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# JOURNAL OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE, COMMUNICATIONS AND CONFLICT

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

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

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

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## **ARTICLES**



**ARTICLES FOR VOLUME 7, NUMBER 1**



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# EMPOWERMENT THROUGH MENTORING

**Deborah F. Inman, Louisiana Tech University**

**R. Anthony Inman, Louisiana Tech University**

## ABSTRACT

*The authors believe that mentorship is the key to empowered employees. Through this paper, we trace the empowerment process, its symbiotic relationship with mentorship (Lee, 2000), and the motivational consequences of this relationship. In so doing, we take the approach of defining empowerment and mentorship, identifying the common characteristics of an empowered employee and the social structure characteristics of an empowering environment, and relating how mentoring impacts each one.*

## INTRODUCTION

As organizations search for the right mix of ingredients necessary for success Ferris, et. al (1999) argue that a firm's people may be its only source of sustainable competitive advantage. This belief is drawn from Barney's resource-based view that employees help create value in a manner "that is rare, cannot be imitated, and cannot be substituted" (Ferris et. al., 1999). In light of this, firms are finding that changing relationships with employees and a tight labor market create challenges concerning recruitment, management, retention, and motivation. Firms have responded to these challenges through the use of employee development programs. These programs increase the value of current employees by instilling higher self-worth within the employee and increasing motivation. In addition, these "soft benefits" have proved to be very cost efficient. The American Productivity and Quality Center in Houston and the American Compensation Association report that it takes 5-8% of an employees' salaries to motivate them with cash while if "soft benefits" are used instead, the cost is around 4% (Withers, 2001). Gutteridge, et. al (1993), reported that employee empowerment is a significant outcome of these employee development efforts.

Obviously, empowerment does not happen on its own (Kaye & Jacobson, 1996). Mentorship is the key. Mentors are enablers and mentorship is a process enabling empowerment to happen (Newton & Wilkenson, 1993). Spreitzer (1996) adds that empowerment requires an environment where individuals can assume an active role in the organization. Through this paper, we trace the empowerment process, its symbiotic relationship with mentorship (Lee, 2000), and the motivational consequences of this relationship. In so doing, we take the approach of defining empowerment and mentorship, identifying the common characteristics of an empowered employee and the social structure characteristics of an empowering environment, and relating how mentoring impacts each one.

## EMPOWERMENT

Power is the root of the word empowerment. Webster's (1983) defines power as "a great ability to do, act, or affect strongly." Human nature dictates that we desire power or have a natural drive for self-control (Silver, 2001). This drive manifests itself in the workplace through workers' desire to use their own judgment and avoid being micro-managed, i.e., the desire to be "empowered." Empowerment, however, is an elusive concept. Employers think they "have it" only to find that employees are not taking the initiative to exercise the workplace control given them. The variety of definitions of empowerment adds to the confusion. Empowerment has been defined as anything from management's sharing of information and solicitation of ideas to increased decision-making on the part of the employee. Lee (2000) sees the "essence of empowerment," as a sharing of power to the benefit of both employer and employee. Slightly different viewpoints are offered by Silver (2001), who defines empowerment as how employees view their jobs and Quinn and Spreitzer (1997) who define it as a mind-set. Since employees come to organizations in all shapes, sizes, and personality types (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997), perhaps empowerment has different meanings dependent upon each individual. Even if this is true, empowerment is not a trait that employees bring with them to the workplace but rather a set of beliefs which are shaped by the workplace (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997). Ultimately, empowerment is whatever it takes to motivate employees toward goal achievement, give them a need for a better work life (Lin, 1998), and make them feel their contributions are needed (Schrage, 2001). Quinn and Spreitzer (1997) found that most empowered employees share four common characteristics:

<p><i>Sense of Self-determination</i> - Employees are free to make decisions concerning how to do their work. The results are learning, interest in work activity and resilience in the face of adversity (Spreitzer, 1995).</p>
<p><i>Sense of Meaning</i> - According to a 1999 Gallup poll, a primary cause for employee dissatisfaction is a shortage of learning and growth opportunities (Withers, 2001). Employees want to care about their work and find it meaningful. They want to learn and grow [up to 70% of employee knowledge is obtained informally on the job (Withers, 2000)]. The results are high commitment and concentration of energy (Spreitzer, 1995).</p>
<p><i>Sense of Competence</i> - Employees have faith in their ability to perform their work. The results are effort and persistence in challenging situations, coping, high goal expectations, and high performance (Spreitzer, 1995).</p>
<p><i>Sense of Impact</i> - Employees feel that what they do can have an impact on their firm's performance. Spreitzer (1995) found that impact is associated with high performance and with an absence of withdrawal from difficult situations.</p>

## THE EMPOWERING ENVIRONMENT

The empowered employee must have an enabling environment in order to flourish. Research shows that if managers "provide more information, autonomy, and opportunities for input and decision-making then employees will feel more job-related meaning, impact, self-determination, and confidence" (Silver, 2001). Note: Silver obviously read Quinn and Spreitzer (1997). Also, Herrenkohl, Judson, and Heffner (1999) emphasize that an organizational environment, that stimulates skill development and motivation, contributes to organizational success.

Odiorne (1991) declares that empowerment is present when workers know what is expected and have the necessary tools, training, and authority to use their talents and abilities, i.e., an empowering environment. While Odiorne (1991) states that this empowered environment can have positive effects on performance when mixed with talent, he also admits that an empowering environment can increase the competence level of an employee with ordinary talent.

Spreitzer (1996) proposed and validated that empowerment in the workplace is facilitated by these five social structure characteristics (note: a sixth characteristic, access to resources, was proposed but was not supported by the study):

<p><i>Low Role Ambiguity:</i> When employees are uncertain about management's expectations, role ambiguity occurs and the employees will be hesitant to make decisions, thereby feeling underpowered and incompetent. Employees should have a clear vision of what results are expected from their efforts. Employees' personal control is threatened with role ambiguity. This creates stress that further necessitates the need for clear goals and guidelines for responsibility. In Spreitzer's (1996) study, role ambiguity was found to show the strongest (compared to the other four social structure characteristics) relationship to empowerment.</p>
<p><i>Span of control:</i> A supervisor or manager with responsibility for a large number of employees (wide span of control) does not have the ability to micromanage; therefore employees have more opportunities for making decisions.</p>
<p><i>Sociopolitical support:</i> Organizational support networks provide channels that increase social ties for employees enabling them to gain acceptance and a sense of personal empowerment.</p>
<p><i>Access to information:</i> Kanter (1989) feels that ready access to information through numerous levels and mediums is a source of empowerment. Knowing where the company is headed and how it fits in the external environment empowers the employee by giving them a sense of ownership (Spreitzer, 1996). Also, too little information often makes the worker feel abandoned or anxious (Perrone, 2001).</p>
<p><i>Participative Climate:</i> Organizations have personalities that influence employee's behavior. Employee's individual contributions and initiatives are valued in a participative unit climate, thereby leading to empowerment.</p>

It should also be noted that Lawler and Kanter (Spreitzer, 1995) consider self-esteem, locus of control, information and rewards to be antecedents to empowerment. These were not addressed in this paper because of their inclusion within the characteristics of empowered workers, proposed by Quinn and Spreitzer (1997) and Spreitzer's (1996) social structure characteristics.

## MENTORING

Mentoring is defined as "the essential human learning support process for the effective implementation of empowerment" (Newton & Wilkinson, 1993). Mentoring is much more than seasoned employees leading inexperienced employees. Mentoring is exciting and dynamic (Newton & Wilkinson, 1993). Mentors take risks, test new ideas and inspire coworkers to do the same (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997). Mentoring can be a useful tool in sculpting a workforce that is challenged, motivated and productive, thereby setting the stage for employee retention. JP Morgan found that, after a company-wide mentoring program was launched, the firm had a 2% turnover rate among desirable employees, whereas their competition had 25%-30% turnover (Sketch, 2001).

An effective mentor develops the employee's capabilities through sharing not only the right methods for doing things, but from sharing his/her lessons from failures as well (Kaye & Jacobson, 1996), often through storytelling and the sharing of personal insights. Mentoring has often been found to be more effective than training (Withers, 2001). Intuitively, it would seem that as companies increasingly implement employee development programs such as empowerment, mentorship will play an increasingly important part.

Since the definition of mentorship is the process of implementation of empowerment, it would be interesting, informational and instructive to discuss how mentorship directly facilitates empowerment. The following is a discussion of how mentors and mentorship impact each of the characteristics of an empowered employee and the social structure characteristics. Characteristics of an empowered employee include a:

<p><i>Sense of Self-determination.</i> Effective mentors can recognize, develop and use their own strengths as sources of empowerment. If the mentor can convey this to the employee, it can foster independence on the part of the employee. As the employee's sense of competence increases, his/her sense of self-determination increases as a result. Also, as the employee becomes more autonomous and the results of his/her work increase the sense of self-determination, the sense of impact increases.</p>
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<p><i>Sense of Meaning.</i> Mentorship provides the employee with an ideal opportunity to learn and grow, not only through the advancement of technical skills, but also through the shared understanding and insight that only years on the job can provide. When a worker sees that his/her mentor cares about the job and the firm, the worker is inherently influenced, almost by osmosis, to feel likewise. This is especially true if</p>
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the worker has respect and admiration for his/her mentor.
<i>Sense of Competence.</i> As the mentor helps the employee recognize, develop and use his/her own strengths, the sense of competence begins to develop. If the mentor is seen as an exemplary performer, the mentored employee can also gain a sense of competence from the fact that he/she is learning the required skills and attributes from a "seasoned veteran." Odiorne (1991) noted that even passion is no substitute for proficiency.
<i>Sense of Impact.</i> A mentor's role is to facilitate an individual's problem-solving efforts (Perrone, 2001). If an employee is actually solving problems, his/her work has an impact on the organization. Also, since mentors feel worthy and value themselves, they are able to recognize the value of others, thereby enhancing the employee's sense of impact (Newton & Wilkinson, 1993).

Social structure characteristics include:

<i>Role ambiguity.</i> Employees must know the skills and attributes that their organization expects of them (Odiorne, 1991). Teaching these things is basically the role of the mentor. In addition to explaining, mentors also demonstrate and model (Kaye & Jacobson, 1996), so the employee can grasp his/her role within the firm in a manner that is much deeper than mere task-orientation.
<i>Span of Control.</i> Unfortunately, span of control may be a variable upon which a mentor has little influence. However, firms with wide spans of control can use mentorship to encourage workers to use their lack of close supervision for company and worker benefit. For example, Southwest Airlines assigns employee mentors to answer questions and demonstrate good decision making to enhance Southwest's culture of high service quality (Czaplewski, Ferguson & Milliman, 2001).
<i>Sociopolitical support.</i> Workers need and desire emotional support. If the mentor is emotionally open and candid, the worker may perceive that the mentor cares about him/her (Kaye and Jacobson, 1996) and gives endorsement and approval, and thereby, legitimacy (Spreitzer, 1996). A mentor can also serve as a channel to networks where the employee can gain others' acknowledgment, support and cooperation (Lee, 2000).
<i>Access to information.</i> Mentors are excellent sources of information. While the firm can communicate much formal information directly to the employee, much informal information needed to perform effectively is overlooked by, or is even unknown to, the employing firm. An experienced mentor can provide this needed informal information, and can provide it in a less threatening manner than management.
<i>Participative climate.</i> The fact that a firm is willing to empower its employees indicates that it fosters a participative climate. If not, the empowerment is in name only. Through a competent, confident mentor, a worker can see, from example, how the participative climate works. The mentor knows how to make his/her wishes known and when certain boundaries should not be crossed. This is information that firms cannot convey formally, so the informal approach of a mentor is ideal for this process.

## CONCLUSION

It is not difficult to see that mentorship has quite an impact on empowerment. It is also easy to see that all the elements of empowerment interact with each other (Lee, 2000) when facilitated through mentorship. Hence, mentorship can be seen as an integral part of the empowerment process. Newton and Wilkinson (1993) state "empowerment is the major source of outcome for evaluating the effectiveness of mentors and the benefits of mentorship." Lee (2000) calls empowerment and mentorship intertwined tools; they have a symbiotic relationship. So, mentorship is more than an antecedent to empowerment, it is part of a reciprocal relationship (Newton & Wilkinson, 1996) that stimulates motivation. However, Lee (2000) adds that "motivation and empowerment fuel mentoring." This implies the relationship depicted in Figure 1.

Firms are beginning to no longer pay for techniques or "know-how." Modern firms pay for ideas, motivation, and the ability to adequately deal with future challenges (Lin, 1998). These are the kinds of things that emerge when companies empower their employees through mentorship. Documented benefits include: innovation, productivity, quality, customer satisfaction, cost reduction, morale (Silver, 2001), training, multi-tasking, employee retention (Sketch, 2001), employee commitment, efficiency, responsiveness, synergy and management leverage (Lin, 1998). Spreitzer (1995) noted that "it has been argued that management practices are only one set of conditions and that those practices may empower employees but will not necessarily do so." With this list of resultant benefits, why would a firm not be willing to take a chance on mentorship/empowerment?

Mentoring will become increasingly important as complex problems, shortened decision time frames and demanding customers necessitate the need for empowered employees. Silver (2001) believes that the "desire of all employees to be empowered will only grow over time...putting organizations that do not take this concept seriously...at risk."

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# ALTERNATIVE WORK ARRANGEMENTS, SYNCHRONIZATION AND EMPLOYEE OUTCOMES: TEST OF A MEDIATIONAL MODEL

**Rusty Juban, Southeastern Louisiana University**  
**Randall P. Settoon, Southeastern Louisiana University**

## ABSTRACT

*As organizations respond to changing work environments and increase the offerings of alternative work arrangements, it is important to understand the process by which these programs impact employee outcomes. In this study, we exam the possibility of an indirect relationship between flextime and telecommuting on employee satisfaction, stress and withdrawal. Using the Quality of Life Model proposed by Ronen (1981) and ideas from Pierce, Newstrom, and Barber (1989), we test the premise that programs which allow greater control over work time and place affect the employee's ability to synchronize their activities and preferences, which in turn improves work and non-work satisfaction, and decreases job related stress and organization withdrawal.*

## INTRODUCTION

In response to rapidly changing technology, organizational re-structuring, and shifting demographics, many organizations have offered flexible work schedules and location arrangements in an effort to retain valued employees and improve employee attitudes (Mattis, 1992; Pfeffer & Baron, 1988). In general, research has shown that alternative work arrangements such as flextime and telecommuting have a positive influence on employee attitudes and behavior, (Golembiewski & Proehl, 1978; Pierce, Newstrom, Dunham & Barber, 1989). However, little effort has been made to study the underlying processes that make them successful. Instead, the majority of studies on this topic have centered on the assumed advantages (i.e. reduced time commuting to work and reduction of facility costs) and disadvantages (i.e. office politics and employee monitoring) of a variety of different work schedules and types of home-based work (Rodgers, 1992). The purpose of this study is to more closely examine the fundamental basis of the relationship between flexible work systems and employee attitudes and behaviors. Consistent with extant models of alternative work arrangements, we propose that the positive effects of flexible work systems occur to the extent that they allow employees to 'synchronize' or match the best time and location to work with their preferences, such as preferences for working when they feel most productive, and preferences for time during the day to handle personal family issues.

Although most of the early empirical research has presumed a direct relationship between the implementation of flexible work arrangements and satisfaction, absenteeism, and other work related attitudes (Golembiewski, Yeager, & Hilles, 1975; Partridge, 1973), a common characteristic of more recent research and theoretical models is an indirect relationship between the implementation of flexible work arrangements and employee attitudes and behaviors. For example, Golembiewski and Proehl (1978) found flexible work schedules to have a direct, positive impact on organizational performance and individual productivity. Alternatively, an indirect effect of alternative work schedules on satisfaction and performance is supported by more recent research (Hicks & Klimoski, 1981; Pierce & Newstrom, 1980; Pierce, et al., 1989).

In light of these latter studies, the absence of a direct relationship between employee controlled schedules and employee attitudes and behaviors has led researchers to propose the existence of mediating variables. For example, in Ronen's (1981) Quality of Life Model, the mediating variables are intrinsic and extrinsic outcomes created by flexibility in the work schedule. In other models (e.g., Dunham & Pierce, 1986), attitudes depend heavily on a set of variables that work and non-work variables that would be affected by flexible work arrangements such as personal and family activities. Consistent with recent theory and research, we hypothesize that the attitudinal and behavioral effects of control over time and place are mediated by activity and preference "synchronization." In other words, alternative work schedules affect attitudes and behaviors through the degree to which employees are able to coordinate work time with time spent on personal activities, family responsibilities, commuting, etc.

## HYPOTHESES

In line with Ronen (1981), we first hypothesize that employees use flexible hours and work location to obtain extrinsic outcomes (i.e., increased time spent with family, reduced stress associated with being late, fewer problems with traffic, and decreased time commuting). These extrinsic outcomes occur when the structure of the job and the fit between work and non-work domains has been improved (i.e., synchronized) as a result of an employee arranging his/her work schedule around other events. Put simply, employees use their control over the work environment to synchronize their work schedule and location with their family, personal, and other demands. This leads to the following hypothesis:

<p><i>Hypothesis 1: Employees with more control over time and place are better able to synchronize their activities.</i></p>
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As noted previously, the early literature on flextime suggests a direct relationship between flexible work arrangements and job satisfaction (Golembiewski & Proehl, 1978; Holley, Armenakis & Field, 1976). It is hypothesized here that synchronization of conflicting demands between work and non-work domains is directly responsible for increasing job satisfaction. The same premise can be found in the literature on flexible working hours and home-based work for

women (Christensen, 1988) and Ronen's (1981) concept of extrinsic outcomes. From a family/role conflict perspective, "work schedules (and work location) affect the amount of time in family roles, which in turn affects work-family conflict, which in turn affect family satisfaction" (Christensen & Staines, 1990). According to Ronen (1981), flexible work schedules allow the employee more control over when to go to work and when to leave. In conditions of high control, employees can synchronize their work schedule to avoid rush hour traffic or stay late to take advantage of less hectic times in the office, which leads to positive job-related attitudes, such as job satisfaction.

A similar test of this hypothesis was performed by Dunham, Pierce, and Castenada (1989) in their research on employee attitudes toward alternative work schedules. In a quasi-experiment examining the introduction of a 4/40-compressed workweek, significant relationships between interference with personal activities and worker's attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction, commitment) were found. In addition, nonsignificant effects were found between introduction of a flexible work schedule and job satisfaction. There is also indirect support for this hypothesis in the work-conflict literature. Studies in this area predict that role-conflict, in terms of work interference with family roles; negatively influences job satisfaction (Burden, 1986). When activity and preference synchronization is high, the opposite effect should occur. We then hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 2: Activity and preference synchronization will be positively associated with increased job satisfaction.*

Consistent with Hypothesis 2, it is hypothesized that activity and preference synchronization affects non-work satisfaction. Indirect support for the negative effect of work-family interference on life satisfaction has been found in several studies examining inter-role conflict. Burden (1986) found work/non-work role conflict to be negatively related to general life satisfaction. According to the spillover effect, events in both the work and non-work domain define an individual's quality of life (Jamal & Mitchell, 1980). When the activities for both work and non-work occur simultaneously, quality of life is decreased. By synchronizing work and non-work activities to attend to personal activities and family roles, quality of life increases. We hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 3: Activity and preference synchronization will be positively associated with non-work satisfaction.*

There are several possible mechanisms that underlie how flexible work arrangements might affect psychological and physical strains. The first is the traditional hypothesis that flexible schedules and locations affect employee control, which in turn, affect strain (see Sauter, Hurrell & Cooper, 1989). This connection is similar to those made by Karasek's (1979) theory of job decision latitude. Alternatively, flexible work schedules may influence control, which

decreases work-family conflict. Work-family conflict, in turn, has a direct effect on stress and strain (Bediean, Burke & Moffett, 1988). This idea is popular in the work and family literature and has received empirical support (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Similar hypotheses have been developed by Pierce (1989), suggesting that activity and preference synchronization reduces stress by reducing tension associated with conflicting work and non-work activities. We hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 4: Activity and preference synchronization will be negatively associated with job stress.*

Traditionally, researchers have attempted to make a direct connection between flexibility and tardiness, absenteeism, and attitudes toward attending (Pierce & Newstrom, 1980). This relationship assumes that control influences the time available to employees to engage in work, family, and personal activities. When activity and preference synchronization is maximized, employees are better able to resolve non-work demands that may cause tardiness or absenteeism (Rodgers, 1992; Steers & Rhodes 1984). For example, employees who are able to synchronize work time with preferences for commute time, such as arranging their work schedule around rush hour traffic, improve attendance behaviors. We hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 5: High activity and preference synchronization will be negatively associated with organizational withdrawal.*

Together, Hypotheses 1-5 imply mediation, whereby control over time and place affect work attitudes and behavior through activity and preference synchronization. A similar mediated relationship has been empirically tested in Dunham, Pierce and Castenada's (1989) research on attitudes toward a four day, 40 hour compressed workweek. In that study, a work schedule providing low control of work time and place increased interference with personal activities, which in turn had a negative effect on workers attitudes. In addition, the characteristics of the work schedule did not have a significant influence on satisfaction with hours of work, time autonomy, or family and social life. We hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 6: Activity and preference synchronization mediates the effects of control of work time and location on employee attitudes and behaviors (i.e., job satisfaction, stress, withdrawal and non-work satisfaction).*

## METHOD

The sample was drawn from the population of businesses in a large metropolitan area in a southwestern state of the U.S. As part of a class project, students were required to distributed

sealed questionnaires to employees who fit into one of four categories: (1) employees who had no flexibility in where and when they worked; (2) employees who had some control over when they worked, but not where; (3) employees who had control over where they worked but not when; and (4) employees who had control over both when and where they worked. When employees had completed the questionnaire, they were asked to mail it back to researchers. For approximately fifty percent of the students participating in the project, an additional questionnaire was to be given to both the employee and a separate survey to the employee's direct supervisor, which was to be mailed separately. The questionnaires given to supervisors were used to obtain convergent validity estimates for several of the measures, and to reduce problems associated with common method variance. To collect the sample for this study, 485 employee questionnaires and 273 supervisor questionnaires were distributed. Of these surveys, 390 employee and 219 supervisor questionnaires were returned. The final sample, excluding surveys with insufficient data, supervisor questionnaires without a matching employee questionnaire and part-time employees, consisted of self-reports from 374 employees and 201 supervisors. Regarding the demographics of the sample, 53% were male and the average age of the employees was 35.8 years. The average tenure reported was 6 years. The average number of hours worked per week by the employees in the sample was 45.6 hours. Because employment status is assumed to play some role in control over time and place, employees were asked to respond whether or not they were self-employed. Only 60 of the participants in this study reported that they were self-employed at the time of this survey.

<b>TABLE 1: Descriptive Statistics And Correlations</b>									
Variables (E = Emp.; S = Sup.)		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Measures of Flexibility									
	1.	Control over Time (E)	(.85)						
	2.	Control over Time (S)	.50**						
	3.	Control over Place (E)	.11*	.09	(.72)				
	4.	Control over Place (S)	.20**	.18*	.68**				
	5.	Part. in Flextime (0=No, 1=Yes) (E)	.64**	.23**	.14**	.20**			
	6.	Part. in Flextime (0=No, 1=Yes) (S)	.39**	.55**	.11	.18*	.52**		
	7.	Part. in Flexplace (0=No, 1=Yes) (E)	.07	.07	.78**	.56**	.11*	.05	
	8.	Part. in Flexplace (0=No, 1=Yes) (S)	.23**	.17*	.61**	.81**	.20**	.14*	.61**

<b>TABLE 1: Descriptive Statistics And Correlations</b>										
Activity/Preference Synchronization										
	9.	Interference	-.08	-.14	.02	-.06	-.10	-.05	-.07	-.03
	10.	Work-family Conflict	.05	.06	.14	.10	-.07	.00	.04	.16*
	11.	Commuting Problems	-.09	-.08	-.05	-.06	-.07	-.01	-.09	-.04
Outcomes of Control										
	12.	Job Satisfaction	.19**	.10	.11*	.18**	.18**	.10	.14**	.14
	13.	Nonwork Satisfaction	.02	.03	-.03	.03	.13	-.02	.11	.01
	14.	Job Stress	-.14**	-.10	-.05	-.13	.13**	-.08	-.08	-.06
	15.	Withdrawal Behaviors	.07	.09	.06	.09	.11*	.11	.07	.06
Variables (E = Emp.; S = Sup.)			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
Measures of Flexibility										
	1.	Control over Time (E)								
	2.	Control over Time (S)								
	3.	Control over Place (E)								
	4.	Control over Place (S)								
	5.	Part. in Flextime (0=No, 1=Yes) (E)								
	6.	Part. in Flextime (0=No, 1=Yes) (S)								
	7.	Part. in Flexplace (0=No, 1=Yes) (E)								
	8.	Part. in Flexplace (0=No, 1=Yes) (S)								
Activity/Preference Synchronization										
	9.	Interference	(.93)							
	10.	Work-family Conflict	-.41**	(.89)						
	11.	Commuting Problems	-.22**	-.32**	(.82)					
Outcomes of Control										
	12.	Job Satisfaction	-.08	-.24**	-.38**	(.83)				
	13.	Nonwork Satisfaction	-.21**	-.23**	-.15*	.39**	(.84)			



	14.	Job Stress	.03	.31**	.30**	-.40**	-.26**	(.82)		
	15.	Withdrawal Behaviors	-.15**	.07	.27**	-.21**	-.08	.19**	(.72)	
* p < .05      **p < .01										

Several of the measures used in this study have been used in previous research and have not been changed for the purpose of this study. Other measures have been tailored so that they better suit the topic of interest. To test for common method variance in this study, some of the measures (i.e., objective measures of control) were distributed to the respondent's supervisors. These measures were included in the regression analyses.

### **Control of Time and Place**

Control over time and place were assessed using self-reports, social reports and an indirect measure. The subjective measure of control consisted of items from Dwyer and Ganster's Control Scale (Dwyer & Ganster, 1991). This approach to measuring control focuses on the extent to which individuals see themselves as being in control of their work environment. Items in the scale assessed the amount of control employees exerted over the variety of tasks, the physical work environment, scheduling of work and time off, and policies and procedures and other work related areas. Because this study concerns mainly control of time and location, some of the items were deleted and more items addressing the constructs of interest were added. The scale presented here consisted of 21 items.

Many early studies on flexible work schedules used more objective, or indirect, measures of flexibility. In these studies, researchers contrasted individuals or groups of employees on flextime, compressed workweek, part time or job sharing with counterparts who were not. In the present study, control of time was also measured indirectly by asking employees the amount of their work time which they personally have control over. Both supervisors and employees were asked if their organization offered flextime, part-time work, job sharing or compressed workweek, and if they currently participated in any of these programs. Control of place was measured in a similar way. Employees were asked to supply the amount of their work time worked outside of the main location and where this work is performed. Another set of questions addressed whether or not the employee's organization offered work at home programs, telecommuting, or remote office sites and if they participated in any of these programs.

