

Letter from the Editor

BY ALBERT J. MILLS

We are pleased to present the sixth ASB issue of the *Workplace Review* based on papers presented at the annual conference of the Atlantic Schools of Business in Halifax (hosted by Dalhousie School of Management). Papers chosen from the annual conference are selected for three main reasons. Firstly, for their ability to reflect the best of research across the Atlantic region – particularly leading-edge research; secondly, because of their local appeal, practical application, and their ability to speak to a broad audience; and thirdly because they have already undergone a process of peer evaluation. In the latter regard we try to select from those papers that are including in the conference proceedings. Above all else we remain committed to make the *Workplace Review* dedicated to better workplace practices, devoted to discussing issues of practical concern to businesses throughout Atlantic Canada. In this issue ethics and social responsibility are once very much to the fore.

Our opening article by Lawrence T. Corrigan (Saint Mary's University) looks at university culture and risk propensity. It is a timely paper in its focus on how turbulent times are testing universities (among other organizations) and explores the role of risk averse culture in the process. Although of particular interest to those of us who work in the universities the implications are of interest to those in large organizations facing similar challenges. Corrigan argues that in the face of a perceived need by administrators (and senior managers) to adopt more risk taking strategies there may be a need to examine important aspects of the organization's culture; seeking ways to foster an organizational culture that "rewards, or at least does not discourage change." The paper ends with a proposed "research methodology for subsequent empirical studies."

Moving to the issue of leadership our second paper – by Margaret McKee and Cathy Driscoll (Saint Mary's University) – examines the relationship between transformational leadership training and employee well-being. Based on an "exploratory" study involving in-depth interviews with health care leaders, McKee and Driscoll suggest that there may be a link between certain forms of leadership training and employee well-being. Although the results are tentative there is an interesting link with the earlier paper in suggesting a way of training leaders and employees to deal with change.

Keeping with the theme of leadership and senior management our third paper, by Russell Fralich (Saint Mary's University), shifts the focus yet again to understand the motivations behind mergers and acquisitions (M&A) despite well established evidence that M&A strategies rarely increase an organization's value creation. This provides us with further discussion of the role and impact of change on organizational outcomes. In this case, drawing on a six-year sample of S&P500 companies, Fralich argues that an important set of motivations may lie in the potential gains that accrue to the "acquiring firm's CEO" in the form of personal prestige. While "high-status CEOs are less likely to engage in M&A activity . . . high-informal power CEOs are more likely."

Our fourth paper tackles the growing organization phenomenon of "crowdsourcing," which refers to company attempts to generate stakeholder responses and feedback to enable improvements in the way it does business. Here Amy Thurlow and Tony Yue (Mount Saint Vincent University) explore the impact of crowdsourcing on the potential to create and build social networks, whose outcomes may be different from those intended or expected by the companies involved. In the process they draw on the postmodernism and the work of the literary theorist Bakhtin to challenge the existing scientific management thought processes attached to crowdsourcing. They suggest "that the true potential of crowdsourcing and its derivatives . . . is found in the way this phenomenon is able to engage individuals in the collective construction of identities;" identities that emerge through dialogue among the participants in the on-line environment.

At the heart of this paper is a reminder that organizational change has implications beyond the concerns of senior managers and has implications for individual and social change.

Maintaining the theme of work-life balance Scott MacMillan and Tony Yue (Mount Saint Vincent University), in our fifth paper, draw on existential theory to explore “the choices people make in the quest for a happy and meaningful life.” They contend that framing the work-life debate through an existential lens returns the issue of individual choice to centre stage, concluding that ultimately, “it does not matter how we view work or non-work; all that matters is that we choose our self by choosing our life freely. The meaningful life may indeed be the “balanced” life or however else a person chooses to live but this must be judged by the individual, not society.”

Our six and final paper is part of our regular teaching practice focus. The article by Linda R. Macdonald (Dalhousie University) “presents best practices derived from the first year of offering discipline-specific communication support to international students of Commerce at Dalhousie University.” As a result of her study MacDonald argues that communication support for international students “should occur within an educational environment that is culturally responsive and regards international students not as deficient in skills but as positive contributors to the academic community.” MacDonald challenges us all to think about the ways we deal with international students at a human rather than an inputs level.

