in tandem with organizational scholarship, interdisciplinarity may come to mean not only a recognition of what disciplines share, but of how their singular experience and reflection may constructively shape their academic partners' mentality, resources and future.

There is an ethical component to this study's content. Legal cases permit dissent. And organizations encourage dissent. Dissent is said to range from an option to a privilege to a right. But when is dissent an obligation? Notice the frequency with which dissenting justices refer to their being compelled to enunciate a contrary opinion. Abbasi and Hollman (ibid, 8-9) speak of the demise of the Challenger and endangerment to E. F. Hutton as due to a dominant expectation that dissenters who did not remain quiet were somehow disloyal. Tragic. Judicial dissent seems far less hesitant to be mute. This is a fact which deserves an analysis of its rationale. Because judicial dissent accentuates for the ethical discussion the role of the necessity of articulation, and the parameters which are appropriate to the manner of that articulation.

The preceding essay conveys that the reality of dissent is not the exclusive preserve of any social organization. Regardless of where it is expressed, dissent illustrates a ground for discerning

similarity and dissimilarity. Dissent is truly intra-organizational and inter-organizational. Could dissent be a natural byproduct of our primal urge to consolidate? If so, dissent may be a virtually innate device by which the human species undergoes those tensions without which it would cease to focus, to adapt, to act fairly and to mature socially.

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THE ROLE OF EMPLOYEE SPIRITUALITY IN THE SURVIVOR RECOVERY PROCESS FOLLOWING CORPORATE M&A

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ABSTRACT

There has been a tremendous amount of corporate merger and acquisition activity in recent years. Research shows, however, that shareholder value is frequently reduced following M&A, with "people issues" most often cited as the cause for low performance. Understandably, a M&A represents a traumatic, life-altering event for those employees who retain their positions. It has been argued that the job survivors must progress through a multi-stage recovery process before regaining the psychological and emotional adjustment necessary for continued performance and productivity.

This study examines the impact that a job survivor's spirituality may have on his/her progression through the post-M&A recovery process. A model is developed that shows how spiritual well-being impacts the employee's cognitive appraisal process, allowing the individual to more easily assimilate and find meaning in the traumatic event that has happened. The survivor's spirituality also influences the effective use of both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies, allowing the employee to move more quickly through the recovery process.

The concept of employee spirituality is becoming more accepted as relevant in the workplace. This model shows that helping employees develop their sense of spiritual well-being can be beneficial for both the worker and the organization.

INTRODUCTION

More than $520 billion in U.S. merger and acquisition activity occurred in the third quarter of 2000 (Gemignani, 2001). The most recent figures from the World Bank show that $3.5 trillion dollars were involved in mergers and acquisitions worldwide in 1999. The U.S. was the most active merger market in 1999, making up 55 percent of the global value. The work environment following the merger of two corporations may be radically altered and present significant challenges for those employees who have retained their positions. Recent research suggests that these "job survivors" go through a multi-stage "recovery process" that ultimately leads to personal growth and improved performance and productivity (Harrison-Walker & Alexander, in press). The transformational process of 'survivor recovery' consists of seven stages: insecurity, embarrassment, anger, guilt, searching, surrender, and personal growth.

The current research borrows from the literature on spirituality and bereavement, stress, and coping to build a model to explain the role of employee spirituality in the survivor recovery process.

The paper is presented in four parts. First, the literature regarding the impact of corporate M&A on remaining employees is discussed. Second, the literature on spirituality and the experience of life crises is reviewed. Third, a model of spirituality and the survivor recovery process is presented, along with a series of research propositions. Finally, the authors set forth the managerial and organizational implications of the proposed model.

JOB SURVIVORS AND CORPORATE M&A

When measured by either the number of incidents or their dollar value, corporate merger and acquisition activity has increased significantly in the last 15 years (Gemignani, 2001; Pryor, 2001). For example, Pryor's (2001) research shows that total worldwide activity increased from $142 billion in 1985 to almost $2 trillion in 1999. Similarly, the total volume of mergers and acquisitions rose an average of 20.8 percent for the same time period.