### **Activity and Preference Synchronization**

To measure the degree to which employees are able to synchronize their work schedule and work location with their personal needs and the needs of their family, three scales representing role-family conflict, interference with personal activities and transportation

difficulties were used. Work-family conflict was measured using an 8-item scale developed by Kopelman, Greenhaus and Connelly (1983) to assess inter-role conflict. Respondents were asked on a 5-point scale to rate to what extent they disagreed or agreed with each item. For example, "My work schedule often conflicts with my family life." Coefficient alpha for Kopelman's scale was .87. Perceived interference with personal activities was assessed using items from a scale developed by Dunham and Pierce's (1986) research on attitudes toward work schedules. This scale consisted of three subscales measuring interference with (1) activities involving family and friends, (2) access to services, events and consumer goods, and (3) financial and related activities. Responses for these items are made on a 5-point Likert scale. Coefficient alphas for these scales were high, from .81 to .93. To avoid items that are confounded with work-family conflict, we eliminated items that refer to this issue in the first subscale. Finally, to assess synchronization of work location and travel, we developed five questions centering on the problems employees face in commuting to work.

The estimated reliability for Dunham and Pierce's (1986) interference measure was quite good ( $\alpha=.94$ ), considering the original study found alphas from .81 to .93. However, because a large number of subjects did not answer several of the items in the interference scale (using the complete scale, 110 responses were deleted from analyses for missing information), five items were removed. Removing these items did not significantly affect the coefficient alpha for the interference measure. The estimated reliability for the abbreviated scale was .93. The coefficient alphas for the remaining two activity synchronization variables, work-family conflict ( $\alpha=.89$ ) and commuting problems ( $\alpha=.82$ ), were acceptable.

### **Job Satisfaction**

A popular instrument for measuring job satisfaction has been the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) based on the work of Hackman and Oldham (1975). Hackman and Oldham's scale of general job satisfaction consists of 5-items referring to satisfaction with work, job and how often individuals feel like quitting their job. The reliability for the scale was .83.

### **Withdrawal**

A seven-item scale was developed to measure the employee's extent of withdrawal from the organization. Items from this scale were adopted from Price and Harrison (1993) and include behaviors such as missing work, coming to work late, and trying to get out of work. Alpha reliability for the scale was .72. Respondents were asked to indicate the frequency of these behaviors on a 5-point scale (with higher numbers representing greater withdrawal).

### **Non-work Satisfaction**

Non-work satisfaction in this research refers to family related factors, leisure activities, and the opportunity to participate in non-work organizations. Items in this scale were taken from two sources: Shaffer's (1995) measure of non-work satisfaction and Pierce and Dunham's

(1986) personal activity items. Items in the measure of non-work satisfaction here included satisfaction with living conditions in general, apartment or house, available shopping, transportation/recreational facilities, interactions with friends, available health care, schools children attend, vacation opportunities and personal security. This construct was measured by asking respondents to indicate on a 7-point scale how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with the non-work aspects of their lives. The alpha reliability for this scale was .84.

Stress. A 10-item scale, developed by Wofford and Daly (1997), was used to measure the stress and strain experienced by employees. Items are similar to traditional scales intended to assess how often respondents experience worry, depression, anxiety, sensitivity to criticism, feelings of strain, and ease of embarrassment. Responses were made on a 5-point scale (1=never to 5=frequently). The alpha reliability for this scale was .82.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Hypothesis 1 was tested using linear regression to determine if control of time and place is associated with activity and preference synchronization. A separate regression equation was developed for each of the elements of the criterion variable: interference with personal activities, work-family conflict and problems with commuting. Separate regression equations were also performed with the employees' indirect measures of the control variables and the supervisors' indirect measures of control.

For each criterion variable in Hypotheses 2 - 5 (job satisfaction, non-work satisfaction, stress and withdrawal) a separate regression equation was tested with the measures for activity and preference synchronization as the predictor variables. To test Hypothesis 6, we conducted a separate regression analysis for each of the outcome variables: job satisfaction, non-work satisfaction, stress and withdrawal. In each of these equations, one outcome variable served as the dependent variable and the activity and preference synchronization variables served as the mediator variables. Given support for Hypothesis 1 is found, if the control over time and control over place variables do not explain unique variance and their beta weights are insignificant after being entered into the regression equation, then the mediating hypothesis will be supported.

<b>TABLE 2: Results of Linear Regression Analyses for the Effects of Control Over Time and Place on Activity/Preference Synchronization Variables: Hypothesis 1</b>		
	Standardized Regression Coefficients for Independent Variables	
	Control over Time	Control over Place
Interference		
Employee Report (Continuous)	-.08	.03
Employee Report (Dichotomous)	-.10	-.06

Sup. Report (Continuous)	-.11	-.05
Sup. Report (Dichotomous)	-.04	-.03
<b>Work-Family Conflict</b>		
Employee Report (Continuous)	.04	.13*
Employee Report (Dichotomous)	-.07	.05
Sup. Report (Continuous)	.06	.08
Sup. Report (Dichotomous)	-.01	.15*
<b>Commuting Problems</b>		
Employee Report (Continuous)	-.09	-.04
Employee Report (Dichotomous)	-.06	-.08
Sup. Report (Continuous)	-.06	-.05
Sup. Report (Dichotomous)	.01	-.03
* p < .05      **p < .01      ***p < .001		

	Standardized Regression Coefficients			
	Hyp. 2 Job Satisfaction (N=307)	Hyp. 3 Non-work Satisfaction (N=182)	Hyp. 4 Stress (N=309)	Hyp. 5 Withdrawal Behavior (N=310)
<b>Activity/Preference Synchronization Variables</b>				
Interference	-.02	-.06	-.07*	-.08***
Work-Family Conflict	-.09**	-.17*	.24***	.03
Commuting Problems	-.22***	-.07	.25***	.18***
F	22.41***	5.67**	17.65***	12.45***

R <sup>2</sup>	.18	.09	.15	.11
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.17	.07	.14	.10
Control Variables				
Control over Time	.10	.00	-.08	.08
Control over Place	.15**	.00	-.14**	.11
* p < .05      **p < .01      ***p < .001				

## RESULTS

Hypotheses 1 predicted that the activity and preference synchronization variables would be influenced by control over time and control over place. For each of the three synchronization variables, a separate regression equation was created with control over time and control over place as independent variables. These analyses were performed for both employee and supervisor reports of control. Two other sets of regression analyses were performed using dichotomous indicators of participation in a flextime or flexplace program; once again, regressions were performed for both employee and supervisor reports of these variables.

In the equations regressing control over time and place against the activity and preference synchronization variables, neither independent variable was able to explain unique variance in interference ( $F = 1.22$ ,  $p > .05$ ) or problems with commuting ( $F = 2.11$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Only in the equation regressing control over time and control over place against work-family conflict were significant results obtained ( $F = 3.85$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In this equation, the coefficient for control over place was significant ( $\beta = .13$ ) at the  $p < .05$  level. Note that this relationship is in the opposite direction of what was predicted earlier. When the dichotomous indicator of participation in a flextime or flexplace program was substituted for control over time and control over place, neither was a significant predictor of any of the synchronization variables. This was also the case for the regression equations using the control over time and control over place variables taken from supervisors.

In the final regression equations, using supervisors' reports of participation in flextime and flexplace programs, participation in a flexplace program ( $\beta = .15$ ,  $p < .05$ ) was again a significant predictor of work-family conflict. In the equations using the same independent variables to predict interference and commuting problems, neither was significant.

Because only two of the twelve regression equations used to test Hypothesis 1 show significant results, it cannot be said that the hypothesis is supported by the data used here. The only significant relationship that received empirical support is between control over location and work-family conflict. Although this relationship is weak ( $p < .05$ ), and it received support in only two of the four sets of analyses, it does suggest that greater control over work location increases the conflict brought on by work and family demands.

According to Hypotheses 2-5, activity and preference synchronization in turn facilitates or inhibits several employee outcomes. Results for these hypotheses are presented in Table 2. Hypothesis 2 predicted that activity and preference synchronization variables would be associated with job satisfaction. Of the three synchronization variables, both work family conflict ( $\beta = -.17, p < .01$ ) and problems with commuting ( $\beta = -.36, p < .01$ ) were unique predictors of job satisfaction. The adjusted  $R^2$  for the regression testing Hypothesis 2 was .17 ( $F = 22.41, p < .01$ ).

Hypothesis 3 described a relationship between non-work satisfaction and activity and preference synchronization. All three synchronization variables were significantly correlated with non-work satisfaction. However, as seen in the results of the regression analyses, only one variable, work-family conflict, was a significant unique predictor ( $\beta = -.19, p < .05$ ). This suggests there is overlap in the variance from the three synchronization variables explaining non-work satisfaction. The adjusted  $R^2$  for this equation was .07 ( $F = -.07, p < .01$ ). Hypothesis 4 predicted that activity and preference synchronization variables would influence stress. All three variables had significant coefficients ( $p < .05$ ): interference ( $\beta = .13$ ), work family conflict ( $\beta = .27$ ) and commuting problems ( $\beta = .24$ ). In addition, the entire model was significant at the  $p < .01$  level (adj.  $R^2 = .14, F = 17.65$ ).

Hypothesis 5 predicted that all three synchronization variables would be related to withdrawal behaviors. Of the three, interference ( $\beta = .24, p < .01$ ) and commuting problems ( $\beta = .28, p < .01$ ) were found to be unique predictors. The adjusted  $R^2$  for the regression equation testing Hypothesis 5 was .10 ( $F = 12.45, p < .01$ ).

While all of the regression coefficients tested in Hypotheses 2-5 were not significant, the majority of relationships for these hypotheses were supported. Each hypothesis was supported by at least one significant relationship between the three synchronization variables and the affective and behavioral outcomes. Two of the four affective and behavioral outcomes, job satisfaction and withdrawal behaviors, formed significant relationships with two of the synchronization variables.

Hypothesis 6 describes the proposed mediation of activity and preference synchronization between the control over time and place variables and the affective and behavioral outcomes of control. To show that a mediating effect exists first requires a significant relationship between the control and activity and preference synchronization variables, and a subsequent relationship between synchronization and its proposed outcomes. Although the later relationships were strongly supported, the former were not. Therefore, synchronization did not serve as a mediator of the effects of control.

An alternative to a mediating hypothesis would be a direct relationship between control over time and place and the outcome variables. To test this relationship, control over time and place were added to the regression equation in which synchronization variables were entered to predict the outcome variables. In the equation in which job satisfaction was the dependent variable, control over time ( $\beta = .15, p < .05$ ) and control over place ( $\beta = .10, p < .01$ ) were significant. For the equation in which job stress was the dependent variable, control over time was a significant direct predictor ( $\beta = -.14, p < .01$ ). For non-work satisfaction and withdrawal

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behaviors, control over time and control over place did not have detectable effects when the synchronization variables were entered in the model.

### DISCUSSION

In an effort to determine the existence of an indirect relationship between alternative work arrangements, such as flextime and telecommuting, on employee outcomes, we tested a variety of measures of employee control over work time and work place against activity and preference synchronization of the employee. Only two of the twelve regression equations used in the analyses showed significant effects. Unfortunately, this is not enough evidence to support the hypothesis that control over time and place influences activity and preference synchronization. This was surprising considering earlier work by Dunham and Pierce (1986) on interference variables and prior findings by Dunham et al (1987) that showed how interference variables influence employee attitudes.

Another surprise from the results for Hypothesis 1 was finding that greater control over work location was associated with an increase in work-family conflict. This finding runs counter to the relationship proposed here and in previous research on dual career families and working women. However, it is congruent with statements by other researchers that working at home can increase the chances for employees to become "workaholics" (Kraut, 1989). By having access to equipment and working materials, employers may encourage workers to "work too much" because the tools for work are ever present. These long hours may increase work-family conflict. This argument can be supported by the data from this study. In the sample, employees who reported working more hours outside the conventional office setting also reported working more hours per week ( $r = .37, p < .01$ ). In addition, the number of hours worked at home, or away from the office, was significantly related to work family conflict ( $r = .14, p < .01$ ).

Because the results in this study fail to support Hypothesis 1, any relationships found in Hypotheses 2-5 cannot be linked to control over time and control over place. For these hypotheses, it was predicted that the three activity and preference synchronization variables would have a significant impact on the outcome variables: job satisfaction, non-work satisfaction, and stress and withdrawal behaviors. From the results, it appears that the synchronization variables are related to the outcomes, with almost all of the predicted relationships significant and in the proposed direction. The relationships found here support findings from other studies (Thomas & Ganster, 1995) that reducing work-family conflict and commuting problems might serve to increase employee satisfaction and reduce job stress. Work-family conflict was also found to significantly influence non-work satisfaction, a relationship previously addressed by authors proposing greater flexibility for working mothers (Hall & Ritcher, 1988). Another relationship worth noting is the effect that commuting problems and interference have on withdrawal behaviors. As the problems associated with coming to work become more difficult, employees tend to exclude themselves from certain organizational duties and are more likely to be absent from the organization. This relationship, while mentioned in the flexplace literature (Ramsower, 1985), has not been previously tested with a large data set.

The failure to find the mediating relationships proposed in Hypothesis 6 is disappointing because they represent a central element in the ideas by Pierce, Newstrom, Dunham and Barber (1989) and others. According to these authors, flexible working arrangements provide experienced flexibility that in turn mediates the flexible work arrangement -- employee response relationships. The activity and preference synchronization variables proposed here were expected to be conditions under which flexibility provides fulfillment of specific employee needs which lead to improved employee attitudes and behaviors (i.e., freedom to engage in other behaviors such as going to the bank, spending more time with children or avoiding periods of traffic congestion). In addition, finding the proposed mediating relationships would help explain why in some cases flexible work arrangements do not directly effect job related attitudes (Hicks & Klimoski, 1981).

Considering the relatively high coefficient alphas reported for the synchronization and control variables, the measures do not appear to be the cause of the lack of results for Hypothesis 1. One possible explanation for the lack of support is that another variable or set of variables not yet studied mediates the relationship between employee flexibility and job attitudes and behaviors. However, direct relationships were found between control and employee attitudes, further invalidating the mediating hypotheses.

Studying the correlations between control and satisfaction, it is evident that employees who possess greater control over their work schedule ( $r = .19, p < .01$ ) and work location ( $r = .11, p < .05$ ) are more satisfied in their jobs than those who do not. In addition, employees who possess greater control over their work schedule experience less stress ( $r = -.14, p < .01$ ) than those who do not. Similar relationships have been previously shown in the flextime literature but not flexplace literature (Hicks & Klimoski, 1981). Considering these findings, a more probable explanation is that flexible work arrangements directly affect employee attitudes and behaviors. One conclusion that can be taken from the data, considering the lack of support for the proposed mediating effect, is that employees are simply more satisfied when they have control over their work schedule and work location regardless of how this control aids the employee in resolving work and non-work activities and preferences. This supports earlier ideas that most employees desire control over their work environment. In sum, providing control over time and control over place seems to have less to do with the assumed direct consequences of these programs, and instead have more to do with improving affect.

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# SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP: A NON-PARAMETRIC ANALYSIS OF THE PERCEPTUAL INFLUENCE OF LEADERS ATTRIBUTION STATEMENTS

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## ABSTRACT

*Leaders have been studied in terms of traits, behaviors, powers, situations, and their ability to be transformational. Despite all these studies, there is little evidence of underlying assumptions that certain people possess characteristics that make them better leaders than others. Yet, certain qualities appear to be easily identified as leadership attributes. What attributes best describe a successful leader?*

*This paper addresses that question by relating the perceptions of a successful leader. A survey using 16 scenarios was presented. Participants were asked to rank the scenarios and to assume they were choosing a new CEO for their company. The scenarios represented a statement made by each candidate. The candidates for CEO were asked to prepare a brief statement describing what they think made a "successful" leader based on availability to employees, passion for their job, treatment of top performing employees versus poor performers, and how good employee performance compares to value proposition.*

## INTRODUCTION

Leaders have been studied in terms of traits, behaviors, powers, situations, and their ability to be transformational. Despite all these studies, there is little evidence of underlying assumptions that certain people possess characteristics that make them better leaders than others (Kirkpatrick, S.A. and Locke, E.A., 1991). Yet, certain qualities appear to be easily identified as leadership attributes. What attributes best describe a successful leader?

While possessing certain traits might not guarantee leadership success, there seems to be evidence that effective leaders are different from other people in key respects: drive, the desire to lead, self-confidence, cognitive ability, business knowledge, and honesty/integrity (Lord, R.G., DeVader, C.L., and Alliger, G.M., 1986; Bass, B.M., 1990). Honesty and integrity depart from other key respects of leaders because they are virtues in all individuals. Nonetheless there is evidence that honesty and integrity have a special significance for leaders (Bass, B.M., 1986; Kouzes, J.M., and Posner, 1987).

While different, honesty and integrity are sometimes associated with humility. Collins (2000) determined that leaders who exhibit great personal humility coupled with strong drive

were able to sustain excellent performance for at least fifteen years; these leaders he called "Level Five Leaders." Excellence, as determined by Collins, refers to CEOs whose firms under their tenure have achieved market capitalization greater than three to one. In contrast, "Level Four Leaders" are often the celebrity-type CEOs that get press recognition. Despite fame, Collins reports that, "not one of the top performing companies had a Level Four CEO."

Perhaps no other celebrity CEO is as well known as Jack Welch. Ironic, the CEO who created more shareholder wealth than any other CEO in history is a Level Four Leader (Moore, P.L., 2000). Not meeting Level Five Leader criteria for market capitalization, Gunn (2002) suggests that Welch is also not humble in that he leads with a "need to exert his personal will in guiding and directing others." If not humility, then what traits make Welch a successful leader?

## METHOD

A survey was administered to 35 MBA students in a leadership class. Gender was approximately split among participants with one less male. Participants ranged in age from 22 to 49 with a mean age of 29.88 years. All participants reported working at least part-time.

The survey instrument presented contained 16 hypothetical scenarios. Furnham (1996) and Furnham, Meader, and McClelland (1998) used a similar procedure successfully with allocation-type studies. As with previous uses, participants were asked to rank the scenarios and to assume that they were choosing a new CEO for their company. The scenarios represented statements made by each of 16 hypothetical candidates. Participants were instructed to select the statement that reflected the CEO for whom they most preferred to work. Selection of subsequent CEOs was to be made on the same basis.

A scenario was constructed using actual statements made by Jack Welch about the importance of leaders to be available to their employees (Visibility), to have passion for their jobs (Passion), to be candid in the treatment of top performing versus poorly performing employees (Candor), and how to treat top performing employees that do not adhere to value proposition (Value Adherence). Remaining scenarios were constructed around Welch's statements by creating dichotomies and varying the remaining statements among these dichotomies.

After ranking CEOs, participants were asked to describe their own personality traits. Ten 10-point Likert scales were constructed to capture participants' behaviors along the Big Five Personality dimensions of surgency, agreeableness, dependability, adjustment, and intellectance. These scales were developed using statements that would positively indicate the five traits on the Hogan Personality Inventory (Hogan, R.T., and Hogan, J., 1992). The higher participants agreed with a statement, the more their personality reflected a given dimension.

## RESULTS

A Friedman's test was performed on the data because non-parametric tests were felt appropriate given the rank order nature of the data. These results are presented in Table 1. The significant relationship established by the test indicates that the statements influenced CEO

selection. Mean rank for actual Welch statements place that candidate as second prioritized. The candidate that ranked first differed from Welch only in the statement about Candor. This candidate was less forthright about feelings toward poorly performing employees.

Leader Attributes				
Visibility	Passion	Candor	Value Proposition	Mean Rank
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5.62
No	Yes	Yes	Yes	7.88
Yes	No	Yes	Yes	9.18
No	No	Yes	Yes	10.18
Yes	Yes	No	Yes	4.85
No	Yes	No	Yes	7.10
Yes	No	No	Yes	8.18
No	No	No	Yes	10.00
Yes	Yes	Yes	No	7.24
No	Yes	Yes	No	7.91
Yes	No	Yes	No	9.59
No	No	Yes	No	11.79
Yes	Yes	No	No	6.18
No	Yes	No	No	8.85
Yes	No	No	No	10.21
No	No	No	No	11.53

Paired-samples T-test was used to analyze which traits in particular influenced CEO selection, as the Friedman's test does not indicate directionality. Mean scores were derived for each aspect of the four-dichotomic statements. Significant differences were found among CEOs for Visibility and Passion. Table 2 shows that, as CEOs became less visible and less passionate their rank declined.

Attribute	Mean	SD	p
Passion	-3.1287	3.10	.000
Visibility	-1.7757	3.27	.002
Candor	.3125	2.35	.443
Value Proposition	-.9522	4.42	.218

Finally regression analysis was performed to determine which personality traits of participants affect their selection of the "Jack Welch" CEO as first choice versus the highest ranked CEO. Constants were negative for the Welch CEO, but positive for the first-ranked CEO. Table 3 presents the results from these two regressions. In both equations, the Adjusted trait of "I remain calm in pressure situations" determines rank. A positive coefficient for the Welch CEO and a negative coefficient for the first-ranked CEO indicate that as participants report adjustment they rank Welch lower. Empathetic participants ranked Welch lower as evidenced by a positive coefficient for the Agreeable trait in the Welch equation. On the other hand achievement-oriented participants ranked Welch higher as evidenced by a negative coefficient in the first-ranked CEO equation.

CEO	Constant	Adjustment	Agreeableness	Dependability	R <sup>2</sup>	p
Jack Welch	-1.97		.219*	.314**	.418	.000
First-ranked	1.91		-.199**	-.208**	.288	.001
*significant at .000						
**significant at .05						

## CONCLUSION

In this paper leadership attributes as presented through individual statements and personality traits were used to examine the perceptions of business students on leadership success. Leaders' attribution statements play a role in the perception of a successful leader. Passion as a leadership trait most affects whether a leader is prioritized as successful. The breadth of this significance suggests further studies. Are successful leaders those who care most about winning in whatever they do?

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Adjustment is a significant factor in predicting priority of two similar CEOs. Those well adjusted favor a CEO similar to Welch, but less candid. Empathy also is significant, again with those high in agreeability favoring a CEO less candid. Only those with high achievement motivation prefer the Welch CEO. The results of this study suggest an interaction framework for assessing leadership success as a function of leadership attributes and follower behaviors.

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# THE GENDERED CONSTRUCTION OF INTERPERSONAL POWER IN POLITICAL OFFICE

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## ABSTRACT

*This study examines the use of interpersonal power by women in elected political positions. Power relationships, access to power, and the way in which power is perceived and wielded, are heavily influenced by the individual's gender schema. Gender schema, by nature of its social construction and reliance on individual cognition, is influenced by the power relationships that the individual engages in. At the hub of the schema's attempt to evaluate and organize information are interaction and the reinforcing power that is achieved through social acceptance of the individual. The basis of interaction, then, becomes the gender appropriate use of power.*

*The analyses of data test a single hypothesis: H1: Female and male political leaders will differ in their uses of interpersonal power. Strong support is seen in the findings for the gendered construction of interpersonal power in political office. The differences between males and females identified in the findings indicate that females receive different information than males about the acceptability of their roles and that females both process information differently from males and employ different sources and levels of interpersonal power to achieve their goals. Males are more likely to rely on both coercion and expert power, while females are more likely to rely on connection power, the power of important relationships. This reliance on social network suggests a direct linkage between gender and the formation of interpersonal power.*

## INTRODUCTION

This study examines the use of interpersonal power by women in elected political positions. Interpersonal power, as defined by Nelson and Quick (1994, 330) is the process of affecting the thoughts, behavior and feelings of others through interactions with them. Parsons (1969) suggests that power relationships become, like other social roles, institutionalized. Power

relationships, access to power, and the way in which power is perceived and wielded, are heavily influenced by the individual's gender schema. Gender schema, by nature of its social construction and reliance on individual cognition, is influenced by the power relationships that the individual engages in. The research examines interpersonal power, focusing on women in elected political leadership positions, using a comparison of women and men matched by elected positions in the State of Mississippi, USA.

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT AND HYPOTHESIS**

Studies of women and development indicate that women's economic status improves as more women hold elected office, thus improving overall economic development through the influence of policies that ensure equal rights and access to services (IWPR, 2000). The United States Agency for International Development notes that while almost all women around the world have a legal right to vote, their participation is inhibited by cultural, social, economic, legal and education constraints (USAID Fact Sheet, 1997). The exclusion of women or other groups through social or cultural barriers results in political under-representation, which effectively leaves those members of the population voiceless in the formation of policy. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, better known as The World Bank, recognizes the linkage between the lack of political representation and poverty. Where social groups have little political voice, they are overlooked in the distribution of public goods and have less access to education and health, leading to lower income and higher female and child morbidity rates (The World Bank, 2001).

According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR, 2002), despite a population that is fifty-two percent female, Mississippi ranks in the bottom five in the U.S. in education level achieved by women, business ownership by women, the percentage of women above poverty, women's median annual earnings, women in managerial and professional occupations, and the percentage of women in elected office.

While there is significant documentation of political representation, barriers to voting access, and partisan affiliation by gender, little has been written about the differences between the genders in the exercise of interpersonal power, a significant factor in access to political office and the use of influence once in office. Ritter and Mellow (2000) observe that gender research in political science is less likely to produce work that challenges deep-seated beliefs because quantitative methods rely on broad assumptions about the fixed or predictable nature of political and social life. Cook and Mendleson (1984) and Grubbs and Olson (1989) review power and political propensity, while the Kenworthy and Malami (1999) and the Liddle (2000) studies relate to class and other factors of gender inequality in political representation.

The objectives of this research are: (1) to identify and measure differences between female and male political office holders in their sources of interpersonal power and (2) to provide a basis of understanding about gender disparity which will lead to more inclusive practices to promote equal representation. The analyses of data test a single hypothesis: H1: Female and male political leaders will differ in their uses of interpersonal power.

## **PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN MISSISSIPPI POLITICS**

Fifty-two percent of Mississippi's population is female, but women remain significantly underrepresented in all elected policy-making positions. The Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers' Eagleton Institute of Politics tracks U.S. states' female representation in elective office since 1975. As recently as 1987, Mississippi ranked 50th in women in the state legislature, and by 2001 had moved up to 46th, with 22 of 174 House and Senate positions held by women, for a total of 12.6% representation in the two bodies (CAWP, 2001). Aldermen and city council positions comprise the largest percentage of elected women in policy-making positions in the state at approximately 22.66% (MMA, 2001). These are local positions, election to which requires less reliance on party affiliation, media coverage and campaign funding, and more reliance on social network, grassroots campaigning, and personal knowledge of the candidate. Lack of political efficacy, rather than political complacency, appears to be an issue influencing the sub par representation of women in public office.

Despite its low statues for female politicians, Mississippi ranked 9th among all states and the District of Columbia in women's voter registration in 1992 and 1996, but 38th in voter turnout, and 50th on the overall Composite Political Index for women in elected office compiled by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR, 1998). The composite includes such measures as women in elected political positions and the existence of appointed commissions to represent and research women's issues. By 2002, the state's ranking had improved to 42nd, due in part to the establishment of the Mississippi Commission on the Status of Women (Mississippi Legislature, 2001). Other factors were the improvement in women's voter turnout to 23rd in the nation and the overall improvement in women's voter registration to 7th in the combined years of 1998 and 2000. Mississippi was still ranked 48th among states for women in elected office (IWPR, 2002).