This issue of *Workplace Review* draws together a series of far-reaching papers that question us to think about the human aspects of organizations and society and what we can do to build better workplaces. If you have an article to contribute don't wait until the next annual meeting of the Atlantic Schools of Business (although we welcome those papers) send it to us now for consideration in a future issue.

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UNIVERSITY CULTURE AND RISK PROPENSITY

This paper discusses the turbulent Canadian university environment that seems to be oriented toward change, and juxtaposes this with university culture that may be oriented toward the status quo. The nature of the Canadian university sector is explored, along with the important influence of organizational culture in affecting propensity to undertake risky adventures. This paper identifies that the complex and distributed nature of university society makes it likely that substantive change will continuously attach to various parts of university organizations. This is a contrary finding to some of the previous research which claims chaos as a unique phenomenon set in particular temporal periods. If the external environment continues to require a more business-like approach and greater risk-taking in universities, efforts will be required to foster an organizational culture that rewards, or at least does not discourage, change. This paper contributes to the ongoing theoretical discussion of university culture and risk propensity by proposing a research methodology for subsequent empirical studies.

INTRODUCTION

The academic literature and recent practitioner conferences in Canada have explored the concept of university culture and risk. For example, four consecutive annual conferences of the Canadian Association of University Business Officers have addressed the topics of culture and risk – *Embracing Cultures* in 2009, *Rock the Common* in 2010, *Winds of Innovation* in 2011, and *Risky Business* in 2012 which characterized university operations as a tightrope walk that requires a safety net. However the discourse of turbulent change is hardly new. Notions of culture and change have been an ongoing concern of university management across Canada, and a recurring topic in the academic literature (Stensaker et al., 2012; Välimaa, 2008). The idea of university cultural change in Canada has included motivation to be more entrepreneurial and business-like, mirroring similar moves elsewhere toward a “market-driven enterprise culture” (Sarrico & Melo, 2012, p. 83). Providers of operating and capital funds have participated in this call for change. Government has placed conditions upon the substantial annual grants provided to universities and the political agenda in Canada seems to have shifted to a skills-based, job-generating mentality. Also, governments facing their own structural financial deficits have attempted to substantially reduce their investments in higher education. Even philanthropic donors, another major source of university funding, are demanding change – endowment funds increasingly consist of financial contributions with restrictions specified by the donor. Corporate donations now mostly come with quid pro quo considerations.

The external environment also includes significant threats such as shaken consumer confidence exposing university affordability, and competitive pressures such as the increase in on-line academic program offerings (indeed, entire virtual universities) and the creation of private, profit-oriented universities. All of these pressures are forcing universities to consider becoming more business-like and

accepting of risk. However, changing from what may be a risk-averse culture to increasingly a risk-taking culture requires substantial changes in the management of many Canadian universities, and the scope of such a transition would be unusual in the absence of a strong external force (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Välimaa, et al., 2012). On the other hand, there is interest in seeing university culture as an hopeful motivating force toward promoting change, rather than a systemic blocking force (Stensaker et al., 2012).

The literature on university change exhibits much talk of political, economic, social and technological threats. The 1970's have been described as challenging times for academic institutions due to the effects of financial stress (Dill, 1982). The 1980's were also described as extremely difficult for universities – “soaring fuel costs, rapid inflation, inadequate budgeting strategies, decreased federal support for research... policy decisions to cut federal support for student loan funds... thereby intensifying the competition between institutions” (Dill, 1982, p. 304). In the 1990's a similar story of chaotic change is told, “Universities worldwide have come under increasing pressures to adapt... unprecedented growth, complexity and competitiveness” (Bartell, 2003, p. 43). The European political agenda during this period required more accountability for university use of public funding, and governments have been interested in “stimulating competition within and between institutions” (Stensaker, 2004, p. 12). The decade following the year 2000 continued the same sort of assertion about the hyperactive university environment (e.g., Lumby & Foskett, 2011). It is instructive that both the academic and practitioner literature has provided a steady stream of chaotic change commentary over the past 40 years. Each decade claims the label *unprecedented*. What may be going on here is a sense of constant organizational pressure in the higher education sector that has upon it multiple demands from sub-cultures of disparate internal and external stakeholders (Sarrico & Melo, 2012). These pressures are sometimes formal (e.g., employee union groups) and sometimes informal (e.g., parents of students). Change is more or less continual, biting or healing different parts of the organization over time. Marshak (2004, p. 8) refers to Peter Vaill's metaphor of continuous white water when calling for a new way to deal with “hyperactive environments” by adopting an ongoing philosophy of organizational alignment, rather than assuming the historical stabilization strategy of starting and stopping change.