Contrary to the expectations of M&A corporate partners, merger and acquisition activity does not appear to have a positive impact on shareholder value. According to a study by KPMG that looked at 700 of the most expensive deals from 1996 to 1998, more than half resulted in reduced shareholder value and another 30 percent added no discernible value. Much of the existing literature that examines the aftermath of mergers and acquisitions suggests that people issues are the root cause of low performance following M&A.

While many companies provide support for those who have lost their jobs in a corporate restructuring, few offer programs or develop procedures designed to help workers who retain employment. Noer (1993) suggests that those left behind experience "survivor sickness," a "generic term that describes a set of attitudes, feelings and perceptions that occur in employees who remain in organizational systems following involuntary employee reductions." The sickness arises because these individuals feel violated (Moore, 1994) and as a result experience anger, depression, fear, distrust, and guilt (Noer, 1993; Brockner, 1983; Brockner, 1986; Pritchett, 1985). Other symptoms of survivor sickness identified in the literature include anxiety (Brockner, 1986; Noer, 1990), sadness (Spaniel, 1995), skepticism (Moore, 1994), concerns about chances for advancement and salary (Berman, 2000), concern about the impact on benefits (Berman, 2000), fatigue (Moore, 1994), health problems (Kanter, 1997; Vahtera, Kivimaki & Pentti 1997), helplessness (Berk, 1996), resentment (Berk, 1996; Moore, 1994), and low morale (Berk, 1996). The overall effect is diminished productivity, which may leave the company worse off than before the M&A (Noer, 1994).

Bourantas and Nicandrou (1998) argue that the reactions of surviving employees are similar to those experienced during the bereavement process. That is, the feelings of betrayal and the sense of loss experienced by surviving employees are similar to the grieving for a lost relative or close friend (Marks, 1988; Marks & Mirvis, 1986; Schweiger, Ivancevich & Power 1987; Sinetar, 1981). According to Bowlby (1980), the grieving process consists of four stages that involve emotional numbing and disbelief, searching, disorganization and despair, and acceptance and adjustment. In comparison, the literature on death and dying identifies similar stages of recovery. Specifically, Kubler-Ross (1969) identifies the five stages of death and dying as denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

Using the experience of bereavement as an analogy, Harrison-Walker and Alexander (in press) suggest that the effects of corporate M&A on survivors should be conceptualized as a multi-stage process through which individuals pass, rather than as a syndrome (defined as a group of related symptoms) (c.f. Marks, 1988; Marks & Mirvis, 1985) or sickness that must be "cured". More specifically, Harrison-Walker and Alexander (in press) conceptualize the survivor experience as a "recovery process"; that is, a transformational process with seven identifiable stages. These seven stages of survivor recovery include: (1) insecurity; workers feel anxiety regarding the significant changes in the work environment, (2) embarrassment; relationships become awkward as workers feel shame and embarrassment over retaining their positions while others are terminated, (3) anger; workers feel anger and resentment toward the organization for taking these disruptive actions, (4) guilt; concerned that they share some responsibility for what has happened, workers, workers feel guilty, (5) searching; workers seek logical explanations for the changes, and to understand their new roles and responsibilities, (6) surrender; with sadness, workers accept the "death" of their old organization, and (7) personal growth; a sense of security is restored as workers adapt to the new work environment and experience personal and professional growth.

SPIRITUALITY AND THE EXPERIENCE OF LIFE CRISES

Definitions of religion typically focus on the expression of existential belief systems through the practices of an organized group or institution (Corbett, 1990; Mahrer, 1996). Spirituality, while including religious beliefs and practices, is often conceived in broader terms, focusing on a person's subjective relationship with a God or Higher Power, a sense of transcendence, the search for meaning and purpose in life, and subjective experiences not associated with traditional religious institutions (Zinnbauer, 1997). Similar to other researchers (see e.g., Fabricatore, Handal & Fenzel, 2000), the authors use the general concept of "personal spirituality" to describe an individual's overall religious and spiritual belief system and practices, and their integration into daily life. Just as psychological well-being is a reflection of our psychological health, spiritual well-being reflects our inner spirituality and spiritual health. More specifically, the concept of spiritual well-being refers to the extent to which an individual applies spiritual principles to daily activities, feels grounded in his/her relationship with God or a higher power, sense of transcendence and spiritual growth, and finds meaning and purpose in life (Hatch, Burg, Naberhaus & Hellmich, 1998; Ellison, 1983).