Mississippi was among six states that, as recently as 2002, had not elected a female to the U.S. Congress. Only two women in the state's history had served in the state's executive branch of government. Between 1960 and 1980, Evelyn Gandy served two terms as State Treasurer, one term as Insurance Commissioner, and one-term as Lieutenant Governor, and was twice defeated in her candidacy for Governor, prompting one political columnist to blame "Mississippi's political machismo" that does not trust women with the top public responsibility (Minor, 2001). Amy Tuck, the only other woman to breach the male-dominated executive branch in Mississippi during the twentieth century, served briefly in the legislature, posed an unsuccessful bid for Secretary of State, was elected Secretary of the Senate in 1996, and was elected to the Executive Branch in 1999 (SOS, 1997, 2000). Both women were unmarried and childless, and while those are not conditions necessary for candidacy, several studies have noted the relationship between representative political power and domestic behavior (Koch, 1995; Lindsey, 1997; Aguinis and Adams, 1998; Dollar and Gatti, 1999).

## **GENDER SCHEMA AND INTERPERSONAL POWER THEORY**

Gender is one avenue through which power is articulated, according to Klenke (1996, 153). Gender schema is an appropriate lens through which to view interpersonal power, and provides a framework for understanding the uneven participation of candidates in political races by sex. Gender schema theory, as defined by Bem, states that once a child learns appropriate cultural definitions of gender, this becomes the key structure around which all other information is organized (Bem, 1981, 1983). As a structure, a schema anticipates and searches for information, then processes the information in terms of schema relevance. The schema remains ready to organize and sort information by category based on pre-determined confines, despite the availability of other categorizing dimensions. At the hub of the schema's attempt to evaluate and organize information are interaction and the reinforcing power that is achieved through social acceptance of the individual. The basis of interaction, then, becomes the gender appropriate use of power.

In the political context, gender schema works closely with interpersonal power to influence both the candidate's self concept and his or her cultural acceptability to the electorate, thus affecting both access to public office and the choice of relationships once in office. Culture dictates types of behavior acceptable for use by individuals based on their gender (Bem, 1981, 1983, 1984) and, therefore, dictates the type of interpersonal power that the electorate sees as appropriate for the acceptable candidate.

In their review of social roles versus structural role behavior in organizations, Aguinis and Adams (1998) illustrate that an individual's choice of behavior and use of interpersonal influence are a result of gender-role expectations that extend into organizational settings. Females, perceived to use more indirect influence such as negotiation, occupy the low-status roles. Males, perceived to use direct, assertive influence, occupy more high-status roles. Therefore, in a culture significantly influenced by gender, for females to assume positions of power (high status roles), they would be required to exhibit more direct, assertive behavior, or "act like men." In a more gender tolerant culture, however, women would be free to, as Judy Rosener states, "draw upon the skills and attitudes they developed from their shared experience as women" (Rosener, 1990, 119).

Power has been defined in many ways. In developing his writings on charisma, Weber used Macht's definition of power as "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests" (Weber, 1947, 152). Since this definition was developed, many other ways of conceptualizing power have emerged. Power is a complex social phenomenon that is hard to define and measure. One facet of power is leadership. Indeed, Plunkett and Attner (1991) cite the use of power to influence others as the foundation of leadership.

The two types of power identified by McClelland (1975) are personal power used for personal gain and social power used to create motivation or accomplish group goals. Personal power employs the concept of domination over others, while social power is drawn from outside the self. Characteristics of social power include the belief that the authority system is valid, preference for work and discipline known as the Protestant work ethic, altruistic behavior that puts the good of the group before self, and the belief that justice should be sought after.

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French and Raven's theory of interpersonal power suggests that people are influenced by five bases of power - reward, coercive, legitimate, referent and expert. Reward power is based on an agent's ability to control rewards that a target wants. For instance, in the case of politicians, a policy maker could wield significant reward power over a lobbyist through legislation or the rewarding of contracts. Coercive power, on the other hand, is based on an individual's ability to cause an unpleasant experience for another. For instance, an appropriations committee member could use the threat of an agency budget cut to influence the behavior of an agency manager. Legitimate power is based on position status and mutual agreement. An elected official holds specific legitimate power based on the duties described by his or her office. Legitimate power does not, however, take into account position-related privileges or perquisites that may accompany acquired legitimate power. Referent power, also thought of as charisma, is based on interpersonal attraction. Politicians are expected to have at least a minimal presence of referent power to achieve election. Expert power exists when the individual has knowledge that another needs. The exertion of this type of power is based on trust in the accuracy of the information, relevance and usefulness of the information, and the target's perception of the agent as expert (French and Raven, 1959).

Hersey and Natemeyer (1988) add two dimensions of power to those posed by French and Raven, both stemming from the social network of the individual. The first is information power, the power of access to key information flows. The second is connection power, which is the power of important relationships. Multi-term elected officials would be expected to have a relative amount of both information power and connection power. For example, a Majority Leader in the U.S. Congress would have significant power through the development of relationships over time. While the loss of majority would represent the removal of legitimate power, the Leader's information and connection power would be potentially unchanged, and could, in fact, be increased as efforts double to regain majority.

Power structures, embedded at the societal level, are conveyed and perpetuated throughout society's institutions, the structures established to maintain the social order, standards of conduct and cultures. Imitation, social obligation, and coercion serve to transfer established patterns of action and thought, which, over time, become accepted into culture, then into society's institutions. So while society makes slow constant changes to its structure, institutions, such as government, remain intact, changing even more slowly than the society. At the same time, the institutional structure of government acts as a conduit for the basic needs of society to be met (Lindsey, 1997).

Wingood (2000) asserts that there is structural division of power between the sexes in social institutions such as government. The relationship of power and politics is rife with institutionalized processes, such as candidacy and election, policy formation, and power acquisition within the governing bodies. In fact, the application of institutional theory to politics suggests that to achieve election to the institution of government, one must first demonstrate culturally acceptable, even ideal, behavior. Then, to gain power within the institution one must adopt the belief system of the institution. An elected official would be expected to adapt to the existing culture of the office, if he or she did not subscribe to it prior to election. Therefore the possibility of any radical culture shift inspired by an individual, or a minority, from within the

elected body is unlikely. On the contrary, the necessary percentage of like-minded individuals necessary to effect change within an institution is estimated to be between thirty percent and fifty percent, as noted by Kenworthy and Malami (1999) and Ivins (1997).

Lindsey (1997) argues that political power and legal authority restrictions that favor men over women are at the core of inequality that spreads to occupational reward through money and prestige, social stratification, and the compromise of interpersonal power by females in the family setting, suggesting that gender role socialization may actually impede female participation in politics and the ability to achieve positions of power. If women are thought to compromise interpersonal power in the domestic setting, organizational settings lacking a critical mass necessary to influence policy should also require the compromise of interpersonal power. A review of voting records on policy-making issues would not be expected to reveal gender differences nor would a review of key leadership positions held by women and men, but would more likely reveal political power based on party affiliation. In support of this premise, Greene (2001) observes that, although the trend since 1980 has been for women to serve longer tenures in the Mississippi Legislature, thus establishing a power base through committee leadership, they are no more likely to support women's issues than are men.

Another popular course of investigation in politics and gender studies is political party platform loyalty. While party identification has emerged as a significant factor in women's voting behavior nationally, Clark and Clark (1999, 78) caution that focusing on the political gender gap to identify a "women's position" obscures the distinction between women who are more liberal and those who are more fundamental. Therefore, to reveal differences in the use of interpersonal power between males and females, the methodology of this research narrows to a focus on individual responses to a self-rating questionnaire, analyzed by gender, but not by partisanship.

## **METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

To test the hypothesis that males and females would differ in their self-valuation of interpersonal power, the study groups were composed of males and females influenced by a comparable culture, that is, a population primarily endogenous to the political geography of the area. Given the controls provided in the selection and analysis, differences should be revealed on the basis of group gender. To further test the applicability of gender schema to interpersonal power, only those male and female candidates who have achieved elected leadership were included in the research.

The study is cross-sectional in design, with survey data collected at one point in time using both a priori knowledge and constructed controls (Rossi and Freeman, 1993). A review of multivariate data analysis techniques indicated that multiple discriminant analysis was the appropriate statistical technique for research that is either predictive or profiling. The objectives of multiple discriminant analysis are: (1) to determine if statistically significant differences exist between the average score profiles of the two (or more) a priori defined groups; (2) to establish procedures for classifying statistical units (individuals or objects) into groups on the basis of their scores on several variables; and, (3) to determine which of the independent variables account

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most for the differences in the average score profiles of the two or more groups (Hair, et. al., 1987, 79).

Several approaches were considered for population sampling and analysis, including matching subjects, disproportionate random sampling, and creating a control group for comparison purposes. The process of matching subjects according to gender and elected position provides the more compatible comparison for this research. While disproportionate random sampling could be deemed to be acceptable due to the fact that the female population is underrepresented (O'Sullivan and Russell, 1999) in positions of elected political leadership in Mississippi, surveying only women in elected political positions would serve the purpose of identifying only the sources of interpersonal power but with no gender comparison. Alternately, the use of a control group of women from the general population for comparison would make the incorrect assumption that all members of the population are compelled to seek public office or have a political propensity. On the other hand, the matched subjects approach provides a basis for control of the research by including another population as a comparison group, but limiting the group to those who have made the choice to run for elected office, thus assuring that the subjects surveyed have a basis of knowledge about the survey matter from which to draw. The use of male comparison groups of elected political officeholders enabled the analysis of relationships between gender and power. The analysis was conducted at the aggregate level, with groups stratified by the geographical jurisdiction of their elected political offices, as follows: (1) statewide elected officials serving in the legislature and the executive branch of state government; (2) county officials elected as supervisors; and (3) mayors, elected at the local level to serve a constituency living within a city, municipality or township.

Several elected positions were excluded from the study to limit skewing which occurs when a distribution has a few extreme values affecting the arithmetic mean (O'Sullivan and Russell, 1999). In addition, the duties of several elected positions do not involve direct influence of policy. Congressional offices were excluded because there were no female elected officials in that category in Mississippi. Elected officials in the judicial system were excluded because of the education requirement of a law degree and status as a practicing attorney for most posts and because the system does not involve development of policy. All county wide elected officials that involved execution of, rather than development of, policy were excluded, including the offices of chancery clerk, circuit clerk and tax assessor/collector, as well as coroner, surveyor, sheriff, superintendent of education, constable and election commissioner. Alderwomen and councilwomen were excluded at the local level, although they represent the greatest percentage of females in elected leadership positions in Mississippi. Mayors were believed to be representative of this group. As mentioned previously, no data were collected regarding partisanship. Females are not in ample enough supply in the Republican camp in Mississippi to offer generalizable results by political party, nor would identification of respondents by political party offer the level of confidentiality assured to research participants.

Under the guidelines established for surveying small populations, those of 500 or less (Hair, Bush and Ortinau, 2000, 343), a census of the population of females was conducted and the subjects were matched with males in comparable elected positions. Participants included elected female and male political office holders serving during the latter half of the year 2001.

Due to the existence of a single female in the executive branch, the executive branch was combined with the legislative branch for evaluation purposes. At the time the survey instrument was distributed, public documents detailing the sex of office holders had not been published. A first name search of office holders in each pool revealed a number of gender anomalous names, therefore, sex of these officeholders was confirmed by staff of their respective office associations.

The total population of 78 confirmed female elected officials in the enumerated positions was surveyed. Two mayors were excluded after the name search and subsequent independent consultation with association staff failed to confirm their sex. Females surveyed included 42 female mayors, 13 county supervisors, 16 representatives, six senators, and one executive department female. The remaining 78 survey recipients were selected using random number generation (Research Randomizer, 2001) from the pools of males matched by elected positions. Matching subjects is a complement to random selection in small samples (Churchill and Iacobucci, 2002, 147). The males were first categorized by position into three pools - legislative and executive, county and municipal. Within each pool of alphabetized names, numbers were assigned to the males only. The total number of males in each pool was entered into the randomizer as well as the desired sample to be chosen from each group. The numbers generated by the randomizer were then cross-matched with the numbers assigned to individuals in each group to select the male elected political participants for the study.

The Hersey-Natemeyer Power Perception Profile Perception of Self (Hersey and Natemeyer, 1988), was included as a component of the survey packet, which was distributed by mail, following an initial call to each of the elected officials selected for inclusion in the study. The Power Perception Profile consists of twenty-one pairs of statements. Six statements are related to each of the seven sources of power - coercive, connection, expert, information, legitimate, referent and reward. The summed scores for each power description were treated as interval scale measures, with a possible minimum score of "0" and a possible maximum score of "18" on each item (Churchill and Iacobucci, 2002).

A total of 156 survey packets were distributed during the month of November 2001. This is roughly the size of the entire population of female elected officials (78) in executive, legislative, supervisor and mayoral offices, plus a comparable number in the sample group of male elected officials (78) in the same political offices. A follow-up card was sent to all survey recipients approximately ten days after the survey mailing. Three additional surveys were mailed after the distribution of the follow-up card to officials who requested replacements for surveys not received in the first mailing.

## **FINDINGS**

Data coding and entry were conducted as surveys were returned, during the month of December 2001, and the data set was verified using research volunteers. The responses to the twenty-one pairs of items were categorically summed and coded upon receipt of the completed surveys.



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## Response Rate

One-third (33.3%) of elected officials surveyed participated in the study. Fifty-two (52) total surveys were returned by participants within the time frame allowed for the research. Two of the fifty-two surveys returned were discarded due to non-completion or inconsistency in response. A total of fifty surveys were used in the descriptive statistics, however, three were disallowed from the gender analysis based on non-response to the gender item. Therefore, forty-seven surveys, or 30.12% were deemed useable based on the response to the gender item. Of the forty-seven, one male elected official did not identify the office to which he was elected. Of the forty-six useable surveys based on gender and political office held, male county supervisors and female mayors had the highest return rates at 69.2% and 30.9%, respectively. Female statewide elected and legislators exhibited the lowest completion and return rate at 17.4% of surveys distributed.

The matched distribution of the survey contributed to the similar overall rate of return of the surveys by males and females. Complete responses from twenty-six males and twenty one females were used in the gender analysis on select portions of the survey, constituting respective returns of 33.3% male and 26.9% female for an overall valid return rate of 30.1%. It should be noted that the percentages of males listed in the survey are representative of the total matched group and not necessarily of the total population of males in the elected positions defined for the study. The percentage of females, on the other hand, is the percentage of the entire population of females in the elected positions surveyed.

Of the total of fifty, nine respondents completed all sections of the survey packet, but did not complete the Power Perception Profile Perception of Self, reducing the total number of surveys analyzed for sources of interpersonal power to forty-one (41). Two respondents replied in writing that they believed the profile did not apply to them, and seven either left the profile blank or only partially completed it. By design, the profile requires that respondents rate themselves using a total of three points divided between competing pairs of twenty-one statements regarding the use of power. Possible pair scores would include 0-3, 3-0, 1-2, and 2-1.

One explanation for lower response to the profile could be the placement of the power section at the end of the survey instrument when participant attention span has waned. The lower response rate may be due to the difference in style of the profile compared to other sections of the survey. Observation suggests that there is reason to suspect a gender relationship to non-completion of the power section. Females were at least twice as likely as males to return the Power Perception Profile not completed. Six of the nine- elected officials who did not complete the power section were female, two were male and one was not identified by sex. The higher proportion of female non-respondents would support the Klenke (1997) claim that women tend to shy away from any mention of power. The non-respondents were evenly distributed by political office, suggesting that the lack of completion of the power section was not related to holding office at a particular jurisdictional level.

## Data Analysis

Analysis for this study was conducted using SPSS 9.0 (Norusis, 1999). Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation were calculated for the sample, then group statistics were run using the t-test and chi-square to determine significant difference between males and females. Based on the high number of items to be analyzed by gender response, as well as the mixture of continuous measure and nominal scale items, multiple discriminant analysis was selected as appropriate for this research. The majority of the ninety-nine items, including the Power Perception Profile, involved continuous scale measures. Pairwise comparison using two sample t-tests was conducted on the continuous measure items, and variances were validated using Levene's test for equality of variances. Two-group discriminant analysis was conducted in SPSS, using all items determined to be significant at the level of .10 or greater. Equality of group means was tested using the Wilks' Lambda test, with Box's test performed on the covariance matrices. The stepwise method of analysis, using the Mahalanobis procedure, identified a reduced set of variables to be used in the function and eliminated those not useful in discriminating between the groups. All tests of validity conducted in the research were consistent with the SPSS 9.0 data analysis software package. Findings are reported at a 95% confidence level with an associated probability of ten percent (.10) or less (O'Sullivan and Rassel, 1999).

Interpersonal power scores were treated as continuous on a scale of 0-18 for each of the seven measures of power. To obtain a complete response to any one of the interpersonal power items required that participants complete the entire profile of twenty-one pairs of statements. As shown in Table 1, based on range and comparatively low standard deviation of responses, there was strong collective sentiment regarding higher self-categorization in expert power and legitimate power, followed by information power, referent power, reward power, connection power and coercive power, in that order.

Q#	Description	Valid	Range	Min.	Max.	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev.
93	Coercive	41	15	0	15	197	4.80	3.20
94	Connection	41	15	0	15	315	7.68	3.59
95	Expert	41	8	10	18	548	13.37	2.21
96	Information	41	12	3	15	389	9.49	2.63
97	Legitimate	41	13	2	15	437	10.66	2.57
98	Referent	41	16	0	16	368	8.98	3.82
99	Reward	41	11	3	14	326	7.95	2.63

Although elected officials would be expected to exhibit significant levels of referent power in the process of campaigning and election, Mississippi's elected officials did not rate themselves particularly high in charisma, inducing compliance through coercive means, having power to provide rewards, or having powerful connections.

Eight items from the total of 99 were found to be significant in discriminating between male respondents and female respondents. Of the eight, three were the power scores for coercive, connection and expert power. Table 2 identifies the eight items, describes the type of measure and test procedure used, indicates whether or not equal variance was established, illustrates the mean, affirms the significance, and describes the level of significance. Findings are reported at an alpha of .10 and greater with a 95% confidence level.

As illustrated in Table 2, findings support the hypothesis that male and female political office holders will differ in their sources of interpersonal power. Three of the seven power scores varied significantly by sex. While political officeholders overall scored low in the use of coercive power, males tended to rank themselves higher than females in coercive power. Expert power was highly valued by all officeholders, but males relied on it more than females. Females were significantly more likely than males to rely on social networks as exhibited in the mean scores for connection power.

Q#	Description	Measure	Test	Equal Variance?	Mean		Alpha
					M	F	
19	Encouragement by a family member	Contin.	t-test	Yes	2.96	1.80	.005
45	Family financial responsibility	Contin.	t-test	Yes	3.00	2.07	.081
52	Reports of gender discrimination in current office	Contin.	t-test	No	4.33	2.45	.004
59	Becoming the target of negative political campaign	Contin.	t-test	Yes	3.76	2.75	.040
61	Minor children at time of decision to run	Nominal	Chi Square	N/A	Pearson Test		.033
					Mean		
					M	F	
93	Coercive Power	Contin.	t-test	Yes	5.33	3.53	.086
94	Connection Power	Contin.	t-test	No	6.63	9.47	.008

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95	Expert Power	Contin.	t-test	No	13.83	12.40	.026
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The purpose of conducting the discriminant analysis was to determine which statistically significant variables could numerically separate males and females as much as possible, thus forming a group of discriminants useful in predicting inclusion into one group or the other. In this research, the discriminant analysis was conducted using only the continuous measure variables determined to be significant, thus eliminating the nominal variable for minor children in the home at the time the decision was made to run for public office. Chi-square analysis supported that this variable was significant, but it was excluded from analysis for the predictive model, due to the troublesomeness of mixing variables (Johnson and Wichern, 2002, 641). Thirty-nine valid cases were used in the discriminant analysis, eliminating two cases with missing or out-of range group codes and eight cases with at least one missing discriminating variable. During completion of the four phases of the stepwise analysis using the Mahalanobis procedure to adjust for unequal variances, the two power scores for expert power and coercive power were eliminated as not contributing significantly to further discrimination. Items determined to be useful in predicting the gender of the elected official were the connection power score, the encouragement of a family member, family financial responsibility and reports of gender discrimination in the elected office.

### **UNDERSTANDING INTERPERSONAL POWER IN POLITICAL OFFICE**

Strong support is seen in the findings for the gendered construction of interpersonal power in political office. The fact that gender differences exist at all in the analysis supports, in part, Bem's description of gender schema as the key structure around which all other information is organized, based on the learned cultural definitions of gender (Bem, 1981, 1983). The differences between males and females identified in the findings of this research indicate that females receive different information than males about the acceptability of their roles and that females both process information differently from males and employ different sources and levels of interpersonal power to achieve their goals. If, as gender schema theory attests, the self-concept is a subset of gendered behaviors, influencing personal adequacy and esteem, then the likelihood of group differences between the sexes is high, particularly in the use of interpersonal power, as detailed in the findings. One result of culture's influence on gender roles, as noted by Aguinis and Adams (1998), is the perception that females use more indirect influence, while males use more direct influence. This perception is validated in the findings, suggesting that males are more likely to rely on both coercion and expert power, while females are more likely to rely on connection power, the power of important relationships. This reliance on social network suggests a direct linkage between gender and the formation of interpersonal power.

Every finding noted as significant in the predictive model relates to the connection power of the females surveyed. Female elected officials were significantly more likely than males to

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rely on the encouragement of a family member as a motivator, and significantly more likely than males to cite family financial responsibility as a barrier to participation in candidacy. Of special concern as a barrier to females seeking elected office is the high degree of concern about reports of discrimination in elected office noted by females surveyed.

The family network has much greater significance for females than for males in the decision to run for public office, suggesting that females must defend, both internally and externally, their decision to seek election. Reliance on connection power would suggest that the female candidate has to seek the approval of domestic constituency before approaching a public constituency. Concern about financial security of the family also suggests that females might be more inclined to share ownership of domestic financial resources; whereas, males might consider financial decisions a singular domain. The significance to females of reports of sex discrimination in office implies that females believe in their own ability to overcome or ignore this type of discrimination should they win election to office. However, the significance of the item fully supports Bem's (1983) claim that sex-typing exists and that those who are sex-typed organize their self-concepts and behaviors on the basis of gender. Troubling, however, is the notion that connective power could be perceived as a less direct, less masculine, form of power, thus consigning elected females to lower status roles in elected office.

Females differed significantly from males in not one, but three, sources of interpersonal power. There was substantial resistance by some female respondents to complete the Power Perception Profile, perhaps due to the perception of power as a negative to females. In addition to the sex differences in scores for connective power, other findings from the power styles support that gender schema is applicable to the use of influence and how the sexes perceive themselves. While elected officials generally did not rank themselves as coercive, female officeholders were significantly less likely than males to view coercive power as an option. This would again support the existence of strong sex-typing in the population, where coercion, though universally distasteful, is considered unacceptable behavior for females. Males were also significantly more likely to rely on their expert power than were females, although both groups rated themselves high in this type of power. The implication from the findings is not that female elected officials lack information, but that they seek validation for using their information. Females rely on their connections to achieve both validity and compliance; whereas, males rely more on the respect achieved by their expert status. Applying gender schema theory, connection power is more likely to manifest itself in groups where validity or respect is marginal. This offers some explanation for the higher percentage of females in municipal elected offices, where personal knowledge of the candidate is more common and grassroots campaigns are formed from social networks. The power scores indicate that females are heavily reliant on family and social network for encouragement and support in the campaign for public office, further revealing that females develop relationships that are fundamental to their aspirations. As a function of gender schema, this behavior would be the result of both personal preference and the culture's influence.

Further research into the influence of regionalism and class on interpersonal power is needed. While class items were not measured in detail in this research, findings suggest that the elected officials who responded to this survey were predominantly of one class. Structural access

to candidacy is potentially limited by access to class items, such as education, including specific institutions that may offer greater access to powerful social networks.

### IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Possible approaches for increasing the number of women in political office, utilizing the inherent or developed qualities of connection power prevalent in females include: (1) increasing female caucusing opportunities in elected offices; (2) creating mentor programs targeted toward women's political participation; and, (3) developing long-term, public efforts to recruit and support female candidates by political parties.

The research implies that females, more than males, consider the opinions of a network of individuals, particularly in the domestic arena, when deciding to run for political office. This networking, while it offers a conduit for connection power, also tends to reinforce the perceived negative aspects of running a campaign for females, even more so for those with minor children. Social network may well serve as both the chief cultural support and the main cultural deterrent to women's involvement as political candidates.

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**END OF VOLUME 7, NUMBER 1**

**BEGINNING OF VOLUME 7, NUMBER 2**

**ARTICLES FOR VOLUME 7, NUMBER 2**



# **A COMPARISON OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION TEACHERS' AND EXECUTIVES' ATTITUDES TOWARD GENERALLY ACCEPTED BUSINESS COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Is there disagreement between those principles taught by business communication teachers and those practiced by business executives? Furthermore, do gender and age affect attitudes toward these principles? Business teachers and executives throughout the United States were surveyed to find answers to these questions. While statistical differences were found, material differences were insufficient to conclude that teaching practices should be changed.*

## **BACKGROUND**

Business communication teachers generally accept most business writing and speaking principles presented in business communication textbooks. Hagge (1989) maintains that many of the business writing principles subscribed to today have actually been a part of writing for decades, and in some instances, even centuries. The communication principles vary among different writers; however, some common examples include incorporating various "C" qualities—conciseness, correctness, coherence, completeness, courtesy, clearness, and conversational tone. In addition to the C qualities, among other commonly accepted writing principles are using positive wording, buffering negative news, writing short sentences with simple words, avoiding passive voice, and applying ethical standards to all communications. Carbone (1994) notes that even in the very early 20th Century authoritative writers like G. B. Hotchkiss were promoting "you attitude," a routinely accepted writing principle today.

American businesses generate massive volumes of original writing each year—by one estimate as many as 30 billion pieces. Workers may spend on average one-third of their time writing letters, memos, and reports. Thus, writing effectively is crucial. One way that companies can cut the waste of ineffective writing is to encourage everyone to write succinctly and in plain English (InFocus, 1993).

Application of effective writing principles seems particularly elusive in certain professions, such as accounting and law. Both occupations run the risk of potential liability should their communications be misinterpreted, so it is critical that their writing be comprehensible. Since accounting principles are complex enough in and of themselves, sentence length should be varied and simple sentences should be used wherever possible (Danziger, 1997).

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In fact, "the more technical the topic is, the more important it is that you select the words carefully (Booher, 1999, p. 17)."

Anyone lacking a legal background understands the difficulty of reading documents written by lawyers. McElhaney (1995) observes that lawyers are professional communicators who are handicapped because their training is in an obscure and confusing language he calls "Legalese." His suggestion? "Simple language suffices for most ideas, even complex legal ones (p. 74)."

It is not just accountants and lawyers who can benefit from application of effective writing principles, however. Managers in all fields can profit from improving their communications. Gilbert (1991) suggests writing in understandable terms, using simple words and eliminating redundancies, and avoiding slang and idioms, which can be especially troublesome for readers or listeners who have minimal background in the subject area. Likewise, technical writers should strive for efficiency in their writing. One study proposes that technical writing instruction and handbooks should promote general writing principles, including use of both active and passive verbs where situations dictate (Riggle, 1998).