Professionals working in the not-for-profit sector have a growing awareness of the need to effectively manage risk. Some executives focus more on a fiduciary duty to mitigate unfavourable contingencies, not recognizing that embracing some uncertainty is necessary to contribute to the goals of the organization (Tang et al., 2010). Defensive strategies seem to dominate the Canadian university sector, with administrative managers focusing on downside risk (preventing unfavourable outcomes) rather than exploring upside risk (innovating to promote favourable outcomes). There are certainly exceptions – such as aggressive policies of the University of Toronto which generated a 30% loss on its investments due to large exposure to the equity markets, hedge fund investments and its currency hedging policy¹.

Sporn (1996) claimed that research about the management of university culture is quite limited. More recently, a robust discussion of culture in higher education is underway. It should also be recognized that some studies look at the symbolic aspects of organization without specifically calling it culture. This exploratory paper sets the stage for future studies of how the notions of culture and change interact within the Canadian university sector to add to an understanding of the influence of organizational culture on the risk propensity of universities. In particular, these ideas are discussed in context by using Canadian university corporations as a platform to consider variables that may affect the relationship between risk propensity and financial performance in higher education.

¹ <http://www.globecampus.ca/in-the-news/article/u-of-t-reports-13-billion-loss-on-investments/>

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Organizational culture is a complex and diverse concept (Välilmaa, 2008). As early as 60 years ago scholars had already identified 164 different definitions of the word *culture* (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). Extension of ‘culture’ to the construct ‘organizational culture’ has been a relatively recent phenomenon. According to Hofstede et al. (1990), the first mention in the academic literature appeared in a 1979 issue of *Administrative Science Quarterly* (Pettigrew, 1979). In the early 1980’s, discussion of corporate culture “burst onto the organizational studies scene” (Denison, 1996, p. 619). Hofstede et al. (1990, p. 286) note the lack of consensus about the definition of organizational culture, but state, “most authors will probably agree on the following characteristics of the organizational or corporate culture construct: it is (1) holistic, (2) historically determined, (3) related to anthropological concepts, (4) socially constructed, (5) soft, and (6) difficult to change”.

Since these characteristics have been combined into the construct ‘organizational culture’, propositions may be difficult to study by quantitative research methods alone, and require knowledge of the actors and symbolic aspects of culture. The researcher should also be aware that quantitative evidence such as survey responses from corporate elites within the organization may not tell an accurate story, or perhaps be accurate but incomplete. There is debate in the academic literature as to whether or not it is even possible to quantitatively measure the culture construct. Hofstede et al. (1990) posed the question, can culture be measured on the basis of answers to surveys, or can it only be qualitatively described? Organizational culture is not only complex but also hard to measure. For this paper, organizational culture is understood in a holistic view – a network of shared orientations (Hoy, 1990). To encourage a more problematized presentation of the concept of culture (i.e., dealing with it as socially-constructed and subject to change, rather than an object), organizational studies should be designed to account for the idea that organizations are themselves culture-producing phenomena (Smircich, 1983). Therefore, research projects on the subject of organizational culture would benefit from both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