To date, there appears to be no research that directly examines the spirituality of job survivors. As previously suggested, however, the experiences of job survivors may be similar to those of individuals dealing with a significant life crisis such as the loss of a spouse or loved one. Accordingly, the authors borrow from the literature on spirituality and bereavement, stress, and coping to build a model for the role of employee spirituality in the survivor recovery process.

An abundance of literature shows that people, when struggling to find understanding and purpose in life events or cope with problems, turn to their religious and spiritual beliefs. For example, strong evidence suggests that religion and spirituality play an important role in moderating the negative effects of perceived stress on various psychological and behavioral outcomes (Belavich, 1995; Hathaway & Pargament, 1992; Kim, 2002; Pargament, 1990, 1997; Worthington, 1989).

Pargament (1997) reviews a relatively large body of literature showing that various religious variables have a positive impact on psychological and emotional adjustment for individuals coping with such life events as death of a loved one, natural disasters, chronic illness, and acts of terrorism. Spilka, Shaver and Kirpatrick (1985) suggest that religion and spirituality enhance coping with stress by providing the person with a greater sense of control, self-esteem, and sense of meaning in life.

Research further demonstrates that positive spiritual identity is related to healthier lifestyles, helps people cope more efficiently on an interpersonal, emotional and spiritual level (Bergin, et al, 1994; Richards & Potts, 1995), and is predictive of positive aspects of mental health, such as individual subjective well-being (see Diener, Suh, Lucas & Smith, 1999 for a review). Fabricatore, Handal, and Fenzel (2000) suggest that individuals with a stronger sense of spirituality are able to maintain a more positive sense of overall satisfaction with life when faced with daily and life stressors.

Those conducting research in the field of thanatology have argued that, as with other forms of stress, spirituality and religious beliefs moderate the bereavement process following the loss of a loved one (Bowlby, 1980; Parkes, 1993; Richards, Acree & Folkman, 1999; Scuchter & Zisook, 1993). For example, Richards and Folkman (1997) find that the spiritual beliefs of survivors in relationships are reported to be a significant source of emotional comfort, enabling survivors to find positive meaning in life despite the intense feelings of anxiety, sadness and grief. Similarly, Fry (2001) finds that religious and spiritual variables are significantly related to the psychological well-being of widows and widowers following the death of the spouse. Fry (2001) concludes that existential variables, including religiousness and spirituality, may in fact be better predictors of psychological adjustment following loss than the traditional predictors of health, education, income and social resources.

EMOTIONAL CRISES AS A CATALYST FOR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Some researchers posit that a significant life crisis can actually serve as a catalyst for personal spiritual development. Balk (1999) argues, for example, that bereavement, as a life crisis, can trigger spiritual change because the crisis (a) allows for sufficient time for reflection, (b) permanently impacts the life of the individual, and (c) creates a psychological imbalance that that resists being quickly stabilized. Marrone (1999, p.498) describes the "psychospiritual transformation" phase of reaction to loss as "a profound, growth-oriented spiritual/existential transformation that fundamentally changes our assumptions beliefs, and attitudes about life, death, love, compassion and God." Similarly, others argue that spiritual development occurs when an individual is forced to examine, assess and reconstruct his or her values and beliefs (Butman, 1990). Those involved in a life crisis must consider the meaning of the event and attempt to comprehend its personal significance (Moos & Schaefer, 1986).

Batten and Oltjenbruns (1999) provides some limited evidence of spiritual growth during the bereavement process. Based upon interviews with four adolescents who had lost a sibling, the authors find that the crises suffered by these individuals triggered profound changes in their perspectives on the meaning of life, self, relationships, death, and God (Batten & Oltjenbruns 1999).