With the increasing use of electronic mail has come a tendency to relax the rules for written business messages. Not everyone agrees that this laxity is a good thing. Gantenbein (2000) recommends that, where email is preferable to other communication channels, business users should incorporate conventional grammar, punctuation, and spelling and use greetings, closings, and subject lines just as they would in traditional communications.

In addition to adhering to mechanics principles in writing and speaking, discussion of ethics in communication has become widespread. Financial failures among companies caused by unethical, and sometimes illegal, activities resulting in substantial losses for stockholders and employees have brought ethics debates to the forefront of business communication. Associations dedicated exclusively to promoting better business communication offer codes of ethics for their membership as well as for society at large. The International Association of Business Communicators summarizes its essential ethical principles as: (1) professional communication is legal, (2) professional communication is ethical, and (3) professional communication is in good taste (Code, 2002). Similarly, the Society for Technical Communication promotes legality, honesty, confidentiality, quality, fairness, and professionalism as ideals for technical communicators (Ethical, 1998).

Reading actual business letters and listening to business conversations might cause one to believe that business executives do not necessarily subscribe to these principles. Business writers frequently violate principles taught in business communication classes and supported by other writing authorities. Is this because they do not know the "correct" way to arrange and articulate their message? Or is it because they disagree with the logic expressed in textbooks and disseminated by business communication teachers? Has business culture changed such of late that we no longer need to follow established communication guidelines? In our efforts to maximize efficiency and maintain a competitive edge, have we developed a "curt" communication style?

Even business communication students frequently question the logic of certain business communication principles, such as "buffering" bad news. They are often heard making

statements such as "If you have something bad to tell me, don't beat around the bush" or "I would rather you be straightforward when writing or talking to me."

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this research was to compare the attitudes of business communication teachers and business executives toward business writing principles typically presented in business communication textbooks and accepted by most business communication teachers.

### **METHODOLOGY**

A survey consisting of statements related to common business writing principles was developed and administered to teachers and business executives throughout the United States. The survey was identical for both groups. A sample of teachers was taken of members listed in the most recent Association for Business Communication membership directory. A sample of executives throughout the U.S. was contacted and asked to complete the survey. Survey statements related to message organization, writing style, and writing processes. Respondents were asked to complete a Likert-type instrument consisting of 20 statements indicating their agreement or disagreement with various writing principles (See Appendix for statements). The scale ranged from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). Responses were tabulated and comparisons were made between the different survey groups. Analyses were also made based on demographic factors, including age and gender of the respondents.

All variables were tested for normality. Since none of the variables was normally distributed, non-parametric statistical tests were used. When only two variables were analyzed, the Mann-Whitney Wilcoxon test for equal medians was used to test the difference between population medians. The hypotheses tested were that there is no significant difference in the attitudes of teachers and executives or between females and males toward commonly taught business communication principles. The Kruskal-Wallis Test was used to test the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in respondents' attitudes toward commonly taught business communication principles where age of respondents is considered. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to test the hypothesis that respondents were indifferent to a particular survey statement.

### **FINDINGS**

Completed and usable surveys were obtained for 79 teachers and 85 executives. Table 1 presents a summary of responses to the 20 items for the overall group as well as individual median values for teachers and executives (Refer to the Appendix for a complete listing of all survey statements.). Mean and median responses above three indicate agreement with statements while responses below three indicate disagreement. A response of three indicates neutrality toward the statement.



<b>Table 1: Summary of Responses</b>					
Statement	Mean	Median	Teacher Median	Executive Median	Standard Deviation
1	4.52	5.0	5.0	4.0	0.8175
2	3.82	4.0	5.0	4.0	1.11398
3	4.13	4.0	5.0	4.0	0.9474
4	4.48	5.0	5.0	4.0	0.7550
5	2.99	3.0	2.0	4.0	1.3180
6	3.70	4.0	4.0	3.0	1.1263
7	3.27	3.0	3.5	3.0	1.2175
8	4.34	5.0	5.0	4.0	0.8551
9	3.41	4.0	4.0	3.0	1.1127
10	4.84	5.0	5.0	5.0	0.5785
11	4.21	5.0	5.0	4.0	1.0060
12	1.67	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0689
13	1.70	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0646
14	4.14	4.0	5.0	4.0	0.8644
15	2.58	3.0	2.0	3.0	1.1910
16	4.09	4.0	5.0	4.0	1.0380
17	4.72	5.0	5.0	5.0	0.6320
18	3.45	4.0	4.0	3.0	1.1457
19	1.90	2.0	1.0	2.0	1.0341
20	4.66	5.0	5.0	5.0	0.7389

The Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used to test the hypothesis that respondents would be indifferent to the stated principles; that is, they would respond in a neutral fashion. Table 2 summarizes the Wilcoxon results.

<b>Table 2: Test of Median Equal to 3.0 Versus Median Not Equal to 3.0 (All Respondents)</b>			
Statement	Wilcoxon Statistic	P Value	Estimated Median
1	12458.0	0.000*	4.5
2	7309.0	0.000*	4.0
3	9911.5	0.000*	4.0
4	12069.0	0.000*	4.5
5	3567.5	0.751	3.0
6	6993.5	0.000*	4.0
7	5038.0	0.012*	3.5
8	10059.5	0.000*	4.5
9	5353.0	0.000*	3.5
10	13179.0	0.000*	5.0
11	9342.0	0.000*	4.5
12	857.0	0.000*	1.5
13	599.5	0.000*	1.5
14	8996.0	0.000*	4.0
15	1856.5	0.000*	2.5
16	10156.5	0.000*	4.0
17	13150.5	0.000*	5.0
18	4837.5	0.000*	3.5
19	915.0	0.000*	1.5
20	12260.0	0.000*	5.0
*Significant at .05 level			

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Estimated medians above 3.000 indicated agreement with the statement while medians below 3.000 indicated disagreement. Responses for all statements were significantly different from the hypothesized 3.000 (indifference) except for Statement 5. The median response for this item was "neutral." Referring to Table 1, Statement 5, the median response for executives was 4.0 while the median response for teachers was 2.0. This would indicate that executives are more inclined than teachers to thank in advance of a favor.

Table 3 compares teacher and executive responses and shows that calculated P values indicated significant differences in responses for survey statements 1-6, 9, 11, 14-16, and 19. Even though significant differences between teachers and executives were found for each of these items, their median responses fell on the same side of overall indifference. Discussion of those statements where significant differences were found follows. For Statements 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 17, 18, and 20, no significant differences were found.

For Statement 1, teachers agreed more strongly than executives that good news should be stated in the first paragraph of a message. The logic of beginning with good news to put the reader in a positive frame of mind is apparently subscribed to by both groups; but teachers, perhaps because of their intensive study of communication, consider this strategy more important than do executives.

Teachers also agreed more strongly that conversational words should be used for most business communications, a concept presented in Statement 2. The explanation for this difference may be that teachers work more with general topics in their classes while executives work with specific vocabularies, including jargon and idioms unique to their businesses.

In addition to a preference for conversational words, teachers also expressed a stronger need to use positive wording even when a negative message has to be delivered. Median responses were 5 and 4, respectively, for teachers and executives. Although no explanation was solicited or given, executives most likely were able to recall specific instances where their jobs required them to convey bad news (or where they were given bad news) and expediency of the situation required quick, terse communication.

Teachers agreed more strongly that it is important to consider reader and listener benefits in all communication, a concept identified as "you attitude" in most business communication textbooks (Statement 4). This may be attributed to idealistic views held by teachers, but it would seem that all writers/speakers would recognize the need for showing consideration to their message receivers.

Executives agreed but teachers disagreed that thanking in advance of a favor is acceptable. The opinion of many business communication textbook authors and teachers is that it is presumptuous to thank someone in advance of their doing anything. However, executives seem to feel that doing so is appropriate.

Teacher responses for Statement 6 revealed their belief that bad news should be buffered with positive or neutral statements. Executives were neutral in their reaction to this statement. The basis for a buffer, of course, is to condition the message receiver for the bad news to follow. This premise is more crucial for external communications, and executives may have based their responses more on their routine, everyday internal communications.

For formal business writing, the use of personal pronouns and contractions is typically avoided. However, many writers consider their usage acceptable and even desirable in their everyday communications since they give a conversational tone to the message. Teachers agreed, though not strongly, that personal pronouns and contractions are acceptable. Executives were neutral toward this idea (See Statement 9).

Quite surprisingly, executives had a median response of 4 regarding eliminating sexism from their writing (Statement 11). Although this indicated agreement that sexism should be eliminated, strong agreement was not shown. The teacher median was 5 (strongly agree) for this statement.

Teachers were stronger in their agreement that active voice is preferred for most business communication (Statement 14). However, they disagreed that passive voice has no place in business communication (Statement 15). Executives agreed, though not as strongly, that active voice is preferred; they were neutral regarding not using passive voice under any circumstances.

Teacher responses (median 5) revealed a greater need for using simple rather than complex words. Executives agreed that a simple word was better, but their median response was 4. Possibly contributing to executive responses is the fact that they possess specific vocabularies unique to their business or profession, thus technical or complex words may be a part of their everyday communications.

Teachers and executives disagreed, though teachers more strongly, that appropriate grammar is more important in spoken than written messages. A median response of 1 for teachers and 2 for executives for Statement 19 denoted agreement that appropriate grammar is important regardless of how the message is delivered.

Those statements showing significant differences between female and male responses are noted in Table 4. Females agreed slightly more strongly than males with Statement 1 that when good news is to be relayed, it should be stated in the first paragraph of a message. Likewise, females indicated slightly greater agreement that conversational words should be used in most communications (Statement 2). In reality, the difference, though significant, was so slight for both statements that median responses were, in fact, equal.

For Statements 12 and 14, respectively, females disagreed more strongly that correct grammar is not as important in email as in printed letters and memos; and males disagreed more strongly that active voice is preferred for most business communications. However, as was the situation with Statements 1 and 2, the median responses were equal even though there were significant statistical differences in the two groups.

A significant difference was found between female and male respondents for Statement 19 concerning whether appropriate grammar was more important in spoken messages than in written messages. Females strongly disagreed that any difference should exist between spoken and written messages. Males disagreed with the statement also, although not as strongly as females.

There were no significant differences among the 15 remaining statements where female/male comparisons were made. Table 4 provides median responses for females and males for all 20 statements.

<b>Table 3: Comparison of Teacher/Executive Responses</b>				
Mann Whitney Test Statistic				
Statement	Teachers/Executives	P Value	Teacher Median	Executive Median
1	7671.5	.0001*	5.000	4.000
2	7471.5	.0010*	5.000	4.000
3	7387.0	.0042*	5.000	4.000
4	7820.5	.0000*	5.000	4.000
5	4991.5	.0000*	2.000	4.000
6	7954.0	.0000*	4.000	3.000
7	6573.0	.5576	3.500	3.000
8	6966.0	.1055	5.000	4.000
9	7283.0	.0118*	4.000	3.000
10	6818.5	.3227	5.000	5.000
11	7720.5	.0001*	5.000	4.000
12	6086.0	.1561	1.000	1.000
13	6388.0	.6712	1.000	1.000
14	7999.0	.0000*	5.000	4.000
15	4383.5	.0000*	2.000	3.000
16	7436.5	.0025*	5.000	4.000
17	6883.0	.2297	5.000	5.000
18	6469.0	.0582	4.000	3.000

19	5743.0	.0147*	1.000	2.000
20	6995.0	.0863	5.000	5.000
*Significant at .05 level				

Statement	Mann Whitney Test Statistic	P Value	Female Median	Male Median
1	7654.0	.0080*	5.000	5.000
2	7333.5	.0432*	4.000	4.000
3	7312.5	.1266	4.000	4.000
4	7128.5	.3562	5.000	5.000
5	6496.5	.2490	3.000	3.000
6	7390.0	.0746	4.000	4.000
7	7291.5	.1074	4.000	3.000
8	7088.5	.3492	5.000	4.000
9	7197.5	.2503	4.000	3.000
10	6838.5	.9777	5.000	5.000
11	7415.0	.0622	5.000	4.000
12	6189.0	.0305*	1.000	1.000
13	6608.5	.4328	1.000	1.000
14	7696.0	.0031*	4.000	4.000
15	6340.0	.2031	2.000	3.000
16	7098.0	.4109	4.000	4.000
17	6869.0	.9449	5.000	5.000
18	6415.5	.5465	4.000	4.000

19	5807.5	.0009*	1.000	2.000
20	7207.0	.1837	5.000	5.000
*Significant at .05 level				

When testing for equal medians among all age groups, 18 of 20 statements showed no significant difference. Only Statements 2 and 5 had medians that were unequal. In statement 2 age groups 41 and older agreed and the 31-40 age group was indifferent regarding using conversational words in most written business communication. In Statement 5 the 31-40 age group agreed slightly and the 41 and older age groups were indifferent regarding thanking in advance of an action.

### CONCLUSION

Although there were several statements where business communication teachers' and executives' attitudes differed significantly from a statistical standpoint, in general the differences were on the same end of the attitudinal scale. Statement 5 regarding "thanking in advance of a favor" was the only exception. On that statement executives thought it was acceptable to thank in advance while teachers considered thanking in advance inappropriate. This indicates that the principles presented in business communication textbooks and subscribed to by most business communication teachers are, in fact, not materially different from executive practice.

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<b>APPENDIX</b> SURVEY STATEMENTS	
1.	When "good news" is to be delivered in a letter or memo, it should be stated in the first paragraph.
2.	Conversational words should be used for most written business communications.
3.	Positive wording should be used in written communications even when a negative message must be delivered.
4.	It is important to consider "reader benefits" and "listener benefits" in all business communications.
5.	Thanking in advance of a favor being performed is acceptable.
6.	When "bad news" must be reported, it should be "buffered" (delayed until appropriate reasons or background information can be given).
7.	E-mail messages permit a more relaxed, informal approach to business communication.
8.	Writing or speaking "confidently" is important to overall message reception.
9.	Using personal pronouns and contractions is acceptable in business writing.
10.	Being ethical in all business communications is important to me.
11.	Business writers/speakers should attempt to eliminate all "sexism" from their communication.
12.	Correct grammar and spelling are not as important in e-mail messages as they are in printed letters or memos.
13.	Ethics in business writing vary with the circumstances.
14.	Active voice (in speaking or writing) is preferred for most business communication situations.
15.	Passive writing or speaking has no place in business communication.



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16.	When a simple word can be used, it is preferred over a complex word (e.g., paid vs. remunerated).
17.	For most business communication opportunities, good listening is as important as good speaking or writing.
18.	More information is communicated nonverbally than verbally, either through speaking or writing.
19.	Appropriate grammar is more important in spoken messages than in written messages.
20.	For finding a job as well as performing effectively on the job, good communication skills are as important as good technical skills.



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# **GORE MAIL VS. BUSH NEWS - CANDIDATE EMAIL CAMPAIGN STRATEGY IN THE 2000 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This paper seeks to address issues of how candidates in the 2000 presidential election used email as a campaign tool. Through a content analysis and use of Searle's Speech Act Theory a number of conclusions were reached which help to define the ways candidates use language in electronic communication to achieve their desired campaign goals.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the course of the nation's history from the first presidential election in 1788 to the most recent election--the first at the beginning of a new century (2000)--involving the citizens of the United States of America, a number of changes have occurred in the manner by which political campaigns have been conducted. As part of American culture and character, the role of elections in society cannot be discounted or minimized. "Elections are the most sweeping and important rituals in American politics. They are the most direct means of transforming public opinion and popular participation into regulatory mechanisms" (Bennett, 1980, p. 174).

As advances in information technology and voting rights have developed over the course of two centuries, political parties and their candidates have developed a unique reliance upon the mass communication technologies at their disposal for distribution and dissemination of political information crucial to winning elections. The roles of two groups, innovators in the development of mass communication technology and political parties, have been of paramount importance in the provision of information to eligible voters.

At the dawn of the 21st century, the relative power and dominance of political parties is only a fraction of what it was at the same temporal point in the prior century. Political parties still have important roles to play, but it is the candidates who hold greater sway in post-Watergate America (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1997, pp. 20-21). Similarly, the technology now available to deliver information to interested consumers was unimagined 100 years ago. A society where freely flowing information could be found at the touch of a button was still the stuff of science fiction barely 20 years ago during the Reagan Administration.

An important new issue for scholars to consider is how political candidates utilize the available technology in order to deliver desired information to interested parties who might or

definitely will support a campaign. The 1990s witnessed the mainstream advent of the electronic or email message. As discussed by Dorman (1998), email provides the means for individuals or organizations to transmit information to selected parties in a matter of seconds. The email message is sent via computers across a network, essentially a spinoff of the Cold War era, called the Internet. Email messages can reach intended recipients faster than print and, in many instances, broadcast information.

The advantages to such a technology are obvious. Email messages can be tailored by the sender to express a policy position, make an announcement, or request the recipient to perform a desired action. In this sense, email can be seen as a public relations or persuasive tool. Another advantage of email over other forms of communication is that it can be accessed from anywhere a connection with the Internet can be established. Unlike most telephones and facsimile machines, which require a person be physically present at a fixed location to receive information, email can be retrieved from almost anywhere, including homes, offices, airports, libraries, hotels, and even coffee shops.

One of the primary goals in any political campaign is the distribution of information to a target audience (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1997, pp. 39-40). It is hoped by the campaign that any disbursed information will help to persuade voters, or reinforce a decision already held by a voter, to vote for a candidate. In the case of this study, the target audience is potential voters or current supporters of a candidate in a presidential election.

In the years since the 1996 presidential election, the proliferation of personal computers and access to email and the Internet grew substantially. A Roper Starch study commissioned by America Online found that consumer activity (e.g., shopping, banking, and stock trading) had almost doubled in the period from 1998 to 2000. The survey showed that only 31% of survey respondents acknowledged shopping online in 1998. By 2000 the number had grown to 56%. The same survey also showed that 80% of online shoppers researched a product before making an online purchase. (E-Commerce [on-line], 2000).

Email addresses are now part of standard information given for contacting individuals and organizations much as telephone numbers and street addresses were in the 20th century. "Email addresses have become such a pervasive part of an individual's identity that [according to the AOL/Roper survey] 75 percent of Internet users expect more people to know their email [address] than their phone number in the future" (E-Commerce, mobile access drawing interest from net users [on-line] 2000). The 2000 presidential election offered a unique opportunity to observe how the presidential candidates used email to distribute their messages to the target audience. These communication actions can be of beneficial significance to personnel in the business world as they may better understand ways to use email to reach potential target audiences.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

"The 2000 presidential election may have [had] at least one thing in common with the 1960 battle between John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon: Both [were] watershed races for

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the intersection of a relatively new technology and political campaigning. Then, it was television; now, it's the Internet" (Brown, 1999, p. 61).

In order to understand the significance of email use as a vehicle for message delivery in a political campaign, a brief examination of the existing literature on email usage and technology advances should be made.

First, let us consider the potential dilemmas posed by advances in technology. "As new technology enters a consumer's life, it can displace knowledge used to solve current problems, raise awareness of needs that the technology can address but that were not previously noticed, and require adaptations that are irksome" (Mick & Fournier, 1998, p. 131).

However, technology has been seen throughout the life of the republic to be an integral part of the American character. "Historically, the United States proved to be fertile ground for the growth of technology, in large part because American inventors and capitalists (e.g., Bell, Edison, Ford) seized the financial opportunities of new technological products and the American public tended to link newness with improvement" (Mick & Fournier, 1998, p. 124).

"In the presidential campaigns of Nixon and Kennedy, television ushered in a new era in both communications technology and political campaigning" (Williams, 2000, p. 52). The Internet has done almost the same thing on the same scale in the 2000 election as television did to the 1960 election. The technology advancements of the 1990s have changed the shape of the political landscape in the 21st century.

Advances in technology have brought with them a spin-off need to enhance and augment the capability of individuals to obtain information in greater quantities and qualities prior to a technology advance. The desire and drive for research in the information age has dwarfed the needs, desires, and available resources of only two decades ago. "But today, the shift is to a multiplicity of 'channels' and a plethora of technologies, not a succession of dominant media. Television's swift sword was blunted by the rise of cable, satellite, and the Internet" (Williams, 2000, p. 52).

But to what ends are people truly using the Internet and email? One political analyst sees the Internet as a much needed panacea. "The Internet is giving campaigns the opportunity to reinvigorate citizen participation in elections" (Brown, 1999, p. 61). But is this analyst merely an opportunist, or are citizens participating in the political opportunities that present themselves to a person online?

"A 1998 study by the Pew Research Center For the People and the Press found that only 15 percent of the population visited any website relating to the 1998 elections. The study found that a sizable segment of American adults (41 percent) are using the Internet. However, it also showed that newer users are less likely to access sites relating to news and public affairs than long-time users. The study found that while about 23 percent of adult Internet users did go to news sites, the information most sought was weather, followed by local community information and movies, stock quotes, sports scores and then news headlines" (Willis & Perra, 2000, p. 29).

Evidence has shown that people are using the Internet interactively and that campaigns utilizing the Internet and email in particular do have positive effects in stimulating participation from target audience members. Take, for example, a Wellesley, Massachusetts-based agency that wanted to direct customers to an e-commerce website. The agency drafted a campaign

including a direct mail postcard, email, and a print ad in a leading trade magazine (Beardi, 2000, p. 72).

The agency made use of computerized lists of potentially interested consumers. "The postcard and email efforts tested a number of lists. On average, 5% of the total email recipients signed up [for the target program], compared with a 3% response rate from the postcard" (Beardi, 2000, p. 72). "The email response rate, which hit as high as 9.6% with some lists, surpassed the company's expectations" (Beardi, p. 73).

In another study one researcher found that email had better rates of response and receptiveness among target audiences. "Using email, [the researcher] garnered a 29 percent combined response rate, and only nine of the total 399 who received the email asked to be removed from her list" (Conlon, 1999, p. 73).

"Designers of commercial Web sites face a myriad of decisions about how best to organize and present information, often without knowing how their design influences information search costs and subsequent choice behavior" (Hoque & Lohse, 1999, p. 387).

Email can serve as a reliable medium in the presentation of information. "Electronic mail or 'email' is one of the most popular and useful features of the Internet. Email allows users to communicate with others who have access to a computer network. The proliferation of personal computers has made this form of communication more readily accessible at homes and personal offices. Email messages can be quickly composed and arrive at their destinations within minutes of being sent" (Dorman, 1998, p. 260).

Since email is easily delivered, people are not forced to search for messages and the information they contain. For a political campaign, the speed by which email travels is invaluable in today's world. As one business analyst stated, "We are not dealing in day-long deadlines but with cable networks and hourly deadlines; you've got to be quick" (Smyth, 1991, p. 17). Email allows for information to be delivered in a timely fashion, which is in tune with the speed of both news and evolving technologies.

In a health related study regarding information flow and communication, email was hailed by the researchers as one of the most important developments in their ability to perform research. "The most significant characteristic of email communication is its speed. The opportunity for rapid response to messages fosters spontaneity in the respondent. Using email helped . . . control the number and length of telephone conversations that would have been necessary for engaging in dialogue about the phenomenon of protective care-receiving and for reaching consensus on questions of data analysis. There was, similarly, decreased reliance on faxes and the postal service (snail mail), which helped . . . control costs." (Bunting, Russell, et al., 1998, p. 132).

The use of email has also gained a measure of legitimacy among members of the business community. "Today's email newsletters have emerged as a voice of authority in the technology business, conveying the wisdom of established Silicon Valley icons" (Email: The medium of tomorrow, 1998, p. 12). A U.S. Government publication released in the mid-1990s stated plainly: "email has taken on a more substantive use than it had in the 1980s" (Rivenbark, 1995, p. 3).

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"For many people, the ability to exchange email with friends and colleagues has changed the way they work and play. Emailing . . . also saves . . . time and money. Pass along relatively large amounts of information even if the recipient is not immediately available, access the Internet from almost anywhere in the world. Using email is easier than using the postal service" (Pohlmann, 1995, p. 84).

Given the Internet's relative ease of use and accessibility by varying segments of the American population, political campaign and marketing considerations have taken on an entirely new dimension. "The web is now playing an integral role in political marketing" (McManus, 1999, p. 76) inasmuch that candidates are now preparing websites and email lists for the 2002 election. One political consultant is certain that in 21st century campaigning and elections "the Internet will be a core part of political strategy" (McManus, p. 76).

The use of email may play a substantial role in providing levels of knowledge needed to sufficiently inform voters of their options. Without sufficient levels of knowledge, political atrophy may set in and the rates of participation may decrease. "Citizens in a representative democracy need basic information about who their representatives are and where those representatives stand on issues of the day" (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996, p. 73). As former president James Madison (1832) once wrote, "A popular government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy, or perhaps both" (p. 276).

The advances in "electronic communications are thought to have created an information explosion with direct implications for creating a more informed citizenry" (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996, p. 112).

Indeed, the Internet is a vast realm of anarchy: uncontrolled by any government, unregulated in terms of consumerism and the promotion of private sector commerce, littered with advertisements for all kinds of industries from retail stores to herbal supplements to pornography, and yet a treasure trove of political information available for the taking. And "participation in the electronic news and information market-place is open" (Schiller, 1986, p. 24). Hence the value of email as a campaigning tool is readily apparent.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to best determine how presidential candidates in the 2000 election used email as a campaign tool, a content analysis was performed for each candidate's emails in this study.

### **The Candidates**

Email from the following candidates were analyzed for a number of factors that will be discussed later: Texas Governor George W. Bush, Vice President Al Gore, and Reform Party candidate Patrick J. Buchanan. Green Party candidate Ralph Nader would have been considered for this study instead of Pat Buchanan; however, after two attempts early in the campaign to subscribe to his email updates proved unsuccessful, Buchanan was chosen as the major third party candidate for content analysis.

## **Email Addresses and Data Collection**

The investigator created separate email addresses to differentiate and separate email messages received from candidates. Free email addresses available at [cnn.com](http://cnn.com) were created to collect emails from the three candidates involved in this study. One address was shared between Al Gore and Patrick Buchanan, and a separate email address was created solely to receive email messages from George W. Bush.

In order to collect data needed for this study, the author visited official candidate websites as listed by the search engine available at [www.msn.com](http://www.msn.com). At each official candidate site, an option was available to subscribe to email updates from the candidate. It should be noted that at each of the campaign websites, the campaigns asked only for minimal subscriber information. The campaigns usually asked only for an interested subscriber's email addresses. For instance, Al Gore requested a few additional items of information. These were limited to general information items: name, address (specifically in what state the subscriber resided), email address, telephone and facsimile numbers, demographic information, and how the website was found. The campaign websites failed on all accounts to request information regarding political party affiliation, items of personal political concern, or any other form of detailed politically relevant information.

By supplying different researcher email addresses to different campaigns, a determination could be made regarding whether or not a candidate would share the email address with other interested groups. The following addresses were created and used for the candidates: [pachyderm@chef.net](mailto:pachyderm@chef.net) (an address created at [cnn.com](http://cnn.com) for the purposes of receiving email from Democrat Al Gore and Reform Party candidate Pat Buchanan), and [goprigh@sanfranmail.com](mailto:goprigh@sanfranmail.com) (a [cnn.com](http://cnn.com) address created specifically for receiving email from George W. Bush). Subscriptions were placed at the candidates' websites well in advance of the general election of 7 November 2000.