How culture exhibits itself within an organization has been explored using symbols (objects that transmit shared meaning), heroes (persons who serve as role models), as well as rites and rituals such as ceremonies, celebrations and other symbolic actions (Deal & Kennedy, 2000). Enduring symbols on the academic campus are plentiful, such as school colours, mascots, official histories, graduation rings, dress codes, and the academic convocation. These are reinforced by promotion in the public media of branded academic accomplishments and varsity athletic triumphs. Deal and Kennedy (2000) indicate that a hero is a central figure in a strong culture (in academia, potentially the central figure would be a “lonely hero” except for the comfort provided by the researcher’s peer group, Ylijoki, 2008, p. 85). They posit the idea that if values are a defining feature of culture, then heroes embody those values. The university president is usually an omnipresent fixture at important management meetings on campus, at academic and administrative strategy forums, as well as internal and external ceremonial proceedings. The presidential hero character is important in its clue-giving aspect. The university will look to its leadership to make sense of the environment and the formulation of organizational responses. The personal traits of the president are important. In some cases the president’s persona may approximate the common portrayal of the risk-averse scholar stereotype, a “sacred cow hero..., disheveled, and disorganized” (Deal & Kennedy, 2000, p. 54). In other cases the president may be a transformational leader. Whatever the case, organizational culture may be affected by a leader’s strategic orientation, including risk propensity. In the university context and explained in the next section, it is not clear that the university president wields sufficient influence to *direct* the whole organization.

University culture normally supports the contesting of ideas and maintains individual rights to control significant aspects of the organization, particularly in the realm of academic freedom and the formal governance domain of the Academic Senate as the body responsible for overseeing the academic

integrity of the university. The idea of numerous actors contributing to perceptions of culture, change and risk is central to university organization. This shared power and influence is known as diffused authority (Reed, 2001). Diffusion is an important concept in the university cultural context since it affects the rate at which change is possible. For example, universities typically employ a bicameral governance system: the Board of Directors (also known as Governors, Trustees, Regents, etc.) and the Academic Senate. Both bodies contribute to organizational governance and control, thus affecting the university culture. In a public company the CEO's views are seldom challenged openly. However, failing to march to the university president's drumbeat may not be seen as a sign of disrespect. Influential people in the organization can be seen to have a high commitment to the university without necessarily being committed to change. As posited in the organizational change literature, individuals may feel they are demonstrating support for the organization by resisting change, especially if they are not committed to the leader's version of change (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002).

Gareth Morgan discusses corporate culture at length in a book chapter entitled, "Creating social reality – organizations as cultures" (Morgan, 1986). He refers to the way mundane activities such as accounting practises may contribute to a constructed reality of the organization. In explaining the derivation of the word culture, Morgan (1986) claims that 'culture' comes metaphorically from cultivate – tilling land. This development metaphor is apt for the university sector whether the context is administrative (providing infrastructure to facilitate cultivation) or academic (sowing seeds of wisdom and the growth of ideas). The agriculture metaphor also communicates a central theme of university organization in terms of honouring traditional methods of work. Experimentation could lead to total crop failure! In the university setting, there is often a heavy reliance on internal audit controls and budgetary reconciliation. Internal rules help to shape the way university employees see their potential contribution to exploring opportunities and threats. The business processes can be slow and require layers of administrative inspection and approvals, reducing the likelihood of swift innovative responses. Therefore, mundane administration processes such as financial accounting controls contribute to the shaping of university culture.

Many other taken-for-granted aspects of organization are culture-bound. For example, the centralization or decentralization of decision-making, and the way faculty members collaborate or ignore one another. There is also an important tendency in higher education toward extremely large governing boards. For example, Queens University in Kingston, Ontario has three governing bodies² including the Board of Trustees (37 members and 9 committees) and the Senate (68 members and 17 committees). Furthermore, there is a combined governance entity, Queens University Council, which includes all the members of the Board and Senate, along with an equal number of elected graduates of the school. Steeped in its own historical background (established in 1874), one can appreciate the complexity of the socially-constructed nature of Queens University culture. However, it is not so easy to see how the governance structure supports fundamental change.

University structures include rules and rites (Trice & Beyer, 1990), as well as other cultural items such as formal mission statements articulated by the governing board. The organization uses these inputs to make sense of the societal activities of the organization. Trice and Beyer (1990) elaborate six organizational rites, claiming that these can be used to promote corporate change. Their review of the literature makes a compelling case that cultures are not easy to change: cultures are mysterious, change initiatives are sometimes impractical, culture is developed organically and seems to defy management, existing in plurality, and providing a comfort zone to mitigate personal risk. This last point is familiar in the culture of some universities. The value placed on continuity as a means of sustaining a sense of cultural security may make it natural for insiders to resist change. Of the six rites described by Trice and Beyer, two are fundamental to this discussion. *Rites of conflict reduction* attempt to reduce antagonism in