SPIRITUALITY AND VULNERABILITY: THE ROLE OF COGNITIVE APPRAISAL AND THE COPING PROCESS

Personal spiritual development has been shown to be a positive mediator of stress and various psychological, emotional and physical outcomes. Individuals with stronger spiritual well-being tend to be able to adjust to and recover from significant negative life events more quickly than others. An explanation for this phenomenon may lie in the literature on cognitive appraisal, vulnerability, and coping processes relevant to a cognitive-phenomenological theory of stress (Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus, 1967; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Seminal work by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) identifies cognitive appraisal and vulnerability as key concepts in understanding an individual's perceptions of and reactions to stressful situations. Cognitive appraisal is the act of attributing meaning to environmental events. Thus, while many events may have the potential to become stressors to a person, those that actually do tend to do so because of the meaning attributed to them. An individual's sense of vulnerability increases as his/her perceived resistance to environmental threats (e.g., perceptions of stressors) decreases. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) argue that a person's commitments (motivation to achieve valued goals) and beliefs (cognitive schema regarding what one believes to be true about the world and his/her place in it) are the major components of cognitive appraisal.

Coping, the other critical process involved in stressful encounters, is defined by Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p.141) as "… cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person." The two major coping strategies include emotion-focused coping (the regulation of distressing emotions) and problem-focused coping (attempts to change the source of the distress). Research shows that most people use both strategies (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Folkman & Lazarus, 1980).

Similar to the cognitive-phenomenological approach to stress, other authors note the importance of individual cognitive style in the relationship between spirituality, stress, and coping. For example, Pargament (1996) asserts that a person could use his or her religious or spiritual beliefs to "reframe" a stressful situation in an attempt to find purpose and meaning. Similarly, Richards, Acree and Folkman (1999) find that a study group higher in spiritual development reported greater "positive reappraisal" and coping. Finally, Marrone (1999) argues that the phases of bereavement following loss of a loved one include (1) "cognitive restructuring" or the reorganization of one's thoughts and concepts to assimilate new information, (2) "emotional expression" or the process of identifying and accepting the emotional turmoil and confusion, and (3) "psychological reintegration" which focuses on new coping behaviors and cognitive strategies.

Marrone further discusses the importance of religious beliefs and cognitive assimilation strategies following personal loss. Individuals may use their existing cognitive schema (i.e., their religious or spiritual beliefs) to more easily assimilate a traumatic event. A person may, for example, deal with profound grief and sadness with the belief that a departed loved one is happy in an afterlife. Such assimilation strategies help individuals find ways of explaining, understanding and minimizing their loss. Those without well developed spiritual or religious beliefs may experience longer periods of emotional and cognitive upheaval while new schema are developed. That is, it may

take longer and considerably more effort for such individuals to find meaning and purpose in the traumatic loss as well as their own lives.

A MODEL OF EMPLOYEE SPIRITUALITY AND SURVIVOR RECOVERY

Clearly, the literature shows that spirituality is an important factor in a person's ability to cope with stress, especially if that stress is a catastrophic life event such as the loss of a spouse or loved one. As Fry (2001, p.71) notes, "In a variety of life spheres, religious involvement and spirituality are increasingly recognized to be a solid basis for providing faith, hope, and psychological well-being even in the face of horrendous external conditions over which an individual may have no control."

The authors believe that spiritual well-being will have a significant impact on employees surviving layoffs and restructuring following corporate M&A. The underlying mechanisms that account for the positive influence of spirituality are similar regardless of the nature of the specific triggering event. That is, personal spirituality is a positive mediator for both a surviving spouse and a job survivor. In either case, the traumatized individual must deal with issues related to cognitive reappraisal, perceived vulnerability, and both emotional and problem-focused coping strategies.