## **Speech Act Theory**

Speech Act Theory is used to categorize the function of presidential campaign emails in this study. The use of Speech Act Theory in this analysis is a viable option because it is a theory supported by academicians in a broad range of disciplines. It is an established theory and helps to bind the research to a previously defined theory.

Developed during the 1950s and 1960s by philosophers John Austin and John Searle, Speech Act Theory promotes the idea that language is used to perform actions and not just to represent symbols. For example, writing "Mark the second oval to cast your vote" constitutes an order or request about voting; it is not simply a statement about voting.

Searle (1976) proposed five types of speech acts: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Brief examples of each are given here. "Representatives . . . commit the speaker (in varying degrees) to something's being the case" (p. 10; e.g., "George W. Bush is the Republican governor of Texas"). "Directives . . . are attempts . . . by the speaker to get the hearer to do something" (p. 11; e.g., "Forward this email message to



everyone in your address book and tell them why you support the Gore-Lieberman ticket"). "Commissives . . . are those illocutionary acts whose point is to commit the speaker . . . to some future course of action" (p. 11; e.g., "I will work to keep Social Security intact for generations to come and will work to make prescription drugs affordable for those senior Americans who depend on Social Security").

"Expressives . . . express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content. The paradigms of Expressive verbs are 'thank,' 'congratulate,' 'apologize,' 'condone,' 'deplore,' and 'welcome'" (Searle 1976, p. 12; e.g., "Joe Lieberman and I want to thank you for your support").

"Declarations bring about some alternation in the status or condition of the referred-to object or objects solely in virtue of the fact that the declaration has been successfully performed" (Searle 1976, p.14; e.g., "I name former Defense Secretary Dick Cheney as my Vice Presidential running mate").

Each of these speech acts tells us how candidates are using messages to relate information to subscribers. The five speech acts show how language can serve in different capacities for differing purposes. It is therefore a useful means of analyzing email messages.

### Messages Analyzed

The analysis of emails was focused on how the candidates used emails as a campaign tool. The unit of analysis for this study is defined as individual email messages sent by the campaign.

The study sought to determine how Searle's (1976) defined speech acts were utilized within email content. This included quantity and types of speech acts contained in each email message.

It was fully expected that an individual email message might contain several different types of speech acts. The entire universe of emails was analyzed in a census (see Table 1) to determine where the speech acts with email messages fall in the five established categories. A census of the emails provided a more thorough analysis than a random sample of emails received from the candidates.

<b>Table 1: Number of Emails Sent</b>	
Candidate	Number of emails sent
Bush	38
Gore	48
Buchanan	52
Total	138

The category of speech acts called *representatives* was defined as those messages found in emails that use language to perform such acts as making announcements regarding the appearance of a candidate (or someone in a candidate's family such as a wife or daughter) at a public venue (a public venue is a broadly defined term and may encompass any event from book signings to county fairs to debates; the main point is that the candidate is publicly visible either in a mediated or non-mediated sense). Representatives also make reference with regard to the campaign and election (e.g., There are only 2 days until the election) or make claims of a political or personal nature relevant to the campaign (e.g., Once again Al Gore proved he is the candidate who will fight for America's working families).

The second category was *directives*. Directives use language specifically designed to elicit a response from the recipient. Examples of directives in emails include a request for supporters to volunteer at a local or state campaign office, to make a financial contribution to the campaign, or to attend a rally or perform some other type of action that has a direct and almost immediate beneficial impact on the campaign. Emails may also contain directives instructing a subscriber to perform an action that requires the recipient to select included hyperlinks to candidate, party, interest group, or other websites, and specifically asks the subscriber to visit those websites.

Since most emails do contain hyperlinks to candidate or party websites (usually found at the end of the email message), the emails were not coded for a directive act solely on the basis of the existence of a hyperlink unless there was a verbal message that urged or instructed the recipient to specifically visit a website.

The third category of speech act to be considered within email messages are *commissives*. Since the function of commissives is to commit the speaker to a future course of action, items such as campaign promises or threats were searched for within the message in order to classify a speech act as a commissive. Commissive acts also included promises of what a campaign organization or candidate might do in the course of the campaign itself (e.g., Al and Tipper Gore will appear tomorrow night on *The Late Show with David Letterman*).

A critical difference between a representative act and a commissive act is a promise of a future event. In the above example, the speech act is considered to be a commissive because it indicates what will happen in the future. The word "will" was determined, for purposes of this study, to have promisory weight that a future action would occur.

The fourth category in this study was *expressives*. Since expressives are a way of verbalizing emotions, individual speech acts such as "thank you's" or apologies were classified in this category.

The final speech act was declarations. Declarations are usually spoken or communicated by persons such as priests or judges (e.g., for purposes of marriage, absolving someone of a sin, or passing a sentence). A good example of a political declaration would be a concession, acceptance, or endorsement of another candidate.

In addition to the previously mentioned study of speech acts included within the email messages, a comparison was made between the total use of directives versus all other speech acts to determine whether directives are the predominant form of speech act found within campaign email content.

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The size of each email was recorded. Many content analyses study the size of what is under investigation. In print content analyses, news stories may be measured in terms of word count or column inches. In broadcast analyses, measurement may occur in terms of time. For purposes of this study, measurement of emails occurred in the number of kilobytes per message.

The frequency with which email messages were dispatched to subscribers was of particular interest. The study sought to examine the total rate of distribution of messages over a specified time period. The study examined distribution of messages before and after Labor Day, the 2-week period immediately preceding Election Day and the 4-week period after Election Day. The date for each email was noted.

Authorship of emails was taken into consideration. A list was created which recorded email addresses and names associated with those addresses. This study sought to answer questions related to email authorship. One is also forced to consider the consistency of actual email addresses in receiving messages from a campaign. Multiple names may be associated with an originating campaign address. Were the senders of email messages clearly identified to a subscriber when they are received or opened? The associated name to which an email may or may not be assigned was considered in some detail. Was there consistency between the named sender of a message and the address from which the message is received (e.g., are all email messages from "Gore Mail" sent from update@al Gore2000.com)? Were multiple senders sharing one or more addresses to send email to subscribers (e.g., how many people use the address bushnews@georgewbush.com to dispatch messages)? Also, how often were messages sent in which no author is stated by which an address can be associated with a person, organization, or other identifiable means? Authorship statistics, including the list of email authors and addresses, are included in the findings section.

A content analysis codebook was developed and utilized to review and analyze each email message from the listed candidates in this study. In order to ensure intercoder reliability in this study, the author and a Ph.D. student from The University of Alabama's College of Communication and Information Sciences coded the emails according to the guidelines set forth in the codebook. The second coder was given a random sample of 30% of received emails and the results compared statistically with those of the author to determine intercoder reliability. Prior to the second coder's review of the email sample, the author spent a few hours with the second coder in a training session. During this training session, the author reviewed the content analysis codebook in great detail so that all terms, especially those relating to speech act theory, were understood. The author then coded one email message with the second coder in order to demonstrate how to code the email messages. To verify the intercoder reliability results, Holsti's test for intercoder reliability was implemented and reviewed.

According to the Holsti test for intercoder reliability, the two coders were in agreement on coding email messages for specified content in 86.8% of total occurrences. For George W. Bush, the coders were in agreement 84.9% of the occurrences, Al Gore registered an 88.7% agreement, and Pat Buchanan 86.3% agreement. The reliability measurements were considered sufficiently high to use the data for this study.

After the content analysis was completed, the findings of each of the research questions were discussed. Appropriate statistical measurements were determined for each question posed above. Those results and a discussion of their potential implications follows.

### **FINDINGS OF THE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF CAMPAIGN EMAIL MESSAGES**

The research questions posed earlier in this dissertation are listed below:

Research Question 1.	What type(s) of speech act(s) is/are found in presidential campaign email?
Research Question 2.	Do emails regularly utilize directives as part of the message more frequently than other types of speech acts?
Research Question 3.	How often are email messages dispatched by presidential campaigns?
Research Question 4.	What is the size of a typical campaign email message as measured in bytes?
Research Question 5.	Who are the stated authors used in presidential campaign email?

The findings of the content analysis, which sought to answer the above research questions, are discussed below.

#### **Results of the Content Analysis of Presidential Campaign Emails**

The first research question sought to determine the different types of speech acts found within presidential candidate email. After a careful and considered content analysis of 138 email messages from the three presidential candidates, the study revealed that all five types of speech acts (representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations) were found in email from each candidates. Table 2 lists the total frequency of all speech acts for the three candidates. Tables 3 and 4 illustrate the speech acts in terms of total percentage of content of the messages. The statistical analysis of the speech act data (as shown in Table 2) by means of conducting a chi-squared test show the data were statistically significant, ( $C^2 = 330.58$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Table 5 illustrates the average number of speech acts per email for each candidate.

Types of speech acts	Bush	Gore	Buchanan	Total
Representatives	1168	893	536	2597
Directives	299	666	157	1122
Commissives	51	198	23	272
Expressives	23	21	33	77

Declarations	1	2	1	4
Total	1542	1780	750	4072

Types of speech acts	Bush	Gore	Buchanan
Representatives	75.74	50.17	71.47
Directives	19.39	37.42	20.93
Commissives	3.31	11.12	3.07
Expressives	1.49	1.18	4.40
Declarations	0.06	0.11	0.13
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Candidate	Types of Speech Acts				
	Representatives	Directives	Commissives	Expressives	Declarations
Bush	44.97	26.65	18.75	29.87	25.00
Gore	34.39	59.36	72.79	27.27	50.00
Buchanan	20.64	13.99	8.46	42.86	25.00
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Candidate	Number of speech acts per email
Bush	40.58
Gore	37.08
Buchanan	14.42

### Use of Directive Speech Acts

Of the three candidates, Vice President Gore made more use of directive speech acts than either Bush or Buchanan or the two candidates combined. As shown in Table 2 Gore's use of directives (n = 666) far surpassed Bush's (n = 299) or Buchanan's (n = 157). As a function of percentages as illustrated in Table 3, the numbers there also reflect Gore's use of directive speech acts far ahead of Bush or Buchanan (Gore 37.42%, Bush 19.39%, Buchanan 20.93%).

While not the dominant form of speech act within campaign emails, the use of directives far outweighs candidates' use of commissives, expressives, or declarations.

The statistical analysis of the use of directives in the speech act data (as shown in Table 6) by means of conducting a chi-squared test show the data involving directives as compared to other speech acts were statistically significant, ( $X^2 = 5853.37$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ).

	Directives	Representatives	Commissives	Expressives	Declarations
Total acts	1122	2597	272	77	4

### Frequency of Email Dispatches

Research Question 3 posed the question regarding how often email messages are dispatched by the presidential campaigns. The first email messages were received from the Bush and Gore campaigns on 2 May 2000. The inclusion of Patrick Buchanan came some weeks later, with the first email message arriving on 28 June 2000. During the 32-week subscription period, the Bush campaign dispatched 38 email messages. During this same period, the Gore campaign dispatched 48 messages. Despite the delay in subscription service, the Buchanan campaign had a higher frequency of email dispatches than either of the two major party candidates. Fifty-two email messages were dispatched by the Buchanan campaign during a 28-week subscription period. Table 7 displays the data on distribution frequencies from the campaigns.

Candidate	Total emails	Time period of receipt		
Bush	38	32 weeks		
Gore	48	32 weeks		
Buchanan	52	24 weeks		
	Avg./week	Pre-LD Avg.	Post-LD Avg.	Post-Election Avg.

Bush	1.19	0.67	1.4	3.00
Gore	1.50	1.22	2.4	0.50
Buchanan	2.17	2.80	2.3	0.25

As reflected in the total number of emails (see Table 7), Bush had the lowest rate of distribution at 1.19 per week over a 32-week time period from 2 May 2000 through 3 December 2000. For the major party candidates the Labor Day (LD) holiday delineates a sharp swing into increased action for dispatching email messages. As shown in Table 7, Governor Bush's pre-Labor Day dispatch average was less than one email per week (0.67 emails per week) and Vice President Gore's pre-Labor Day average was slightly above one email per week (1.22 emails per week).

An ANOVA analysis of the frequency of email distributions of the campaigns was conducted to determine whether there were significant differences in the frequency of distribution. The ANOVA found that the data were statistically non-significant, ( $F_{(2,85)} = 2.492, p \geq .05$ ). The ANOVA data is shown in Table 8.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	13.383	2	6.691	2.492	.089
Within Groups	228.208	85	2.685		
Total	241.591	87			

The activity of the campaigns in the 2 weeks prior to the election in email distribution is also interesting to note. Table 9 illustrates the frequency of emails sent from 24 October through 7 November.

Candidate	Number of emails
Bush	6
Gore	11
Buchanan	5

The Gore campaign sent almost twice as many email messages in the 2-week period than the Bush campaign and more than double the number of messages sent by the Buchanan campaign. This trend was also reflected on Election Day as shown in Table 10.

Candidate	Number of emails
Bush	1
Gore	2
Buchanan	0

### Average Size of Campaign Emails

The averages for each candidate's electronic mail are listed in Table 11.

Candidate	Email as measured by kilobytes
Bush	14.05
Gore	10.92
Buchanan	2.29

An ANOVA analysis of the size of each candidate's email showed that the size of each candidate's email was significantly different, ( $F_{(2,135)} = 29.311$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ) as illustrated in Table 12.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	535.654	2	267.827	29.311	.000
Within Groups	1233.563	135	9.138		
Total	1769.217	137			



A post-hoc examination of means indicated that the size of each candidate's email messages was significantly different from all candidates as illustrated in Table 13.

<b>Table 13: Post Hoc Least Significant Differences Analysis</b> 95% Confidence Interval						
		Mean Difference*	Std. Error	Sig.	Lower	Upper
Bush	Gore	1.5680	.6564	.018	.2699	2.8661
	Buchanan	4.7379	.6451	.000	3.4620	6.0137
Gore	Bush	-1.5680	.6564	.018	-2.8861	-2.699
	Buchanan	3.1699	.6051	.000	1.9733	4.3665
Buchanan	Bush	-4.7379	.6451	.000	-6.0137	-3.4620
	Gore	-3.1699	.6051	.000	-4.3665	-1.9733

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

### Senders of Email

The final research question asked who are the stated authors of the email messages. Authorship of an email message for purposes of this study may not actually be the person who wrote the message but rather whose or what name appears in an email recipient's "from" mailbox. The examination of email addresses and associated names is crucial to answering this question.

According to received email messages analyzed in this study, the Bush campaign associated 10 names with only three addresses. The Gore campaign associated five names with six addresses. The Buchanan campaign supplied no names to associate with the five addresses that dispatched campaign related email.

The findings of the authorship and address considerations as posed in Research Question 5 can be found in Table 14.

<b>Table 14: Email Authors and Addresses</b>				
Candidate	Authors/Addresses	Frequency	# Addresses	% Email

Bush	Authors			
	No author stated (N/A)	5	2	13.16
	Gov. George W. Bush	3	2	7.89
	BushNews@GeorgeWBush.com	10	1	26.32
	Bush News eTrain	1	1	2.63
	Bush News	6	1	15.79
	Bush eTrain	4	1	10.53
	George W. Bush	1	1	2.63
	Laura Bush	1	1	2.63
	George P. Bush	1	1	2.63
	Don Evans	1	1	2.63
	Bush-Cheney 2000	5	1	13.16
	Total			100.00
	Addresses			
	replies@georgewbush.echomail.com	1	1	2.63
	BushHQ@georgewbush.com	1	1	2.63
	bushnews@georgewbush.com	36	11	94.74
	Total			100.00

<b>Table 14: Email Authors and Addresses (Continued)</b>				
Candidate	Authors/Addresses	Frequency	# Addresses	% Email
Gore	Authors			
	No author state (N/A)	1	1	2.08
	Gore 2000 Campaign	1	1	2.08
	Gore Mail	29	1	60.42
	Donnie Fowler	1	1	2.08
	Gore-Lieberman Mail	12	1	25.00
	Al Gore	1	1	2.08
	Gore/Lieberman InstantMessage	3	1	6.25
	NetTotal			100.00
	Addresses			
	campaignupdate@algore2000.com	1	1	2.08
	update@algore2000.com	42	3	87.50
	envirosforgore@hotmail.com	1	1	2.08
	khancock@gorenet.com	1	1	2.08
	imnetwork@algore2000.com	3	1	6.25
		Total		

<b>Table 14: Email Authors and Addresses (Continued)</b>				
Candidate	Authors/Addresses	Frequency	# Addresses	% Email
Buchanan	Authors			
	No authors stated (N/A)	52	5	100.00
	Addresses	41	1	78.85
	update@buchananreform.com	1	1	1.92
	update@iname.net	4	1	7.69
	pjb@buchananreform.com	5	1	9.62
	updates@buchananreform.com	1	1	1.92
	jatras@aol.com			100.00
	Total			

### Post-Hoc Analysis of Data

During the analysis of the email messages, questions beyond the initial research questions arose for further consideration. First, to what degree of frequency do presidential campaigns employ the use of directive speech acts to encourage readers to (a) visit websites, (b) make

financial contributions, (c) engage in volunteer activism, or (d) participate in other campaign related activities?

Second, how often are hyperlinks included in email messages, and what is the average number of hyperlinks included in a message?

### **Different Uses of Directive Speech Acts**

The first post-hoc question sought to examine the use of speech acts to direct people to take action on one or more of four potential campaign related actions: visiting a website, making a financial contribution, engaging in some form of volunteer activism, or some other form of campaign participation. For purposes of this study, the statement "click here to contribute" or other variations of such a statement, which, by itself, could have implied a double meaning to either visit a website or make a financial contribution, were treated as a directive to visit a website. In order for a directive to qualify as a request for a financial contribution, a direct plea involving the word "please," "need," or some other direct request had to have been made in the email message. A simple instruction to visit a website where contributions were accepted was not sufficient to qualify as a request for a contribution.

The most fascinating numbers may be reflected in the directives calling for volunteer activism. The Gore campaign used directives focused on volunteerism 238 times, which accounted for 37.74% of the total directives used. In comparison, the numbers for Bush were  $n = 90$  (30.10%), and the figures on volunteer activism for Buchanan were even lower  $n = 31$  (19.75%).

The category of "other" is designed as a catch-all to cover participatory activities not covered in the three previously defined categories. Activities such as "check local listings for air time" of a syndicated talk show or "tune-in tonight for Al Gore's appearance on *The Late Show with David Letterman*" or calling an office for rally tickets for instance would fall into the other category. Any directive speech act that did not fall into the previously defined three categories was classified as an "other" directive.

Candidate	Directive	Frequency	Percentage
Bush	Visit website	167	55.85
	Give money	17	5.69
	Volunteer	90	30.10
	Other	25	8.36
	Total	299	100.00
Gore	Visit website	280	42.04
	Give money	9	1.35
	Volunteer	238	37.74
	Other	139	20.87
	Total	666	102.00
Buchanan	Visit website	79	50.32
	Give money	8	5.10
	Volunteer	31	19.75
	Other	39	24.84
	Total	157	100.01

### Hyperlink Frequencies and Means

The second post-hoc question, which concerned the inclusion of hyperlinks into email messages by the campaigns, was a universal ingredient in the course of disseminating information to political consumers in the course of the campaigns and in the wake of the election.

Every email message analyzed for this study had at least one hyperlink included in the message. Since many directives included in the email messages centered upon visiting websites, the question was raised as to how many hyperlinks the candidates included in their emails and what was the average number per email message.

	Bush	Gore	Buchanan
Total	400	415	82
Average	10.52	8.65	1.58

As seen in Table 16, the Gore campaign actually included a greater total number of hyperlinks in its emails; however, the Bush campaign had a higher average of hyperlinks per email message. The Bush average of 10.52 to Gore's 8.65 hyperlinks per email shows that Bush

managed to make effective use of a fewer number of total emails by packing the messages with hyperlinks for readers to follow.

<b>Table 17: ANOVA Data for Frequencies of Hyperlinks in Candidate Emails.</b>					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2097.355	2	1048.677	41.237	.000
Within Groups	3433.145	135	25.431		
Total	5530.500	137			

An ANOVA analysis of the number of hyperlinks found in each candidate's email showed that the number of included hyperlinks was significantly different, ( $F_{(2,135)} = 41.237, p \leq .005$ ) as illustrated in Table 17.

## DISCUSSION

The use of email as a campaign tool was evident in that messages used speech acts for different purposes (e.g., to thank supporters, ask for help, make a promise, state a candidate's voting record, et cetera). 2000 was predicted to be a year when the Internet would become a useful campaign tool. Given that campaigns are essentially the contact points between voters and candidates, the campaigns must use every means at their disposal to reach their intended audiences. The campaigns must supply those audiences with information as discussed by various scholars. Email has been proven to be a means by which campaigns can distribute political information to interested persons.

McQuail (1986) stated that attention must be devoted to "developments in new electronic media currently underway" (p. 146). It appears that the campaign organizations have paid attention to those developments and are ready to use them to whatever advantage they can manage during the course of a campaign. With the rapid advancements in information technology that have developed during the past 10 years, the inclusion of email into political campaigning was an inevitable development, and failure to recognize the value of new technologies such as email and the Internet may have costly consequences in future elections.

Considering that information is carried in speech, this study sought to determine what types of speech act(s) is/are found in presidential campaign email? All five types of speech acts, representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations, were found in the content analysis of the email population to varying degrees. The use of all types of speech acts was expected to some degree. Email messages were tailored by multiple senders in an attempt to use language as a persuasive tool or to perform various functions. Policy positions were often stated, as were campaign promises, directives to forward email messages to friends, or to contribute online to a particular candidate.

It was also found that emails do regularly utilize directives as part of the message more frequently than other types of speech acts, but not necessarily more than all types of speech acts.

The data show conclusively that representative speech acts are the predominant speech act contained within email messages; yet the importance of directives in dispatched messages cannot be ignored. As shown in the post-hoc analysis, directives are useful for encouraging readers to visit websites, make financial contributions, engage in volunteer activism, or participate in other campaign-related activities such as tuning into a particular television show or talk radio program to listen to a candidate speak.

The use of directives in campaign messages plays into the discussion made earlier about citizen participation in the political process. The insertion of speech acts, especially directives, in a new information medium such as electronic mail suggests that new media may indeed be a stimulus for greater citizen participation within the American political arena.

Directives were also used more frequently in campaign email messages than commissives, expressives, or declarations. Table 15 lists the breakdown of the total directives into the four designated directive speech acts. The post-hoc analysis showed some interesting results. By far, the most frequent directive was to encourage a reader to visit a website by selecting a hyperlink that had been included in the text of the email message. Directives from the Bush campaign to visit websites were 167 or 55.85% of the total directives included in the emails. The Gore campaign encouraged readers to visit websites in 280 instances or 42.04% of directives. The Buchanan emails contained 79 directives to visit websites, which accounted for 50.32% of total directives.

One point to consider is the numbers between the Bush and Buchanan emails. The email messages from the Republican and Reform Party candidates are strikingly similar on a number of factors, including number of declarations (Bush  $n = 1$ , Buchanan  $n = 1$ ), percentage of directives for financial contributions (Bush 5.69%, Buchanan 5.10%), percentage of representatives (Bush 75.74%, Buchanan 71.47%), total percentage of directives (Bush 19.39%, Buchanan 20.93%), percentage of commissives (Bush 3.31%, Buchanan 3.07%), and the number of emails dispatched during the last 2 weeks of the general campaign (Bush  $n = 6$ , Buchanan  $n = 5$ ).

These similarities might be explained due to the fact that Patrick Buchanan publicly left the Republican Party to seek the Reform Party nomination for the presidency. Given that Buchanan twice ran for the Republican nomination (first in 1992, then again in 1996), some of his methods and patterns in communication may be accounted for because of his longtime affiliation with the Republican Party prior to his year 2000 break from that party.

While Bush and Buchanan may have had a higher percentage of emails that called for visiting websites, both campaigns fell short of using directives in email to encourage volunteer activism. Given the intensity of campaigning from both the Republican and Democratic sides, one might have expected the Bush campaign to have been more pro-active in its call for volunteer activism. A similar trend might have been expected from the Buchanan campaign given its status of low popular support in most opinion polls.

It appears from the evidence at hand that the Bush campaign used speech acts to forward ideas to the target audience. In effect, Bush was using email to engage his readers so they might connect with his ideas and his vision for America. In direct contrast, Al Gore requested actions and appeared to be directing his audience to perform desired actions (e.g., forward email messages, call friends and tell them to vote, drive senior citizens to polling locations, et cetera).

No logical determination of how Pat Buchanan used email messages as a campaign tool can be discerned from the available data.

The methods for attaining the desired goal, in this instance the winning of the presidential election, showed that different marketing techniques were at use between the different campaigns. The success of one marketing campaign versus another may not be able to be measured given the volatile conditions following in the aftermath of the election. One important measure of future success from a marketing standpoint may be in terms of costs to campaigns in sending email over regular mail messages.

Another interesting finding was the lack of direct appeal to email subscribers for financial contributions versus the use of other types of campaign directives utilized in the email messages.

Pat Buchanan did not make a direct appeal for funds until after Labor Day. Al Gore's first direct appeal for contributions came after the announcement of the nomination of Dick Cheney as the Republican Vice Presidential candidate. Of all the candidates, the well-financed George W. Bush made the most appeals for contributions ( $n = 17$  compared to  $n = 9$  for Gore and  $n = 8$  for Buchanan). However, it must be noted that several of the Bush requests for funding came in the aftermath of the election.

All of the campaigns engaged in some form of negative attacks against other campaigns. The interesting point to note here is that while Buchanan attacked Bush and Gore, the other campaigns ignored him. Bush and Gore were busy attacking each other and ignored outright, the third party candidates. Campaigns did include fundraising messages to a certain degree, as well as messages on policy positions and candidate records. The Gore campaign certainly followed one of the expected messages by encouraging supporters to pass along campaign messages to friends who might be willing to support the campaign. The calls for forwarding messages to friends or other persons in a recipient's address book were seldom seen in messages from Buchanan or Bush.

The timing of email dispatches led to some interesting findings. If the campaign period is divided into four 5-week periods, there are definite trends that can be found in the use of email as a campaigning tool. With Labor Day as a midway point in this division of campaigning periods, the frequency of email dispatches shows some remarkable trends. Prior to the Labor Day weekend, the Bush campaign sent less than one email per week on average (0.67), the Gore campaign sent an average of 1.22 emails per week, and the Buchanan campaign dispatched an average of 2.80 emails per week.

After the Labor Day holiday, as shown in Table 7, the numbers of dispatched email messages increased visibly. The post-Labor Day numbers are averages of email messages sent between 4 September and 7 November 2000. This is traditionally seen as the major push period in campaigning. The numbers of email distribution reflect that assertion. Bush's average jumps to 1.4 email messages per week whereas Gore's average doubles to 2.4 email messages per week.

Surprisingly, the Buchanan average dropped from 2.8 to 2.3 email messages dispatched per week. The decrease in email activity from the Buchanan campaign is something of a mystery given that the other candidates increased their email traffic as befits the push period.

The post-Labor Day push period in the campaign season is important because it is traditionally the time when the candidates mark themselves as going into "the final stretch" of a



race. Usually candidate appearances, both mediated and non-mediated, increase dramatically. Campaign volunteers seek to do more to increase name recognition by canvassing neighborhoods, placing campaign signs on interstate medians, or calling registered voters to elicit support for a candidate. Fundraising activities during this time period also increase dramatically. An increase in the frequency of email dispatches among the major party candidates would, therefore, be expected.