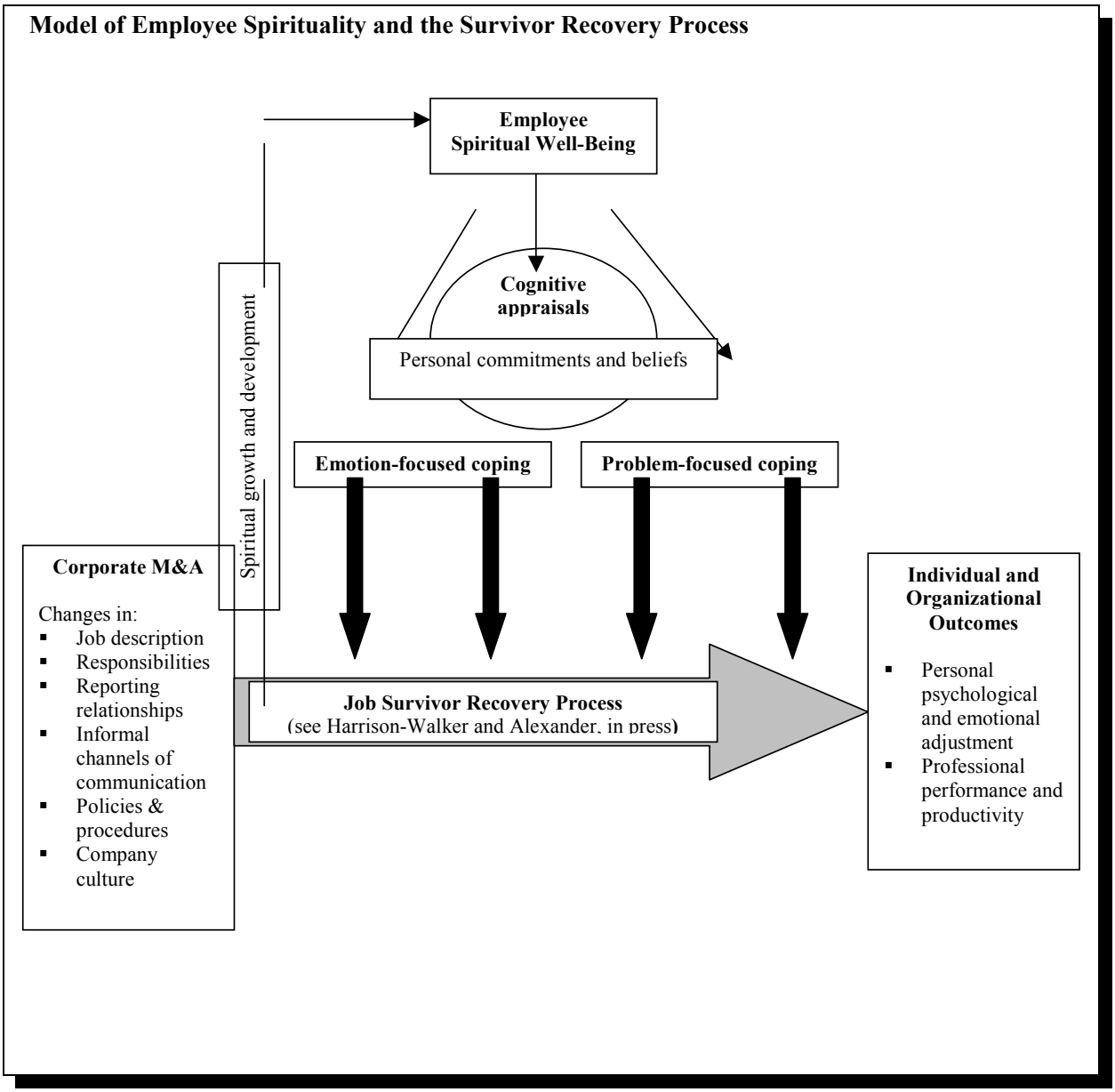
A model of the role of employee spirituality in the survivor recovery process is presented in Figure 1. The model shows the precipitating traumatic event to be the radically altered job environment (e.g., changes in job roles and responsibilities, reporting relationships, policies and procedures, culture, etc.) following a merger and acquisition. After the M&A, the surviving employees begin and progress through the stages of the recovery process as outlined previously in this paper (see Harrison-Walker & Alexander, in press, for a more in-depth discussion). Emerging from the recovery process, surviving workers show greater psychological and emotional adjustment to the altered environment, with an overall improvement in performance and productivity.

The focus of this paper is the impact an employee's spiritual well-being has as he/she progresses through the recovery process. As we have discussed, however, the act of experiencing a traumatic life event can serve as a catalyst for a person's own spiritual growth and development. The altered job environment following restructuring and M&A would seem to meet the three criteria suggested by Balk (1999) for a "significant life crisis" in that the employee would (1) have time for personal reflection, (2) be permanently impacted by the event, and (3) experience a severe psychological upheaval. As the model indicates, after the M&A experience, the employee may begin to consider previously ignored "spiritual" explanations in a search for the reason and meaning of the experience. Such spiritual growth and development would impact the employee's sense of spiritual well-being.