In support of this assertion, the number of speech acts relied upon by the Bush and Gore campaigns increased visibly. As shown in Table 18, the use of representative, directive, and commissive speech acts by the major candidates grew substantially as Election Day approached.

Candidate		10-6 weeks pre-LD	5 weeks pre-LD	1-5 weeks post-LD	5-10 weeks post-LD
Bush	Representative	113	64	86	140
	Directive	27	14	49	71
	Commissive	10	3	4	13
Gore	Representative	142	107	174	322
	Directive	72	112	204	206
	Commissive	28	45	42	45

Table 9 illustrates the number of emails sent from each campaign during the 2-week period prior to Election Day (24 October through 7 November 2000). During this period, Bush dispatched six emails, Gore sent 11 email messages, and Buchanan dispatched five messages. It would appear that in this critical 2-week period, the Gore campaign felt email would be a more effective and important campaign tool than did either the Bush or Buchanan campaigns.

On Election Day, Buchanan failed to send any messages, Bush sent one, and Gore sent two (see Table 10). The act of dispatching messages on Election Day is to be expected, yet again the Buchanan campaign's failure to follow this expectation is unusual. In the 4-week post-election period reviewed in this study, the Bush campaign dispatched 12 emails, an average of three per week; the Gore campaign sent only 2 emails for an average of 0.5 per week; and the Buchanan campaign dispatched only 1 email for an average of 0.25 per week.

Because of the controversy following the election results in the state of Florida on Election Day, email messages for a period of 4 weeks following the election were reviewed. The increased activity from the Bush campaign is clearly evident. Considering the legal battles that ensued in Florida over the actual vote count, one might have expected more email traffic from the Gore campaign. The lack of email from the Buchanan campaign in the post-election period was to be expected.

The lack of email communication from the Gore campaign in the immediate period following Election Day was somewhat of a mystery. The Bush campaign was engaged in

sending regular email messages by the weekend following the election. These emails were peppered with requests for contributions and reports on the latest developments from Florida. Gore's first email message after the election arrived almost 4 weeks after voting had ended. There were no appeals for volunteer activism, financial contributions, or other types of campaign participation by the Gore campaign in the immediate aftermath of the election.

Given that no prior data regarding the size of campaign email messages was available to the researcher, expectations regarding the size of candidate email cannot be stated to any degree of certainty. However, the size of email messages as measured in kilobytes is a clear indicator of the amount of information that may be stored in an email message. The larger the number of kilobytes, the more information will likely be stored in an email message. As shown in Table 11, the average size of an email message from the Bush campaign was 14.05 kilobytes, 10.92 kilobytes was the average size of email messages from the Gore campaign, and Buchanan's average was a meager 2.29 kilobytes per message.

Each of the campaigns sent email messages with no author stated. The only candidate never to state the author of an email message, in addition to an address, was Patrick Buchanan. George W. Bush and Al Gore used multiple email addresses and often had multiple senders associated with the addresses (for full details see Table 14). With these facts in mind, the logical conclusion to draw is that campaigns in the 2000 presidential election often made use of a single email address possibly to lend some legitimacy to their messages or to make the use of email easier for the people involved with the campaign work.

Thirty-eight Bush campaign emails were reviewed in this study. The review of emails showed that in 36 of 38 email messages (95% of the total email received) the Bush campaign used the same address, but 11 different names (including no author stated) were associated with that one originating campaign address. The Gore campaign demonstrated a similar trend. In Gore's case, 42 of 48 emails (87.5%) were sent from an address that used three different names. Pat Buchanan's campaign did not associate any names with its email messages, yet the campaign used five different addresses to supply information to the recipient in the study. As expected, the campaigns used multiple names to provide information to subscribers. This most likely reflects the assumption that the candidates themselves were too busy with campaign obligations to compose email messages to deliver to supporters.

A further point to consider is the format in which email messages were created by the campaigns. The Bush and Gore campaigns developed email messages that were essentially the same in format. Billed as "Bush News" or "Gore Mail," these messages were laid out much like a newsletter and contained numerous hyperlinks, along with candidate appearance information and statements about where the candidates stood on debate topics, salient political issues, and visions for the future. Gore Mail was brimming with pleas for volunteer activism. Encouragements were sent to forward emails to all persons listed in email address books. Pleas were made to call relatives and have them vote for the Gore-Lieberman ticket and all other Democrats on the ballot. There were even appeals to contact senior citizens living in the reader's neighborhood and offer to take them to the polls to vote on Election Day.

The findings of this study may be interesting in terms of their historical value in studies of the year 2000 election and the potential usefulness in understanding how email is used as a

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political tool in future campaigns. Both of the major candidates also wanted to lay claim to the notion they were the most technologically advanced candidate running. According to email messages, video and audio archives from the candidates, their wives, family members, and supporters were stored on-line along with transcripts from speeches and television interviews. Internet chats with campaign personalities were announced as regular features. It seemed each campaign wanted to prove that it was the campaign leading the way to the future.

### **DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

In consideration of the findings of this study, one must look ahead to potential future research that may be drawn from the work accomplished here. This study was envisioned as a groundbreaking study from which future research might be derived. Therefore, a number of potential future projects will be discussed here.

The first direction from which future research related to this project may develop could be in studies for the 2004 presidential election. Clearly there were differences in the ways by which candidates utilized speech acts in email messages. Democrat Al Gore was more apt to use directives and commissives than Republican George W. Bush or Reform candidate Patrick J. Buchanan. Will the candidates (assuming that Al Gore is not the Democratic Party nominee against George W. Bush) use speech acts in the same manner as they were used in the 2000 presidential campaign? A direct comparison study between data gathered in the 2004 campaign and the data gathered in this study would be a reasonable future research project. The author of this study expects to initiate a comparison study in 2004 to make those exact determinations.

A second direction for future research would be to compare the content of email messages in political campaigns to email messages dispatched for other types of campaigns. For instance, would a campaign to raise awareness for ongoing efforts in breast cancer research use speech acts in email in the same manner as political campaigns? Could a study be performed that might compare how speech acts are used in an email campaign to promote the upcoming tour of a popular teenage music group, to the data gathered on the content of speech acts in a political campaign? The general idea here would be to determine whether or not the patterns established in this study are solely limited to political campaigns, or whether they extend to other types of campaigns that might use email to deliver messages to intended recipients.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study was designed to determine how presidential candidates made use of electronic mail as a political campaign tool during the 2000 election for President of the United States. This study revealed that the candidates (George W. Bush, Albert Gore, Jr., and Patrick J. Buchanan) all made use of electronic mail as a means to deliver their messages to supporters. It also found that anyone could subscribe to an email address provided they supplied the campaigns of the candidates with sufficient information as deemed by each campaign.

Email was a frequently used tool, to varying degrees, among each of the candidates, which utilized speech acts to perform certain functions. All five speech acts were used by the

candidates in email messages, but representatives was the predominant type of speech act used by the candidates. The candidates used directive speech acts to encourage readers to visit a website, contribute money to the campaign, volunteer to help the candidates, or perform another type of action such as calling for tickets to rallies or checking local TV listings to see when a program would air that a candidate would be a guest on. Declarations were the least used speech act by any of the candidates in the study.

It is the hope of this researcher that the information found in this study may be of benefit to scholars, researchers, political consultants, and other interested persons in the future. It is hoped also that this research may lead to other research projects that may expand the common knowledge of how political candidates and other entrepreneurial venturists communicate via email and how speech acts are used in the course of campaigns.

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# COMMUNICATION MODALITIES FOR COMMERCIAL SPEECH ON THE INTERNET

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## ABSTRACT

*The Internet and the World Wide Web (the Web) have introduced changes in the way that companies communicate with their customers and have provided new opportunities for customers of a company to communicate with each other. Many times, this new customer-to-customer communication is unmoderated by (or even unknown to) the company. This paper outlines the changes that have occurred, discusses the implications of these changes, and suggest possible future developments that could occur in the conduct of commercial speech in an information age society.*

## INTRODUCTION

When companies first began using the Internet and the Web to communicate with their customers, they used the Internet to send e-mail responses to customer inquiries and their Web sites as static brochures that, in many cases, were infrequently updated. Since then, companies' Web sites, often outfitted with integrated and often automatic e-mail functions, have become centers for transaction processing and automated business processes within those companies. Thus, Web sites have become important elements in many companies' information systems infrastructures (Ramsey, 2000).

## TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION MODES

Businesses have traditionally used two general ways of identifying and reaching customers: personal contact and mass media (Babcock & Du-Babcock, 2001; Siebel & House, 1999). These two approaches are often called communication modes or communication modalities because they each involve a characteristic way (or mode) of conveying information from one person to another (or communicating).

In the personal contact mode, the sales staff employees of a company carry out the tasks of searching for, qualifying, and contacting potential customers. This personal contact approach to identifying and reaching customers is sometimes called prospecting. Much of the interchange in the personal contact mode occurs within a two-way conversational interchange. These interchanges frequently include many conversational elements, such as discussions about the

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weather, sports, or politics, that are not directly related to the transaction that the seller is proposing. These other interchanges are part of trust-building and trust-maintaining activities (Holliday, 2001; Shelat, 2002) that selling companies undertake to develop a relationship element within the structure of the commercial speech that is the primary purpose of these exchanges. The defining characteristic of the customer's information gathering in the personal contact model is the wide-ranging interchange that occurs within the framework of an existing trust relationship (Jones, 2002). Both the buyer and the seller (or the seller's representative) actively participate in this exchange of information (Violino, 2002).

In the mass media approach, firm employees prepare advertising and promotional materials about the firm and its products or services. They then deliver these messages to potential customers by broadcasting them on television or radio, printing them in newspapers or magazines, posting them on highway billboards, or mailing them. Communication in this model flows from one advertiser to many potential buyers and thus is called a one-to-many communication model. The defining characteristic of the mass media promotion process is that the seller is active and the buyer is passive.

Some experts distinguish between broadcast media and addressable media. Addressable media are advertising efforts directed to a known addressee and include direct mail, telephone calls, and e-mail. Some users of addressable media today do use address information in their advertising strategies; however, in traditional media strategy the address information is not used. Thus, in traditional communication structures, addressable media are similar or equivalent to mass media (Wang & Hawk, 2000).

It is possible for a business to use a combination of mass media and personal contact to identify and reach customers (Milliman & Decker, 1990). For example, many major life insurance companies use mass media to create and maintain the public's general awareness of their insurance products and reputations, while their salespersons use prospecting techniques to identify potential customers. Once an individual becomes a customer, one of these insurance companies would maintain contact through a combination of personal contact and mass media, such as mailings.

### **COMMERCIAL SPEECH ON THE WEB**

The Web and the Internet have been heralded as an important new home for commercial speech; that is, the communication between buyers, sellers, and their intermediary agents. Kent (2001) argues that the Web's rhetoric today is primarily one of consumerism and capitalism rather than the rhetoric of ideologies political and social that dominated the early use of the Internet and Web as a communication tool before the commercialization of the Internet in the early 1990s (Schneider, 2002).

The Internet is not a mass medium, even though a large number of people now use it and some companies view their Web sites as billboards or broadcasts (Webster & Lin, 2002). Nor is the Internet a personal contact tool, although it can provide individuals the convenience of making personal contacts through chat rooms, discussion boards, e-mail and newsgroups.

Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon.com, has described the Web as the ideal tool for reaching what he calls "the hard middle" (Anderson, 1997); that is, markets that are too small to justify a mass media campaign, yet too large to cover using personal contact. The Web as a customer-contact medium lies between the large markets addressed by mass media and the highly focused markets addressed by personal contact selling and promotion techniques (Miles, 2001).

The Web gives people the flexibility to use a one-to-one model (as in the personal contact model), in which the buyer communicates over the Web with an individual working for the seller, along with a one-to-many model in which the buyer communicates over the Web with several individuals working for the seller. The Web also allows the buyer to engage in many-to-many communications with other potential buyers. This many-to-many communication ability is seldom a realistic and efficient possibility in the physical (as opposed to the online) world. The defining characteristic of a product information search on the Web is that the buyer actively participates in the search and controls the length, depth, and scope of the search.

An example of an information search in which a person might engage in a full range of Web-enabled commercial speech could occur in a book purchase. To obtain information about a book on the Web, the potential buyer could search for Web site references to the book, the author, or the subject of the book. The buyer would likely identify a number of Web sites that offered such information. These sites might include those of the book's publisher, firms that sell books on the Web, independent book reviews, or discussion groups focused on the book's author or genre. The New York Review of Books and Booklist magazine, both staples of mass media book promotion, now have online Web editions. Book review sites that did not originate in a print edition, such as BookBrowser.com, have also appeared on the Web. Most Web-based booksellers, such as Amazon or BN.com, maintain searchable space on their sites for readers to post reviews and comments about specific titles. If the author of a book is famous, there might even be independent Web fan sites devoted to him or her. If the book is about a notable person, incident, or time period, one might find Web sites devoted to those notable topics that include reviews of books related to the topic. Potential buyers can examine any number of these resources to any extent they desire. They might encounter some advertising material created by the publisher while searching the Web. However, if potential buyers choose not to view the publisher's ads, they will find it as easy to click the Back button on their Web browsers as it is to surf television channels with their remote controls. The Web affords potential buyers many communication channels, including communication channels not controlled or even influenced by the product manufacturer or any other member of the sales supply chain (Faria & Wensley, 2002).

### **ROLE OF VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES IN COMMERCIAL SPEECH**

One of the key distinguishing elements between commercial speech on the Internet and more traditional forms of commercial speech is the ability of potential buyers to interact and obtain information from many sources that are independent from the seller. Most of these alternative information sources can be characterized as some form of virtual community.



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A virtual community, also called a Web community or an online community, is a gathering place for people and businesses that does not have a physical existence. Rheingold (1993) was one of the first to describe the characteristics of these communities. His book has become recognized as the seminal work on the subject (Moore, 2001; Quittner, 1996; Williams, 2002). Virtual communities exist on the Internet today in various forms, including Usenet newsgroups, chat rooms, discussion boards and Web sites (as distinguished from sellers' Web sites; these Web sites are created by consumers, not-for-profit organizations, or other interested individuals to gather and disseminate information about the products and services offered for sale on other Web sites).

The power of virtual communities has been acknowledged by sellers. Many sellers have threatened legal action against owners of Web sites that include negative comments about their products or services. They have argued that such commercial speech constitutes product disparagement. Sellers have met with varying degrees of success in arguing the merits of these cases; but sellers, who usually have deeper pockets than the operators of the virtual community sites, often prevail in such situations.

### **TRUST IN ONLINE COMMERCIAL SPEECH**

After years of being barraged by television and radio commercials, many people have developed a resistance to the messages conveyed in the mass media. The impact on an audience of the shouted expression "New and improved!" has diminished to almost nothing in most cases. The overuse of superlatives has caused most people to distrust or ignore the messages contained in mass media. Television remote controls have a mute button and make channel surfing easy for a reason. Attempts to re-create mass media advertising strategies on the Web are doomed to fail for the same reasons; for example, many people will ignore or resist messages that lack content of any specific personal interest to them. Thus, commercial speech conveyed by mass media has, in general, the lowest level of inherent trust of any media mode.

In terms of trust, the Web occupies an intermediate space between mass media and personal contact. However, it is a very broad range of space. Using the Web to communicate with potential customers offers many of the advantages of personal contact selling (which include a high level of trust) and many of the cost savings of mass media.

Although mass media offers the lowest level of trust, many companies continue to use it successfully. The cost of mass media advertising can be spread over the many people in its large audiences. For example, the cost of creating a television ad can be several hundred thousand dollars, but that ad will be viewed by millions of people. Thus, the cost of advertising per viewer is very low. Mass media advertising's low cost makes it very attractive to many companies.

### **THE FUTURE: CUSTOMER-CENTERED MARKETING STRATEGIES**

Sellers can use the Web to capture some of the benefits of personal contact, yet avoid some of the costs inherent in that approach. Most researchers agree that it is better to scale up the

trust-based model of personal contact selling to the Web than to scale down the mass marketing approach (Newell & Rogers, 2002).

By the late 1990s, rising consumer expectations and reduced product differentiation had led to increased competition and a splintering of mass markets. Both of these results reduced the effectiveness of mass media advertising (Godin & Peppers, 1999). As we enter the new millennium, companies are developing highly customized approaches to offering products and services that match the needs of a particular customer based on the one-to-one marketing models developed by Peppers and Rogers (1993).

The Internet gives marketers the best opportunity for highly customized interactions with customers that they have had since the heyday of the door-to-door salesperson in the 1940s and 1950s (Schneider, 2002). However, the increased capabilities of marketers to target customers and customize offerings to meet customer needs will continue to be moderated by the buyer-to-buyer communications that will continue to flow in various types of virtual communities.

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# THE VIRTUAL WATER COOLER: GOSSIP AS CONSTRUCTIVE/DESTRUCTIVE COMMUNICATION IN THE WORKPLACE

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## ABSTRACT

*Lies, rumors, backbiting, and office gossip have always been a part of the workplace. Employees have complained about their employers since paychecks were written on parchment. But, thanks to the Internet, employees now have a chance to vent in a highly public fashion. If you want to know about the kind of insurance coverage your employer offers, look in the company handbook. If you want to complain that your boss "sucks," to know who to avoid, or to find out salary information, log onto your e-mail or join a chat room. But, beware, litigation may occur. This paper looks at the history of gossip, who gossips, the constructive/destructive elements of gossip, gossip at the virtual water cooler, the legal liability that exists, and what managers can do to protect the organization and its employees.*

## INTRODUCTION

In *The Murder at the Vicarage*, Agatha Christie's Miss Marple responds spiritedly to an attempt to undermine the qualifications of gossip to get at the truth:

*"Don't you think, Miss Marple," I said, "that we're all inclined to let our tongues run away with us too much? Charity thinketh no evil, you know. Inestimable harm may be done by the foolish wagging of tongues in ill-natured gossip."*

*"Dear Vicar," said Miss Marple, "you are so unworldly. I'm afraid that, observing human nature for as long as I have done, one gets not to expect very much from it. I daresay idle tittle-tattle is very wrong and unkind, but it is so often true, isn't it?"*

(Christie, 1930, 14.)

Lies, rumors, backbiting, and office gossip have always been an entrenched part of the workplace. Workers will always talk about the latest company news, gossip, and spread rumors about other staff when they gather. And, nowadays with the Internet and e-mail, rumors can be

spread faster than ever before with the click of a mouse (Gregory, 2001). And, contrary to what people may say about gossip, there is, in fact, widespread agreement with Miss Marple's claim that those at the heart of the most powerful institutions, including the university, the corporate world, and the political arena, frequently rely upon gossip as a source of crucial information inaccessible by other means. Not surprisingly, those who are excluded from gossip circles will be hard pressed, for they will not be privy to crucial inside information (Ayim, 1994).

In addition, employees have complained about their employers since paychecks were written on parchment. But thanks to the Internet, employees now have a chance to vent in a highly public, albeit anonymous, fashion. Sitting behind their home computers late at night, countless American workers are logging online in order to make accusations, share salary information, post company secrets, organize union activities and even recruit attorneys for class-action lawsuits (Caudron, 1999).

If you want to know about the kind of insurance coverage your employer offers, look in the company handbook. But if you want to know who to avoid, who the boss loves or loathes, who to go to when you need help, what it really takes to get a promotion or raise, and how much you can safely slack off, you're better off paying attention to the company grapevine. Log into your e-mail or join a chat room. Gossip defines who is in and who is out in a group. If you are considered worthy enough to be buzzed about at the virtual water cooler, you are in. If you have got valuable information to share, you are also in. But if you don't fit into either group, consider yourself out (Westen, 1996).

Psychologists say that the survival of the human species itself may be dependent on the time-honored and sometimes nasty behavior of gossiping. Gossip give us information on how to better interact with other people. When we read something about how someone has acted or hear about how someone has acted, then we hear the opinions people have of that action (Palazzolo, 2002). This paper looks at the history of gossip, who gossips, the constructive/destructive elements of gossip, gossip at the virtual water cooler, the legal liability that exists, and what managers can do to protect the organization and its employees.

## HISTORY OF GOSSIP

*"There is only one thing worse than being gossiped about, and that is not being gossiped about." - Oscar Wilde.*

"Gossip" has developed from a positive term applied to both sexes into a derogatory term applied to women. "Gossip" originally referred to an idea encompassing both god-parent and family friend. Samuel Johnson in his dictionary identified two additional meanings. Gossip could now be used to refer to "a tipling (drinking) companion." Johnson also defined gossip in terms of a female meaning - "one who runs about tattling like women at a lying [birth] (Rysman, 1977). Today, gossip is a national growth industry, and the dictionary defines it simply as "chatty talk; the reporting of sensational or intimate information." Despite its banal definition, gossip is often perceived as a dangerous weapon, one that can ruin reputations, poison

relationships, destroy companies, and halt careers (Westen, 1996). Gossip often heats up when workers are bored or lack significant information about major company events. Men often use gossip as a form of political control, while women employ it to make themselves look and feel important. When people are not fully engaged in work, it creates a vacuum. And when they don't know what is going on, they begin to speculate (Greengard, 2001a). In addition, some researchers have suggested that gossip is a cultural device used by the individual to forward her/his own interests. For example, the gossipier circulates information that s/he wants others to possess and typically endeavors to receive more information than s/he gives. Presumably, this information allows the gossipier to manage others' impressions of her/him and to manipulate the impression and actions of others (Suls, 1977).

### WHO GOSSIPS?

*"Gossip is just news running ahead of itself in a red satin dress." Liz Smith*

According to researchers, everyone gossips, and we begin almost as soon as we learn to speak. Kids' gossip tends to be more innocent and often more cruel. Children usually gossip about their marginal peers, the kid who can't hit the ball, or the one in the special class. Rather than bring someone down, they feel more powerful by elevating themselves from the less fortunate and siding with the kids on top. Adults, on the other hand, often gossip to bring someone with power down a notch or two (like celebrities, politicians, and bosses). Adolescents blabbed on the average of 18 times an hour, with gossip sometimes taking up as much as 50% of their time. They are three times more likely to gossip about someone of their own sex as they are about someone of the opposite sex, and they are just as likely to talk about other people's relationships as they are about their own. By college, gender differences are even more striking. Women gossip about people in their lives who are close to them: family, friends, roommates, people they know very well. Men, on the other hand, engage in "shop talk" which primarily revolves around sports figures, politicians, and people in their class who they hardly know (Westen, 1996).

It is said that women gossip more than men do. Men get away with gossiping by calling it "networking," a term that was invented to make male gossip respectable. Men tend to use gossip to build status, trading tales of triumphs and defeats. Men are more interested in who is up and who is down (hence sports-page obsession), as befits their predilection for competitive gameplaying. Women tend to gossip more about social inclusion and moral alignment - who is in and who has merit (Nicholson, 2001). And, forget the stereotype of the village scold. The office gossip is a man. Internet security specialist Integrallis conducted a survey of senior directors of 800 large UK companies and found that half of them consider men to be the perpetrators of e-gossip. Only 12 percent said women were the culprits (Eadie, 1999). The meaning of "gossip" lies in its inconsistent use. The noun is a negative stereotype used against women. If two people engage in the same behavior, talking too much, the woman is more likely to be called a gossip, while the man is not. Ironically, a man who talks too much is often called

"an old woman," a phrase that manages to blame womankind for the man's verbosity. (Rysman, 1977).

With regard to age, most Baby Boomers, much as they deny it, believe a mastery of elementary office politics is necessary to survive. They know the grapevine is generally right, that people make and stroke allies, attempt to please their bosses, and honor the hierarchy. The new generation of workers, called either GenXers or the Baby Busters, are happily oblivious to politics. They value plain talk and facts and assume everyone else does too. Among Busters, it's fashionable to disbelieve all company intelligence, whether it comes by memo or whisper. Under-30 workers are proud of the fact that they don't rely on anything they are told. Younger workers show no curiosity about what is happening or what may happen. Part of this withdrawal may be the refusal of younger workers to engage emotionally in the life of the organization (Kennedy, 1997).

Lastly, there are three kinds of gossipers: the bridgers, the baggers, and the beaners. The bridgers, or key communicators, receive and pass information to others. The baggers hear gossip but do not pass it along or fail to tell others. The beaners, or isolates, are not privy to any information, do not hear the information, and thus cannot pass along the information (Mishra, 1990).

### CONSTRUCTIVE/DESTRUCTIVE GOSSIP

*"And all who told it added something new, and all who heard it, made enlargements too." -- Alexander Pope*

Good gossip keeps people in line. If people are talking about good things others do, we want to emulate that good behavior. It's a nice way of socially controlling people. On the other hand, bad gossip is used to destroy someone's reputation and that is why we have so many mixed feelings about gossip (Palazzolo, 2002). According to a study by occupational psychologists, having a "good gossip" about co-workers can boost workplace morale. In fact, the study shows that office gossip is good for business as it gives workers the chance to let off steam and relieve tension and anxiety. Someone who feels anger, envy and frustration towards a colleague can get it off their chest by gossiping about them. It's a safety valve that allows people to let off steam (Bolton, 2001).

In addition, it is human nature to talk about others. Gossip can be informative; it builds intimacy. It may make us feel superior or acutely uncomfortable (Gray, 1999). Also, gossip is frequently used to obtain information in order to make comparisons between oneself and others. Such comparisons allow the individual to evaluate his/her own achievements and abilities. Although comparison information is needed, direct comparisons may be viewed with aversion. Gossiping may serve to satisfy our need for comparison information while allowing the individual to avoid the problems associated with its direct acquisition (Suls, 1977). Office gossip usually takes on two forms: relationship-oriented talk that focuses on who is sleeping with whom or which executives and managers are dating which employees; and office politics

that focuses on who is being favored by the management, who is being promoted, fired, or transferred (Greengard, 2001a).

Gossip is also the life blood of the office. It is freedom of speech at its most ferocious. Office gossip is communication that has not been sanctioned by the powers that be, and that is precisely why it is so valuable. The very reason that gossip is so necessary is that it is indiscreet and unedited. Gossip is free as speech gets, and when talk is this unfettered, it is wild and reckless stuff (Every Office Needs One, 2000). But contrary to what most of us might think, when a circle of friends gossips about members of its inner sanctum, it is usually a compliment. It is a way of saying that others are important. We gossip about people we care about. We don't bother talking about people who don't matter to us (Westen, 1996).

Engaging in office politics doesn't have to be dirty, but it does have to be done. And, sometimes, you pay when you don't play. By not participating in office politics in a positive way, an employee may be stunting his/her professional growth (Reed, 1999).

*"If you haven't got anything nice to say about anybody, come sit next to me."*

Alice Roosevelt Longworth

On the other hand, gossip in the workplace can be deadly to the company or organization. Some experts compare it to a disease that spreads uncontrollably, destroying everything in its path. Others say it undermines trust in relationships (at all levels of the business or organization) and can rock the organization to its very core (Bad Disease: Workplace Gossip, 2001). Lies, rumors, and office gossip have always been an entrenched part of the workplace. The office water cooler has long been a place to chitchat about the latest company news and to swap lurid tales. But in today's increasingly angry and malicious society, where road rage is an every day event and body bags invade the news, the nature and intensity of gossip have hit new lows. And, thanks to the Internet and e-mail, it is possible to spread ugly words as fast as a nasty virus (Greengard, 2001a).

Not surprisingly, e-mail is the hottest gossip tool in town. Tales of bawdy behavior can travel around the world in minutes, and the number of jokes working their way around the web every day is in the millions (Ray, 2001). Virtual water coolers offer the online equivalent of the kind of banter that workers pick up in the office hallway or over an after-hours beer (Cohen, 2000). And, unlike the spoken word, which is difficult to document and subject to a great deal of interpretation, and misinterpretation, e-mail messages are usually clear-cut. Workers who spend an inordinate amount of time gossiping online must understand that it isn't acceptable and that it opens the gossiper and the company to legal liability (Greengard, 2001b).

Only a few years ago, gossip traveled at the sound of the human voice. While a person could pick up the telephone and call someone else anywhere in the world, the exchange took place on a one-to-one basis. The advent of the Internet has changed the communications equation. Today, e-mail messages rocket around the world in seconds, with dozens and sometimes hundreds of names on a distribution list (Greengard, 2001b).

Electronic communication such as "cybergossip" (gossip through the computer) has made



the grapevine an even faster means of communication. Though a potential advantage, cybergossip is often misinterpreted because it is flat: no voice inflection, no room for subtleties of language. It may be more difficult to tell whether someone is making a joke or being sarcastic (Karathanos & Auriemmo, 1999).

### VIRTUAL WATER COOLER

*"There is so much good in the worst of us and so much bad in the best of us that it hardly behooves any of us to talk about the rest of us."*

Edward W. Hoch

The Web now has more than 100 million sites. People post 250,000 messages a day, and the number of Web pages is expected to grow 1,000 percent in the next three years (Crawford, 1999). Virtual water coolers turn up in unexpected places. Greedy.com, gets up to 80,000 hits a day, and as its name suggests, much of the focus is on compensation. The site charts salaries at large law firms around the country (Cohen, 2000). At Disgruntled.com, people are encouraged to tell stories about why their job sucks, how miserable their boss is, and what they do to vent their frustration or get even. The site even warns new users that the pages contain language that may be deemed "inappropriate for employers." At Yahoo.com, message boards allow users to freely exchange salary information and prepare each other for upcoming interviews at specific companies. And, finally, at Vault.com, which bills itself as an online site "dedicated to letting job seekers know what life is really like at the nation's big-name employers," there are dozens of company-specific message boards where employees can post information (Caudron, 1999).

It is obvious that the extensive amount of employment information that is available online has the potential to encourage litigation, harm a company's recruitment efforts, and interfere with salary negotiation. It can also affect relationships with temporary workers, encourage union campaigns, and interfere with a company's overall ability to conduct business (Caudron, 1999). Smart organizations facing this challenge now routinely monitor what is said about them on these sites, or try to. Major search engines like Infoseek or Lycos scan only about a third of all Web pages, and do-it-yourselfers see far less. Having discovered that they can't do the job properly in-house, many companies are turning to monitoring services like EWatch, Inc. or Cyveillance (Crawford, 1999).

As corporate rumor and innuendo flourish at the virtual water cooler, companies worry that deceitful employees, angry customers, or fierce competitors are anonymously posting inaccurate or unfair messages, which may, in turn, discourage investors or prospective customers (Boehle, Dobbs, & Stamps, 2000). Lawyers are predicting a glut of "cybersmear" libel lawsuits by targets of malicious online gossip. Companies are not particularly sensitive about someone standing next to a water cooler and griping about someone else, but messages that go out over the web reach so many people that companies are very concerned (Cohen, 2000). And, if people think they are anonymous when telling their stories on line, they are wrong. People leave

electronic fingerprints all over the Net. If someone mentions a snowstorm in a message, a monitoring service can determine where it was snowing at the exact moment the message was posted. And, faced with a subpoena, most sites will readily divulge a poster's name to the authorities (Boehle, Dobbs, & Stamps, 2000).

### LEGAL LIABILITY

*"Live in such a way that you would not be ashamed to sell your parrot to the town gossip." -- Will Rogers*

When employees send e-mails or publish information on web sites, they may be exposing their employer to cyber liabilities, while simultaneously recording the evidence of any misdemeanors on their own server and the servers of all recipients of the information for later use in a court of law (Cane & Taylor, 1999). For example, there can be a threat of legal action arising from inaccurate rumors or gossip that have traveled via e-mail or the web. Many organizations have been defendants in legal suits arising from false information circulating in the workplace. Lawsuits based on defamation, fraud, invasion of privacy, harassment, emotional distress, libel and disability discrimination have all taken place because of inaccuracies that have appeared on e-mail or the web (Karathanos & Auriemmo, 1999).

Talk is cheap until it is libelous or slanderous. In Europe and America several centuries ago, you didn't want to be accused of libel. It was punishable by jail time, and you might even get executed if you libeled someone sufficiently important. In the early 1700s, for example, a New York publisher was imprisoned for criticizing the governor of New York. Years before that, an offender had his ears lopped off. Libel and slander cases eventually left the criminal courts and became the subject of lawsuits seeking damages. Most libel and slander cases today involved a trial by jury, and punitive damages are possible (Kleinman, 2000).

Libel and slander technically come under the heading of "defamation." Defamation is false or misleading injury to someone's reputation. Libel, in the old days, was strictly written defamation, while slander was spoken defamation. However, in these high tech days, the two concepts have been mixed together (Kleinman, 2000). In some cases, gossip can be intended to slander or defame an individual. Making matters worse, managers often look the other way or engage in the gossip themselves. Management leaves itself open to significant liability by not dealing with the situation. Left unchecked, certain kinds of office gossip can lead to serious problems. Employees who perceive that they are working in a hostile environment might also feel that they are the subject of discrimination (Greengard, 2001a).

### WHAT MANAGERS CAN DO TO HELP THE ORGANIZATION AND ITS EMPLOYEES

There are a number of things managers can do to manage gossip both within and outside an organization.

1.	<i>Direct confrontation is often effective.</i> Track down the source of the rumor or gossip and ask if the person is the source and then deal with it on the spot (Gregory, 2001).
2.	<i>Keep employees informed.</i> When employees know what is going on within an organization, they are far less inclined to speculate. Effective communication can take place online, through a newsletter, and at weekly face-to-face meetings.
3.	<i>Build a culture that is cooperative rather than competitive.</i> The worst gossip problems often occur at organizations where the climb to the top is ruthless.
4.	<i>Communicate that malicious personal gossip is not acceptable</i> (Greengard, 2001c).
5.	<i>View the Web as a vast, completely uninhibited focus group</i> that can provide insights you would never get any other way. Eavesdrop all you want, learning the attitudes of specific audiences and the issues most important to them (Crawford, 1999).
6.	<i>Hire a monitoring service</i> such as EWatch or Cyveillance to make sure malicious gossip about the company is not occurring, and if it is address the situation.

## CONCLUSION

*"Avoid inquisitive persons, for they are sure to be gossips, their ears are open to hear, but they will not keep what is entrusted to them."* -- Horace

Gossip is an ingrained part of our nature. Photocopy machines and the virtual water cooler often serve as the foundations for a complex social network within and without an organization. Small talk helps people to feel closer to each other, and it is what humanizes the workplace and helps people bond. On the other hand, gossip can be deadly to an organization. Lies, rumors, and malicious tales can destroy peoples' lives, their careers, and put the organization in legal jeopardy. Once, we stood around the water cooler; today the water cooler encompasses the world. Between e-mail and chat rooms on the Web, messages circle around the world in the matter of seconds. The internet is so vast that there really is nothing anyone can do to stop the free flow of comments. But employees must be aware that gossiping on e-mail or in chat rooms opens them up to legal liability; their "fingerprints" are all over their messages. In addition, organizations must protect themselves in lawsuits based on invasion of privacy, harassment, libel or slander. Although there is both constructive and destructive gossip swirling around the virtual water cooler, heed Miss Marple's advice:

*"You believed what he said. It really is very dangerous to believe people. I never have for years."*

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# CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION: THE WAY TO DO BUSINESS IN CHINA

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## ABSTRACT

*Since China entered a new historic period in 1979, and has implemented reforms and created an open-door policy to carry out a modernization process, China has changed dramatically. The 1.2 billion Chinese people are the biggest consumers for foreign businesses. Many foreign companies go to China to transact business. Because of cultural differences, some of them are very successful through effective communication while others are failures. This paper will explore how cultural differences can become the noise of cross-cultural communication that directly leads to the success or failure of businesses in China.*

## INTRODUCTION

Since China has entered a new historic period of implementing reforms and creating an open-door policy to carry out the construction of modernization in 1979 (Itoh, 1997), China has changed dramatically. Rapid economic growth attracted foreign trade investment. In 1997, China received foreign direct investments (FDI) valued at \$ 45 billion, becoming the second largest recipient of FDI in the world after the United States (Hill, 2001). Industries, agriculture, education, medical and health works are flourishing. After China took over Hong Kong and Macao in 1997 and 1999, China became the world's largest market. The 1.2 billion Chinese people are the biggest consumers for foreign businesses. However, because of cultural differences, some foreign organizations are not satisfied with their investments and trade. Some of them are very successful in their businesses through effective communication while others are failures. Deresky (2000) presents the following case, which discusses a typical business in China, and is summarized below.

The story happened in a city in the northeast part of China in 1989-1990. Shenyang is well known for its heavy industry and building materials industries. All the Buildings in Shenyang were constructed of brick and concrete elements without insulation, which caused a huge waste of heat energy. The Shenyang government had listed the development of the insulation industry as one of the priorities in the local development program.

Shenyang Building Materials Corp. (the end user), headquartered in Shenyang, produced different types of building materials such as bricks, concrete elements and sanitary wares. It had 1,000 employees and was supported by the local government. Management wanted to go ahead with an investment in a rockwool product factory. Yanjing Building Material Machinery and Technology Import & Export Corp. (YBMMTIEC), (the buyer) was headquartered in Beijing. It was one of the organizations authorized by the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations and Trade

(MOFERT) to engage in trade with foreign countries. Since China's economy is centrally planned and the government monopolizes foreign trade, the end user had no authority to import. Yanjing Building Materials Machinery and Technology Import & Export Corp. are responsible for organizing and conducting the technical and commercial negotiations, the signing, and execution of contracts on behalf of the end users. The buyer sent inquires to three different foreign suppliers for bidding: Deli in the United States, Toya in Japan, and Horri in Sweden. The commercial negotiations were scheduled to take place in Beijing from November 12 to December 23, 1989, with these three suppliers. Deli Rockwell Corporation headquartered in West Virginia is the biggest company in the United States specializing in the design and delivery of rockwool machinery and production technology. Deli management had defined that as one of firm's key objectives in entering this market, new strategies were to be developed to position the firm to capture the Chinese market in the future and stimulate the otherwise declining sales volume and revenues of the company.

In late 1989, the company received an inquiry from the buyer for a rockwool production line with an annual designed capacity of 15,000 tons. In January 1990, a Chinese delegation arrived in America for a plant tour and detailed technical discussions. An exchange of information conducted by fax telex and the mail indicated encouraging progress. At the invitation of the buyer, Deli sent a team of four to China in December 1990, for formal commercial negotiations. The Deli group consisted of John Gross, vice president of the marketing department; Richard Wolf, chief engineer; Arthur Miller, a young lawyer; and Tony Shen, marketing assistant, who was born in China and later moved to the United States. December 16, 1990, when the Deli group arrived at Beijing Airport, Wang Hai, director of the Import Department, and Chen Ling, a young interpreter from YBMMTIEC, gave a warm welcome to the Deli group. Wang told Deli that Mr. Xin could not come because he had a meeting with the Japanese Toya representatives. However, he was looking forward to seeing him at the welcoming banquet that evening. John Gross did not expect the Chinese to arrange the negotiations with other potential suppliers simultaneously. Gross had met Xin at an exhibition in Hanover, Germany where they had become very interested in one another's business activities. During the preceding year, Gross had invited and sponsored the visit of Xin's delegation to Deli's Rockwool Manufacturing Facilities and Research Center in West Virginia. Xin and his delegation were greatly impressed by Deli's state-of-the-art technology and grateful for the hospitality Gross extended to them. The two men developed a close relationship and expressed a strong mutual interest in developing China's rockwool insulation industry. On the way, Wang recalled the history of Beijing and suggested to them that they tour the Great Wall.

Mr. Xin arrived at the hotel with a delegation of 15 Chinese who were officials from the Economic and Planning Department of Shenyang's government, professional institute, and bank. Since China was a socialist country characterized by central planning, the foreign trade system functioned as an integral part of the national and local economic planning mechanism. The end user had to initiate a project, professional and feasibility study for approval by the local government authorities responsible for the planning, executing, financing, and supervising of the economic development program. They would evaluate the priority and feasibility of the proposed project according to the local development program and then grant or deny it accordingly. After shaking hands and exchanging greetings, according to a Chinese custom, Xin, the host, was seated facing north, Gross was seated opposite him. Xin gave a welcoming speech and expressed his warmest welcome. He hoped the negotiations would be conducted in a spirit of friendship and on the basis of mutual benefit and equality. Gross gave a corresponding speech expressing his appreciation and said that Deli had the best technology and machinery with the best services to turn the Chinese plant into one of the best in the world. Let's Ganbei (bottoms up). The Chinese applauded, rose touched their cups, and emptied them. The rich variety of Chinese delicacies sat on the table like mountains. When Gross thanked Xin, he replied: " no, no, it is a simple dinner, hope you don't mind." Gross was confused: this much food would feed my family for a week.

The next day, a technical meeting was scheduled at the buyer's headquarters. The flags of both countries were on the table. The Chinese arranged themselves on one side of the table while the Deli group was seated opposite them. Mr. Xin proposed the initiation of the meeting. However, he could not participate in every meeting but authorized Wang to handle the negotiations. Richard Wolf, Deli's chief engineer, started the presentation. He emphasized the advantages of Deli's melting and spinning technology, and told them how this technology could benefit the end user in terms of raw materials consumption and labor costs in the long run. The interpreter had difficulty translating the terms used to explain the process and machinery since she lacked a technical background. The presentation proceeded slowly. During the break, Gross asked Tony Shen whether he could act as translator. He said this would not only embarrass Wang but also cause the girl to lose face; the Chinese always trust their own interpreter. The negotiation continued and turned to the price. Gross found the competitor's quotations on the table before the Chinese negotiators. Wang Hai pointed out that the Chinese fully compared quotations from different suppliers before a contract was signed. The Swedish and Japanese suppliers had agreed to reduce prices by 20% and 15% respectively. Deli's price was high and its technology transfer fees were unreasonable. The Chinese were not concerned about the labor and raw materials since these were both local and cheap. They focused on Deli's prices, which greatly exceeded the end user's approved foreign currency budget. For the end user, there was no way to apply for an extra budget in such a short time. Gross was disappointed the Chinese did not evaluate the technology in terms of economic efficiency and the benefits for the long run. Gross learned the project had only a \$4.2 million foreign currency budget. The Chinese hoped Gross would reconsider the price. Deli's schedule for the following day was a sightseeing tour. Gross was unhappy with this arrangement since his group came for business and not for touring. He was frustrated over the absence of a time schedule. Shen shared his view, but the Chinese negotiators regarded a price concession as a face-giving act and indicated their willingness to continue cooperating on this project. They felt Deli should carefully consider the prices. During the second round of price negotiation, Gross reduced 3% on the machinery and 5% on the technology, and gave Wang a copy of the new quotations, including seaworthy packing. The Chinese quietly studied his new quotations and then responded. Deli's price was still high. Deli should reconsider before the contract negotiations. Gross was worried the Chinese just be using Deli to get a deal from its competitors. He promised to re-consider the price, but the final price would depend very much on the payment terms and other contract terms. Gross noticed the Chinese wished to avoid direct confrontation with him and wanted to solicit comments from their superiors.

After their discussion, they started to discuss the contract terms. The Chinese gave the Deli group their standard commercial contract form. Miller found the form was exactly same one he had seen three years ago. There were many ambiguities in it, such as the rights and obligations were too general and uncertain for the guarantee of the acceptance test. Miller gave Wang two copies of his contract draft. Wang said: "our contract form is not negotiable; our relevant authorities will not approve it". The reasons were the Chinese negotiators were unfamiliar with the United States legal system and laws and their signed contract was subject to review by the government. Wang also refused to give the confirmed letter of credit from the bank to Deli since the Chinese government owns the Bank of China and would not go bankrupt. The guarantee clause was general and the language used was too vague and ambiguous for Deli. The negotiations proceeded to a solution. Miller suggested that all disputes or claims relating to this contract should be settled through litigation. Wang insisted but agreed on arbitration: "no matter what happens, we can always sit down and solve the dispute through friendly discussion or reconciliation. Between friends, everything can be negotiated." The Chinese stressed ethical and moral obligations rather than the legal obligations. The Chinese traditionally and culturally opposed litigation because it was a face-losing and humiliating act and were of the opinion that discussion and negotiation could save face for both parties, maintain their self-respect, and preserve the friendship between the two



sides. December 21, both parties had gone through most of the contract terms, but the price issue was still pending. Shen advised Gross: the Chinese place a great deal of importance on personal relationships (guanxi), and you have a good relationship with Mr. Xin, so why do you not invite Mr. Xin and Mr. Wang to dinner and settle the price problem face to face across the table? Gross adapted this suggestion and invited Mr. Xin and Mr. Wang. While at table, when Gross turned the conversation to the price issue, Mr. Xin told Gross: "we admit your technology is better than the Japanese. However, the end user has only \$3 million for this project. The Chinese saying: Less profits, more projects. The Japanese agreed to further reduce their prices below the budget level. We are old friends, if you reduce your price to our budget level, I will try to persuade the end user to order the machinery and technology from you. The president of the end user was my classmate in high school, and we have a very close relationship." Gross realized Xin was doing him a favor by giving face. He wondered what he could do to give face him in return?

To reduce the price to their budget level would mean a negative profit margin for the company. To insist on the present price would be to allow the Japanese to establish the first foothold in the Chinese market. Deli's plans called for dominating the market in China. Should the company sacrifice immediate gain for future growth, or go home and forget the whole thing? Gross realized doing business in China was not easy. (p. 202-209)

Was John Gross's approach of communication correct in his negotiations with the Chinese? What should Gross do because the negotiation process cannot go on in China? What are some of the fundamental cultural perceptions on basic cultural values and concepts (Deresky, 2000)? These questions and many others are typical of the cross-cultural encounters companies must face in the 21st-century of globalization depending on their level of expertise in dealing with such situations. Indeed, communication can affect the success or failure of a company's business in China.

### **COMMUNICATION IS CONTINUOUS AND IS A PROCESS**

When people live in the world, they need to communicate with others. Communication is everywhere and inevitable because people select and choose their communicative behaviors. Communication is not random since communication comes from the past and goes into the future (Meyers, 1980). It is continuous action. Meyers (1980) stated:

"It does not have a clear-cut beginning and end. It is a part of people's lives, which flows and changes as their environment changes, as one changes and others change. Human communicative needs are never static, and therefore, they require adjustment based on our previous experiences and our future expectation" (p.7).

Communication describes the process of sharing meaning by transmitting messages through the use of common symbols such as verbal and nonverbal symbols (Deresky, 2000; Gibson, Ivancevich & Donnelly, 2000). For example, the process of Deli's group negotiation with the Chinese is a process of communication.

The general process of communication contains four elements. They are sender/encoder, medium/message, receiver/decoder, and feedback.

Both parties are the senders and receivers through messages and feedback (Deresky, 2000; Gibson et al, 2000). However, the communication process involves certain stages during which the messages can be distorted. Deresky (2000) said: "anything that serves to undermine the communication of the intended meaning is typically referred to as noise.

The primary cause of noise stems from the fact that the sender and the receiver each exist in his/her own life space which is based largely on culture, experience, religion, relations' values, norms, and so forth. This determines the interpretation of meaning in communication (Deresky, 2000). People decode and understand a message according to their values and norms experience. Gross emphasized that his technology and machinery would lead to reduce raw materials and labor in the long-term. The Chinese said that this was not important for them since raw materials and labor were local and cheap. Both were from different backgrounds and countries with their own perceptions of the value of labor and raw materials. In this way, culture that links is a communication problem because it is not a constant; it is variable. As cultural variance increases, so does the problem of communication.

### **COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE**

The scholar Iris Varner (1988) stated, "communication is culture specific" (Barner, 1988, as cited in Sims & Guice, 1992). It is true that different cultures use different approaches to communicate every day. Hill (2001) defined: "culture as a system of values and norms which is shared among a group of people, and when taken together, constitute a design for living (p. 79) because culture is experienced. Culture is that complex act which includes the whole: thoughts, knowledge, feelings, beliefs, behaviors, art, morals, law, customs and other capabilities acquired by people as members of society (Hill, 2001; Cheney, 2001). Values and norms are the central components of a culture. Values are the foundation/the bedrock/the core ideas or principles that direct human behavior. Norms are social rules and guidelines that prescribe appropriate behaviors in particular situations. "Values and norms are influenced by political and economic philosophy, social structure, religion, language, and education" (Hill, 2001, p.79).

The Chinese cultural values are dominated by the Confucian ethic and principles which require obedience to and respect for superiors and parents, duty to family, loyalty to friends, humility, sincerity, and courtesy ("Confucianism", China Hong Kong Business, 2002). These have been extremely normative for all Chinese subculture groups, regardless of the country in which they live. Samovar, Porter, and Jain (1981) expressed cultural factors pervade the communication process:

<p>"Culture and communication are inseparable because culture not only dictates who talks with whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds, it also helps to determine how people encode message, the meaning they have for message, and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed, or interpreted. In fact, our entire repertory of communicative behaviors is dependent largely on the culture in which we have been raised. Culture, consequently, is the foundation of communication and, when cultures vary, communication practices also vary" (p.24).</p>
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When the sender sends a message (medium) to a receiver, who interprets the message and draws a conclusion about what the sender meant, then he/she will send a response to the receiver; this is a circular process (Deresky, 2000). Since cultures vary, the communication process also varies and changes as the technology develops.

### **CULTURAL NOISE IN THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS**

"When a member of one culture sends a message to a member of another culture, intercultural communication takes place" (Deresky, 2000). There are two types of intercultural communications. One is multicultural communication that is relative cultural homogeneity. Fine (1993) discussed how "multicultural communication refers to modes of communicating among people of different cultural backgrounds, whose cultural differences manifest themselves in different linguistic features (grammatical, phonological, and lexical) and/or rhetorical styles" (p. 271). This is the kind of communication, which happens in a country whose cultures are different. Fine (1993) found:

People of different racial and cultural backgrounds bring different meanings, values, assumptions, and discourse styles into the workplace. Although people speak the same language, they have difficulty communicating with one another; this can threaten common orientation organizational goals such as those found in American businesses. These differences often lead to misunderstandings and breakdowns in communication (p 259).

It is the same in China. The Taiwanese, or people from Hong Kong who go to Mainland China to do their business, also have custom's problems. Although they are Chinese, some customs and traditions are totally different. They still need to learn to improve communication in order to succeed in their businesses. It is the same thing with Northern Chinese businesses that want to do business in Southern China; they should follow the rules of the southern Chinese and their business practices. The Chinese have a saying: "Ten miles are different customs."

China has fifty-six ethnic groups each with different traditions and customs. In 1990, my two co-workers and I went to ShanTou Chemical Gas Plant in the ShanTou Economic Zone of Guangdong/Canton Province for a sale contract and to collect debts. The president of the plant, Zhang, and his department directors gave us a warm welcome and banquet. The host had already ordered the dishes, shrimp, snake, frog, duck's feet and tortoise. Just as a Chinese saying: Cantonese eat all flying animals except airplanes and all claiming animals except a table (Deresky, 2000). I never ate snake and tortoise before, but I tasted each one. The hosts were happy since it represented the guest "do in Rome as the Romans do." I found beside each plate, a pack of cigarettes 555. After dinner, everybody is expected to take the pack of cigarettes 555 as a gift since this is the custom of welcoming guests and the beginning of cooperation between two parties.

Deresky (2000) stated since "cultural variables cause noise in the communication process, the knowledge of cultural noise will enable us to take steps to minimize that noise and so improve communication. The message contains the meaning intended by the sender/encoder

when it reaches the receiver/decoder. However, it undergoes a transformation in which the influence of the decoder's culture becomes part of the meaning" (p. 141) for the accomplishment of business.

Intercultural communication is comprised of both homogeneous and heterogeneous aspects. This paper will focus on cross-cultural communication or the heterogeneous aspect of the business world by examining the relationships among the Deli Company of America, the Toya Company in Japan, and the Horri Company in Sweden and their ways of doing business in China.

## **CULTURAL VARIABLES IN THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS**

### **Attitude**

People's attitudes underlie the way they behave and communicate, and the way they interpret messages from other people. Ethnocentric attitudes are a particular source of noise in cross-cultural communication (Deresky, 2000). In the incident described in the case above, the Chinese negotiators thought that the government owned China Bank would never go bankrupt while there was no litigation. Gross was confused by the Chinese arrangement of sightseeing and touring that seemed to be an indication of reconsider the price issue. However, attitude can change when the Chinese understand your purpose and behavior through communicating. As Gross invited Mr. Xin and Wang to dinner, their attitude became more open than before; Gross received significant information.

One of the attitudes that occur is stereotyping. This is when a person assumes that every member of a society or subculture has the same characteristics or traits (Deresky, 2000). The Chinese generally consider any Westerner to be rich. They view Europe as the cultural center of the Western world. But more and more people in China are understanding that free market economics is the real reason for the disparity between the Chinese and foreign incomes, especially America ("Attitude", China HK, 2002). Americans are rich and generous, Americans like baseball and hotdogs. Because the Western ideas about individual freedom are totally alien in the collectivist culture of China, the Chinese often see Western behavior as selfish and uncaring for the common interests of the group ("Attitude", China HK, 2002).

### **Language**

The scholars, Berko, Wolvin, and Wolvin (1998) said: "language is a system of human communication based on speech sounds used as arbitrary symbols" (p. 79). Language difference is a big obstacle to communication. Few people in China speak English well although English is now mandatory in most schools. It is the same as any kind of language. The Chinese language has spoken (verbal) and unspoken (non verbal) languages in the communication process.

#### **Verbal (Spoken) Language**

Mandarin (Putonghua) is the official national language in China and is taught at all schools. Although China has many different dialects such as Cantonese, Taiwanese and other dialects, the writing systems use exactly the same characters, regardless of the dialects, which differ only in pronunciation. The Chinese people are most likely to communicate in Mandarin (Putonghua) ("Language", China HK, 2002).

In the Deli Co. case, both parties used English to negotiate. The Chinese used Chinese to do group discussions then translated them to English for feedback to the sender Deli group. Verbal communication may be regarded as a game in which sender and receiver battle against the forces of confusion (Galvin & Book, 1978). To illustrate, the young interpreter Chen Ling played a role in the whole negotiation process. Because she lacked the professional background, her translations of presentation did not satisfy either the Deli group or the Chinese group. This lack might lead to misunderstandings or incomplete understanding of Deli's high technology and its machinery. It is difficult to translate exactly from one language to another. The best way for foreigners is to bring their own interpreter who was born in that particular culture's country. This can be an asset to the foreign business.