Research Proposition 1:

Experiencing M&A as a traumatic life event may itself trigger an employee's spiritual growth and development and sense of spiritual well-being.

Figure 1



The model further shows that an employee's sense of spiritual well-being impacts progression through the recovery process by influencing the individual's cognitive appraisal process. As previously noted, individuals with stronger spiritual well-being tend to be able to adjust to and recover from significant life events more quickly than others. Their spiritual commitments and beliefs allow them to more readily restructure or cognitively assimilate what has happened to them. That is, their spirituality allows them to find meaning and purpose in, or "make sense of", life events.

Research Proposition 2:

Employee spiritual well-being directly impacts the individual's cognitive appraisal process following M&A activity.

Directly related to an individual's cognitive appraisal of a situation is their adoption of coping strategies to deal with the event aftermath. Surviving employees are likely to use both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies when attempting to adjust to a post-MA work environment. Employees high in spiritual well-being, able to more effectively assimilate the meaning and purpose of what has happened, will also be able to use more positive coping strategies.

Research Proposition 3:

The cognitive appraisal process has a direct impact on the emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies used by the employee.

Research Proposition 3a:

Spiritual well-being will indirectly effect the emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies used by an employee by way of cognitive appraisal.

Effective problem-focused coping strategies, for example, deal with the person's ability to identify various problem sources and plan for appropriate action. Through emotion-focused strategies the employee might assert self-control, assume responsibility, maintain a safe emotional distance when appropriate, and seek social support (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Effective use of coping strategies will aid the job survivor as he/she progresses through the insecurity, embarrassment, anger, guilt, and search for meaning inherent in the recovery process.

Research Proposition 4

The positive emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies used by an employee will enhance the survivor recovery process.

As outlined by Harrison-Walker and Alexander (in press), job survivors emerge from the recovery process following M&A activity, adapting to the changes in the work environment with a greater sense of psychological and emotional adjustment. With appropriate opportunities provided by management, the worker's performance and productivity should flourish.

MANAGERIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Several key factors regarding corporate M&A activity seem evident: 1.) There has been a significant increase in the number of mergers and acquisitions (Pryor, 2001), and there is every reason to believe this activity will continue, 2.) The performance and productivity of employees surviving M&A activity is critical for the organization's continued operation, and 3.) Following M&A activity, management must take a more active role in assisting surviving employees' adjustment to the altered work environment.

The spiritual well-being of job survivors is one factor important to their psychological and emotional adjustment after M&A activity. Fortunately, the issue of employee spirituality is becoming more accepted as relevant in the workplace, and amenable to management intervention. Numerous authors have noted the significant increase in the number of publications that focus on employee spirituality as a central issue in employee and organizational development (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Craigie, 1999; Conger, 1994; Biberman & Whitty, 2000; Cavanaugh, 1999; King & Nicol, 1999). Moreover, several authors have presented data indicating the relevance of spirituality as an organizational behavior variable. For example, in their recent text, A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America, researchers Ian Mitroff and Elizabeth Denton (1999) present data that showed managers believe spirituality is an appropriate topic for the workplace, and that organizations described as "spiritual" were also rated as showing greater warmth, flexibility, caring and ethics (Mitroff & Denton, 1999). Bruce (2000) presents data showing that almost half of the employees surveyed indicated their work was an important part of their spiritual path. Trott 's (1996) data shows that employee spiritual well-being was related to greater commitment to the organization, increased individual self-efficacy, and a greater willingness to cooperate, grow, learn, and adapt to challenges.

Spirituality seems to be an integral part of many people's lives, even if they are at work. Helping employees recognize and develop their own spirituality can greatly benefit both the worker and the organization. As presented here, employees stronger in their sense of spiritual well-being are likely to more quickly adjust to the difficulties of working in a post-M&A environment. Thus, organizations can and should actively promote the spiritual development of workers. This may be accomplished through programs designed to increase the awareness of spiritual issues and their relevance to the workplace, providing opportunities to share spiritual values (e.g., spiritual teambuilding), spiritual leadership training, and structured activities related to spiritual experiences (e.g., yoga and meditation classes, prayer groups, guest speakers, and community involvement).

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