The words yes/no have another meaning for the Chinese. Since the Chinese are introverts and wish to keep harmony in society, they would avoid saying, "No," which can cause embarrassment and loss of face. If a request cannot be met, the Chinese may say it is inconvenient or under consideration. This generally means "No." Another way of saying, "No" is to ignore a request and pretend it was not asked. If the Chinese tell you "Yes, but it will be difficult", "We will think about it", and "We will study it", this is an affirmative for a Westerner, but it is "No" or "Probably not" for the Chinese. If the Chinese people say "yes" to a question and/or favor by making change of direction, the real answer is "no." Because of courtesy and social harmony, the Chinese rarely and directly tell the person bad news. Indeed, they like to use an intermediary for communication in order to avoid hurting the person ("Chinese Say No", China HK, 2002). Therefore, it important for a Westerner to listen to what the Chinese people are saying during the communication process such as negotiations, or conversations between manager and employee.

### **Nonverbal (Unspoken) Language**

Unspoken language (non-verbal) means people communicate without words. It is important to the meaning of a message you receive. There are many ways of unspoken communication. Berko et al (1998) discussed how.

"Kinesics is the study of communication through body movement. People communicate through the gestures they use, the way they walk and stand, the expressions on their faces and in their eyes and how they combine these variables to open or close channels" (p. 105).

Body language refers to body movement such as gestures, eye contact, facial expression, and postures. Although these actions are universal and general, different cultures have different

understanding of them. The Chinese do not like to touch people, and they rarely hug in public. Lightly touching another person's arm when speaking is a sign of close familiarity. The Chinese often use body language that can be incomprehensible to Westerners who are unfamiliar with them, and some western body language can be also misunderstood. Some examples are: laughing or smiling among the Chinese can be confusing and may mean different things according to the situation. When nervous or embarrassed, the Chinese will smile or laugh nervously. Blank facial expressions with no smiling and periodic glancing at a clock or watch are a signal of uncomfortable (Elashmawi, 2001). Hissing is a sign of difficulty or uncomfortableness. The Chinese sit upright in chairs with both feet on the floor. Body language and subtle remarks and patterns of conduct can tell you more about the emotions and feelings in a situation than blunt verbal communication ("Nonverbal Communication", China HK, 2002). In contrast to Americans and other Westerners who value straight unambiguous dialogue, the Chinese are masters of the oblique. In conversation, what is not said can be more important than what is said. Even the seating arrangements can tell you how the Chinese view a certain meeting. In negotiating a meeting, the Chinese arranged themselves on one side of the table while the Deli group was seated opposite them. There are both countries' flags on the table. Knowing how to respond to situations appropriately can mean the difference between success and failure.

### **Facial Expression**

The researcher Griffin (1993) commented: "face is a complicated channel of communication; it reveals your intention or emotional state, and it reveals something about your character" (p. 15). In China, people rarely express their feelings on their faces. Since childhood, people are taught to restrain themselves and to learn how to suffer and not show their pain, anger, laughter, or sorrow. Confucian thought has influenced over 2,500 years in China. People should think about and be concerned with others because they live in a group. The group is the first; the individual is second. Therefore, many business people find it is difficult to obtain information from the Chinese facial expression. The Chinese do not laugh in public places. Sometimes they just smile when they listen or talk with others. If the Chinese are satisfied with your lecture or presentation, a half smile is often the feedback. In negotiations, it means ok.

### **Eye Contact**

All cultures have rules about how their members show respect to one another. Many Western people like to use eye contact. Americans especially tend to trust you more if you look them in the eye. Good eye contact conveys openness and receptiveness; it is viewed as a sign of sincerity and honesty (Griffin, 1993). On the other hand, the Chinese people use eye contact less; it is only for close friends or family members who know each other well. Their eye movement signals a clue to remind the other person to be aware of something. Therefore, foreign business people should not use eye contact with Chinese women. It can signal failure of your business negotiations. Indeed, when the Chinese greet someone, they do not look a person straight in the eye, but rather lower their eyes slightly. A foreigner/visitor should refrain from looking intensely

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into a person's eyes, as this can make a Chinese person feel uncomfortable ("Etiquette", China HK, 2002).

### **Etiquette and Gifts**

The term etiquette refers to proper and correct behavior for different situations. People who follow common customs and traditions in society use proper etiquette. China has always had a high regard for the proper ways of doing things since the beginning of its history. The Chinese people are concerned about etiquette in order to "avoid activities or behaviors that might lead to the discomfort of others or that might cause disorder in society" (Amant, 2001, p. 387). They teach their children proper etiquette from childhood. They treat others politely for give an individual's external public appearance (*face/mianzi*). Etiquette is an important part of the Chinese culture.

When meeting the Chinese business people, foreigners should display sincerity and respect. The Chinese also generally accept shaking hands as proper etiquette since it is important to Westerners. But the Chinese tend to shake hands very lightly and a handshake can last as long as ten seconds. The handshake is always followed by a ritualistic exchange of business cards. Foreigners should always carry many business cards, preferably with English text on one side and Chinese on the other. While exchanging business cards, it is necessary to give and receive the cards with both hands, holding the card corners between the thumb and forefinger and take a few moments to study the card and what it says, even if it is only printed in Chinese. This is a good beginning for your business ("Etiquette", China HK, 2002).

*Qing Ke* is a part of etiquette for the Chinese people. *Qing ke* refers to inviting somebody to breakfast/lunch/dinner in restaurants or in private homes. People *qing ke* have many reasons such as reunion, reconciliation, in honor of occasion, build/deep relationship, and do business. There is unwritten rule of bill paying. The Chinese do not allow guests to pay their bills since the Chinese are concerned about friendship rather than money. If one allows his/her guest to pay the bill, the person would be considered as not knowing the correct etiquette. The person who is the guest usually would *hui qing* (invite) the hosts to a restaurant or the home in appreciation of their generosity and hospitality. It is the same thing between two persons and companies who invite each other to restaurants; the hosts will take care of the bill, not the guests. This is totally different with Americans who pay their own bills in restaurants when they are invited. Therefore, foreigners should follow the Chinese rule when they get an invitation. But look for an opportunity to repay this invitation and take care of the bills in return.

Gifts are also part of etiquette. During the welcoming dinner banquet, foreign business people who are invited by the company or institution should present a single large gift to the company as a whole. The gift is presented to the head of the Chinese group. It expresses friendship and symbolizes hopes for good future business, or appreciation for a favor done. Favors should be material rewards; the gifts can be more symbolic than monetary ("Gifts", China HK, 2002). According to Chinese tradition, when foreigners leave China, the Chinese prepare a beautiful and worthy gift that represents long lasting friendship given to the foreigners. There is a well-known Chinese saying *Li Shang Wang Lai* that means reciprocation of greetings, favors,

and gifts (Gao, Ting-Toomey, 1998). In the case, if the Deli group brought a gift, Gross would present it to Mr. Xin who was head of the negotiating group. The Chinese would definitely give gifts to the Deli group before they left China. The gifts to the Chinese individuals should be of lesser value, with in the range of \$10US to \$15US ("Gifts", China HK, 2002).

It is polite for the recipient to refuse a gift two or three times before the Chinese finally accept it. This is the traditional Chinese custom even in their daily living. The Chinese people call *Ke Qi* (politeness). The foreigners should insist that the gift is only a small token, and they would be honored if it were accepted. As a rule, it is only after some hesitation that the Chinese will accept the gift graciously. When a gift is offered to the foreigners, they should refuse it ceremonially, as the Chinese do, with a humble acceptance and a few words appreciation. If the gift is wrapped, it is considered impolite to open it in front of the giver unless he/she encourages you to do so ("Gifts", China HK, 2002). The Chinese do not like people to open gifts in public places.

### **Face Value**

The term face (*MianZi/Lian*) is both objective and/or subjective. Having face means having a high status and prestige in the eyes of one's peers, and it is a mark of personal dignity. The Chinese are very sensitive to having and maintaining face in all aspects of social and business life ("Face Value", China HK, 2002). Individual face directly influences the faces of family, group, community, and society since the individual is a part of them. Face can be compared with a prized commodity and can be given, lost, taken away, or earned.

Mr. Xin gave Gross a big face; Mr. Tony Shen did not allow the interpreter, Chen Ling to lose face. The easiest way to cause someone to lose face is to insult the individual or to criticize him/her in front of others. Another way to cause someone to lose face is to treat him/her as a junior when his/her official status in an organization is high. However, one's business would certainly fail if this were done. Just as face can be lost, it can also be given by praising someone for good work in front of peers or superiors or by thanking someone for doing a good job. But it is not a good idea to praise another too much, as it can make an individual appear to be insincere. One can also save someone's face by helping him/her to avoid an embarrassing situation ("Face Value", China HK, 2002).

In business interactions, a person's face is not only his own but also the entire organization that he/she represents. A foreigner's relationship with the individual and the respect accorded him/her is probably the key to their business success in China.

### ***Guan Xi* (Relationship/Connection)**

The terms of *Guan Xi* and relationship have two explanations in Chinese. Relationship describes that condition of belonging to the same family, being connected by birth or marriage. *Guan Xi* refers to different properties of connection between person and person or thing and thing. I think that a foreigner's meanings about *guanxi* include these two aspects. Since the Confucian thought emphasizes the kinship system and the hierarchy of society, family, and



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friends, the Chinese prefer to do business with members of the kinship system, close friends, or trusted companies. In China, the term kinship has gone beyond meaning just a blood tie and has extended into the widely personal system to form a network.

The Chinese people speak about *guanxi* to mean a personal connection with others, government, institutions, and companies. Personal *guanxi*, relationship, and network are the key element of doing business in China. There are many different relationships (*Guan Xi*) for the Chinese such as national, geographical, provincial, friends of friends, former classmates, roommates, relatives, neighbors, colleagues, and associates with shared interests. As a result, trust and cooperation are reserved solely for family members and extremely close friends. The Chinese carefully cultivate these pervasive networks of personal relations. It is the primary means of accomplishing things and getting ahead. Once the Chinese establish a cordial relationship with foreign companies, they use this relationship as a basis for the give and take of business discussion. Personal relationship is also business relationship. In the case, Gross and Xin have already had a close relationship; Xin very openly advised Gross and gave him significant information.

*Guan Xi* establishes an obligation to exchange favors in future business activities. It is the same with companies. They need to have a good relationship with the bureaucracy. Since *guanxi* prevails over legal interpretation, relationship between a company and the Chinese bureaucrats is significant for a companies' survival. Doing business especially in the northern and inland areas in China, foreign business people would experience these problems more so than in the special Economic Zones in the south ("Personal Connection", China HK, 2002). By establishing close connections with others, the Chinese could survive and perhaps even prosper. Therefore, the difficulty to cultivate and establish a solid relationship would be the biggest obstacle to doing business successfully in China. One way to ensure success is to have a mutual friend serve as an intermediary be introduced through an overseas Chinese family member in China or to anyone who had worked with the authorities in China ("Personal Connection", China HK, 2002). Another way to establish foreign business is to make joint ventures. Foreign Joint Ventures with local participants would provide great opportunity to access *guanxi* networks than Wholly Owned Subsidiaries. Foreign companies are able to benefit from cheaper supplies, easier entry to markets, favorable taxation treatments, priority in obtaining infrastructures services, and greater assistance from authorities with problems (Chang, 1998)

The dinner table is another way to establish a solid relationship (*guanxi*) with the Chinese. Dining is a part of the Chinese culture that means reunion, acceptance, understanding, and sharing the same fruits of human products. People who gather together and sit around the table would be close friends or family members. The dinner table plays a strong role of in communication. A person, who does not treat guest with special foods, is considered an unreasonable person. Just as our case described, banquets are usually held in restaurants/hotels in private rooms that have been reserved for the purpose. All members of your delegation should arrive together and on time ("Dining", China HK, 2002). The Chinese greet you with a loud round of applause. The proper response is to applaud back. Seating arrangements, which are based on rank, are stricter than in the West, which is why you should give your host a list of delegation members and their rank. The Chinese regard the right side as the superior and the left

side as the inferior. Drinking takes an important place in the Chinese banquets. Toasting is mandatory and the drinking of spirits commences only after the host has made a toast at the beginning of the meal. He will stand and hold his glass to welcome, and says Gan Bei, which means bottoms up (empty glass); all present should drain their glasses. After this initial toast, drinking and toasting are open to all, but the head of the visiting group will be expected to toast the well being of his hosts in return. This is the time for getting to know one another and for feeling out the personalities who will be involved in later negotiations ("Dining", China HK, 2002).

After a banquet, a hardy Chinese host may invite you to go singing to a karaoke (KTV) or pool club. For Chinese, the karaoke phenomenon is a technological extension of their natural propensity to sing with close friends. Most karaoke clubs have Chinese, Japanese, and English songs. If a foreigner can sing, it will be greeted with much praise and applause ("Karaoke", China HK, 2002). The pool is a new leisure-time sport for the Chinese, especially for the boys. The karaoke or pool is a good way to establish close relations with the Chinese.

### **Social System and Legal System**

People in different societies organize their activities and social relationships in such a way as to be consistent with the values, religions, and economies of their societies. The Chinese social structure is a typical hierarchy that has been influenced by Confucian thought patterns. Ogden (1989) expressed: "Confucians believed that both the world and its people were essentially moral and that it was the duty of superior minds to train themselves in benevolence or humanity and then extend this out to all people" (p.16-17). The Chinese people always submitted themselves to authority since "the duty of government was to nurture the people both physically and spiritually, particularly by teaching them virtue and ceremonial rites" (Ogden, 1989, p. 16-17). From government to family, a certain sequence of order must be arranged. To respect elders and superiors and to love children are great virtues for the Chinese people. The Chinese people trust in government, companies, communities, and families who work together to form a social network. Most people like to follow the decisions from the government, companies, communities, and families. By understanding these factors, foreign companies can build a good relationship and reputation, and government would assist these companies to have a place in the Chinese market. Aboulafia-D'Jaen (1998) presented the following case is a good example.

<p>In 1996, Procter &amp; Gamble introduced a two-month long program to raise funds for Project Hope, a Chinese organization that builds schools in rural areas of China. For each purchase of the company's detergent, shampoo or soap, P&amp;G made a donation to Project Hope. In two months, \$240,000US was raised, enough to build ten new Schools. It maximized employee and community awareness of and loyalty to the P&amp;G brand and built government support for the company's operations (p. 23).</p>
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The legal system of a country is another dimension of its culture. It is a more concrete manifestation of a country's values, attitudes, cultural norms, and religious traditions. It is important for foreign businesses to know the legal system of the country in which it operates since foreign businesses frequently face civil liability for mishaps that involve their operations, services, or products sold in the host nations (Kim & Manborgne, 1987). Ogden (1989) found: "China has had a series of constitutions. The constitution provides both the legal and policy basis for all other laws" (p. 189). Since 1979 China legal system reforms, many new laws and legalities were put in writing (Ogden, 1989). Basic legal concepts are important particularly those related to business transactions such as business law, civil law, civil Procedure law, constitutional law, labor law, and tax law, and so forth.

### **Time**

Another variable that communicates culture is the way people regard and use time. There are two kinds of time systems that affect cross-cultural business communication. The monochronic time system works in monochronic cultures such as Switzerland, Germany, and the United States (Deresky, 2000). Deresky (2000) expressed: "time is experienced in a linear way, with a past, a present, and a future, and time is something to be spent, saved, made up, or wasted (p. 147). Monochronic people generally concentrate on one thing at a time, adhere to time commitments, and are accustomed to short-term relationships. In contrast, polychronic systems tolerate many things occurring at the same time and emphasize involvement with people. Polychronic people such as Latin Americans, Arabs, and those who are from other collective cultures (Deresky, 2000) may focus on several things at once, be highly distractible, and change plans often. The Chinese people run a polychronic system. Considering these differences, we can understand why Gross felt unhappy with Xin's sightseeing tour arrangement since his group was there for business and not sightseeing. Gross was frustrated over the absence of a time schedule. However, the Chinese had not yet discussed the time frame for the next process of negotiations.

### **Business Motto**

Since the cultural values are different, the Chinese people have their own way of doing business. Chinese business discussions usually stress mutual relationship and cooperation (Elashmawi, 1991). They recognize that friendliness is conducive to doing business successfully. They do not like one-time or short-term transactions. They wish to have long-term business dealings in order to build good relationship with consumers. Their business motto is: high volume, lower prices/less profits, and more projects. They trust in their consumers. The consumers are loyal to their producers or services, which leads to constant sales and increased profit. They share and share alike. In contrast, Americans usually make choices with a heavy emphasis on short-term profit. Gross should think about and be more patient regarding this point and be willing to sacrifice short-term results in order to build future investments and shared markets in China. Deli needs the Chinese project to resolve its declining sales volumes and revenues of its company. Therefore, providing a new price concession is necessary. In practice,

Gross should invite the president of the end user to dinner through Mr. Xin because they are former classmates and have a close relationship. Gross can tell the president of the end user what Deli's bottom price is and ask the president of the end user to increase their budget as high as possible. This means both parties are willing to co-operate and build long-term relationship. In this way, they give face to each other. Deli would really open the door of the Chinese rockwool industry.

### **IMPROVE CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

Intercultural communication skills are essential for business people in today's market because almost all business, whether domestic or international, involve communication with people from different cultural backgrounds (Cheney, 2001). Understanding cultural differences can prevent miscommunication. Effective communication is complete when the message has been understood. A message has been understood when it has been both clearly sent and received (Kikoski, 1993).

Since technology is developing quickly, it is reducing the distance between countries. International companies have shown dramatic growth and increase in the number of people those who do not travel often but are in contact via telephone and facsimile machines. Although some companies have concerns about cross-cultural communication, they are just at the beginning stages (Derderian, 1993). Thus, the companies should develop and understand the dramatic changes taking place in society.

#### **Training/Education**

Training programs are important for the companies that have business in foreign countries or for companies desiring to do business in foreign countries. It is a requirement for everyone who works in an international environment to participate in training sessions on negotiation, communication, and supervisory skills (Derderian, 1993) such as self-confidence and reliability, curiosity and willingness to meet new challenges, business customs and practices, values and beliefs of the society, and social interactions. Of the study, Odenwald (1993) said: "the main objective of intercultural training is the development of cross-cultural awareness." The companies who want to enter the Chinese market must learn about the Chinese business customs and practices, values and beliefs of society, social interactions, tax and legal system. An understanding of these practices will assist companies to form effective communication and build a good relationship with the Chinese.

#### **Awareness/Switch Roles**

"Awareness is the key to overcoming cultural differences" (as cited in Hammond & Kleiner, 1992). Hunt (1985) discussed that the skills of openness, self-assessment, and objectivity for avoiding or solving communication breakdown problems are awareness on the part of the communicator. Communicators should have openness, which means entering into a

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communication situation without your mind already made up. The person should be willing to be open to new ideas, new ways of thinking, people with varying viewpoints, and new and unusual approaches. Communicators need to engage in self-assessment to become critics of their own communication behavior before they can criticize the behavior of others. Objectivity gives our communication partner the opportunity to express his/her own ideas and feelings (Hunt, p. 104-105). For instance, people's awareness of the language is important in cross-cultural communication; he/she would understand others who speak another language when they communicate with each other. Empathy emerges from the heart which leads to role switching; the ability to put oneself in the other person's role and to assume that individual's viewpoints and emotions (Gibson et al, 2000). Increased awareness of language usage is a major benefit in cross-cultural communication. When people are concerned about this, they will speak slowly and say it simply. The author Bredin (1991) agrees with Professor Bailey's opinions: "talk to your reader, simply talk on paper. Write the way you talk by writing plain English" (p. 9). This is a good way to communicate with the Chinese. Many Chinese people know English and their reading skills are much better than their listening or speaking. Since there is not a great opportunity to speak English, the Chinese do not speak well. Therefore, writing simply and saying it simply will help foreign people to keep their business flowing in China.

### **Writing/Graphic Language**

The researchers, Stitaram & Cogdell (1976) stated, "writing is symbolic of spoken communication. It is a symbol of a symbol" (p. 94). When business people must communicate with people whose native language is different from their own, they must not only know the receiver's language but also their culture (Sims & Guice, 1992). For example, an appropriate piece of communication in the United States might not be appropriate or effective in China because the writers and receiver have different expectations for the format, tone, and information in the communication. Therefore, using plain English and saying it simply is the best way to overcome this problem.

In business communication, both parties should understand the reader's culture to assure effective written communication. The researcher Bredin (1991) believed, "Plain English is extremely important, but it is only one part of effective business communication (p. 20). He contended, "It is easier for the reader to read, and it is easier for the writer to write." (p. 19) Since companies and people exchange information through letters, fax, e-mail, telephone, video... writing plain English and speaking simply facilitates that people give the right information and receive the right information from the right person to the right person easily (Bredin, 1991).

Graphic language, the earliest form of human communication, was used before written language. People talked, gestured, and drew pictures in the dirt (O'Hara-Devereaux & Pardini, 1993). In much the same way today, it can connect different cultures as a common visual tool

using symbols and shapes that can be accepted universally. Since graphic language is a very elementary and visual system, people can easily understand it. Using graphic language as a way of doing presentation and marketing advertising with the Chinese people would be a better way of communication. The Chinese are rational. Chinese words evolved from pictographs. I agree with the author O'Hara-Devereaux & Pardini (1993) that graphic language can be used to fill a critical need to support cross-cultural communication and provide a space to build mutual understanding and trust. This will enable people to be productive and have enjoyed interactions and success in business.

### **Listening**

Listening is a process that involves reception, perception, attention, the assignment of meaning, and response by the listener to the message presented (Berko et al, 1998). Listening can be taught. In order for cross-cultural business communication to be successful, a high level of listening ability is required to prevent the loss of even a greater amount of dollars when foreign business people do business in China. Communicators must seek not only to be understood but also to understand (Gibson et al, 2000). The same words in the Chinese language may have several meanings. Just as the critic Grunkemeyer (1992) said: "not only do many words have a dictionary meaning (denotation), but also they have an implied meaning (connotation)" (p. 28). If business people stopped talking and carefully listened to what the Chinese were not saying and what the Chinese were saying, it would be a smarter strategy.

### **Feedback**

Feedback plays a role in communication since it would give the sender/encoder an understanding of whether the message was received. Berko et al (1998) analyzes that feedback responses could be either verbal or nonverbal, and they should function to further enhance and/or reinforce the communication. There are various forms of feedback which are facial expression, nodding or shaking heads, applaud, writing letters, sending e-mail, making phone calls, and so forth. The Chinese people usually give feedback to presentation, lecture, and performance by applauding. If people's lecture, presentation, or performances were very successful, the Chinese would applaud and smile for a few minutes. If the speaker or performer gets feedback of light applause, they should know this feedback is polite.

### **Learning by Doing**

Doing business in China, foreigners cannot continue to do business their own way, but rather, they should do in China as the Chinese do. Hill (2001) provided the following case, which supports this view.

Mr. Gil Hastings, the founder of the Orient Foods Ltd., was a former Golden Gloves boxing champion for the state of Ohio. In 1993, Hastings started to research fast food opportunities in China for his company, Hutchinson Whampoa Limited in Hong Kong. During his research, he found that McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Dairy Queen, Pizza Hut, and Japan's Yoshinoya were already established in China, but none of them were dominating the fast food market. They all served Western-style food, not traditional Chinese rice bowls. A Chinese-American founded the California Beef Noodle King providing Chinese style noodles. He also obtained significant information from a Beijing city official that the Chinese needed to solve their school lunch problem. The Chinese people recognized the link between nutrition and IQ development as well as physical development. He learned quickly that in order to receive support from the government for your business, it was important to identify an area where your business could help China. He was sure this school lunch program would help entire institutional factories and other organizations. It would offer great opportunity with very little competition. After 60 days of research, he came up with a concept and product that directly appealed to Chinese palates. However, Hutchinson Co. gave up this project temporarily for its existing businesses. Hastings left Hutchinson Co. and decided to do his own business --- retail fast food that was the Chinese product served in a Western manner. In a short time, he found investors and partners. Orient Foods formed in Hong Kong in November 1993. His partner Ling Ling, Chinese Food Company, was based in New Jersey, and it produced, prepared, cook-freeze-thaw products, and sold them in American supermarkets. But he could not get a Chinese partner in China; he decided to apply for Wholly Foreign-Owned Enterprises (WFOE) in the Chinese fast food industry. In fact, no one foreign company got permission of WFOE to do business in China from the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation (MOFTEC). He did not give up. He hired his first manager, Ms. Margaret Zhang who was born in China but lived in New Jersey. Even though she did not speak English, she had a business background, and she was driven and loyal. She brought strong discipline, an iron will, and a commanding presence to the company. In December 1993, Margaret Zhang moved to Beijing to begin working for Orient Foods for the license. Margaret Zhang worked hard through her *Guan Xi* (relationship/network) to get Orient Foods' pilot kitchen and product testing that satisfied the Chinese schools' requirements. Hastings, Willie Ling (from Ling Ling Foods), and Margaret Zhang had communicated Orient's "get it done" philosophy to find factory space and get the local government support. Because of the export product requirement, Orient application of WFOE did not get approved. Hastings and Willie Ling came up with a solution that exported their product to Ling Ling Foods while Margaret Zhang went to seek advice from some government officials. She found the right person, the vice party secretary in the Beijing City government, who wrote a support letter to MOFTEC to explain Orient's school lunch program which helped the city government to solve the school lunch problem. Because of this letter and *Guan Xi* of this vice party secretary, Orient's application was approved in August 1994. Orient Food became the first WFOE Company in the Chinese fast food industry. In reflecting on his experience in the Orient Foods project in China, Gil Hastings thought that there were two strategies. One was to have vision and continue to work against the vision. The second was to learn by doing. His philosophy was that you couldn't study your way to success in China. That is absolutely impossible. One should just do it quickly without waiting (p. 461-469).

It was really a miracle that a foreign company became a WFOE after only eight months in China.

## CONCLUSION

Culture has always been important. It is more important now than in previous decades, and its importance shows every sign of growing (Stevenson, 1997). People should respect other

cultures and create new ways of integrating diverse groups to form a cohesive and responsible society (Charlton & Huey, 1992).

The study of Casares (1993) found that business success depends on the quality of communication, basic communication abilities, and an awareness and understanding of both your own and your business partners' cultures.

In Chinese business communication, attitude directly influences a company's sale market. Language plays an important role in effective communication. Knowledge of Chinese etiquette and rules of social behavior are major assets for foreigners who do business in China. Face value also helps foreign companies to build good reputations. *Guan Xi* is a prevalent cultural phenomenon, and it is essential and extremely important to establish and cultivate *Guan Xi* in order to accomplish business since the Chinese do not like to do business with strangers. Being familiar with the Chinese social system and legal system will keep business flowing. Effective use of time schedules creates a new way to improve communication skills with the Chinese. The Chinese business motto is always a challenge for foreign companies (see figure 3).

All of the above eight elements of the Chinese culture work together to make the noise of cross-cultural communication. Learning and doing is the best way to breakdown these barriers since in each culture its members have been taught to do things in a particular way. It may not be logical to do things that way, but if it is not done in that manner, it can lead to problems (Sitaram & Cogdell, 1976). "Do in China as the Chinese do" will help foreign companies to succeed in their businesses.

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