² <http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/council.html>

the organization. In the university context, the all-important concept of collegiality is an exemplar of this rite. Heads of university academic departments are normally described as ‘*primus inter pares*’ – first among equals. This downplays the notion of leader-follower. Since cultural change implies significant conflict, rites of conflict reduction attempt to minimize the number of disruptive events and re-establish stability. This relates to *rites of renewal*. As Trice and Beyer (1990, p. 387) state, “More than other rites, rites of renewal may interfere with cultural change efforts. Their intended purpose is to refurbish social structures and help them function effectively again”. The authors use the example of academic curriculum reviews to demonstrate that rites of renewal are essentially traditionalist rather than creative. Democracy and freedom are important in the university culture but may act to stifle change. To reconcile many diverse academic views, new ideas often get lost in an attempt to satisfy all the conflicting voices (Trice & Beyer, 1990) with the result that privileged individuals and groups maintain their status.

Universities exhibit elements of political complexity. Sarrico and Melo (2012, p. 90) describe a situation where the ivory tower prototype conflicts with the mass university, putting universities “in a schizophrenic situation, suffering, at the same time, from frustration and anxiety”. Even when the financial benefits of change can be easily demonstrated, there is often a class of stakeholder which will be offended. The following two recent examples of change proposals at Canadian universities emphasize this point (today@academica.ca 2010): after extensive consultation, the University of Toronto planned to amalgamate the East Indian, German, Italian, Slavic, and Spanish/Portuguese departments into one School of Languages and Literature. This was approved in the arts and science faculty's academic plan. However, over 5,000 faculty members, students, and alumni signed a petition opposing the change, labelling the move ‘academic vandalism’. Similar structural inertia can be seen in an example from the administrative side of university affairs. Kwantlen Polytechnic University wanted to eliminate the use of credit cards for payment of student tuition fees. Expected savings of commissions paid to credit card companies would amount to a quarter of a million dollars annually. The university has been informed by the student union that it intends to sue the university under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the British Columbia Human Rights Code.

Slowness to change predominates the university landscape in Canada. Part of the organizational underpinning is a strong sense of tradition and constancy. Many Canadian institutes of higher education have been in existence for more than a century, having well-established cultural symbols, rites and other socially constructed untouchables. Sitkin and Pablo (1992) note the predominance of historically-based inertia in organizations that are laden with tradition. Academic culture pervades the overall society of the university. This may be natural due to the teaching, research and service elements which are core to the corporate mission. However, the university culture can be insular, “obeying its own laws and deriving from its own history, intimately linked to current social realities at some points but bafflingly distant from them at others” (Damrosch, 1995, p. 18). Damrosch notes uniformity within the university culture and a general resistance to change, and discusses the isolation of academic disciplines and specialized fields, resulting in scholars becoming intellectually separated from others. To the extent that shared expectations of culture maintenance become the norm in a university, these expectations may become self-fulfilling (Ferraro et al., 2005).

UNIVERSITY RISK PROPENSITY

The above exploration of organizational culture and change underpins the following more focused discussion of university risk propensity. Of interest in this paper is risk propensity at the unit level, i.e., the university as a whole. The need for examining university risk from the organizational rather than individual perspective has theoretical support in the literature. For example, Välimaa et al. (2012, p. 244) issue a call for studies that shed light on how “cultural capital plays out in reform processes... in higher education”. Sitkin and Pablo (1992) claim that prior research has taken an over-simplified

approach. Since research of risk propensity at an organization level of analysis is rare (Harwood et al., 2009) this paper makes a useful contribution toward broadening the literature. It has been asserted that many arguments developed for individual contexts may be equally applicable to organizations (Sitkin & Pablo, 1992). This may be true of university culture. However, another phenomenon may also be affecting the situation. Faculty members are often “socially and psychologically independent of the enterprise and the profession” (Dill, 1982, p. 311). Dill states that a generation ago faculty members would define themselves in terms of their university affiliation but now identify themselves in relation to their field. The research into the cultural dimension in higher education has shown that universities are not homogenous entities but internally differentiated into distinct “small worlds” (Clark, 1987). This increases the complexity of analyzing the risk propensity of the university organization since the management of the university depends upon administrators working collegially with faculty members. The university is very much an open system but its members also have characteristics that create a sense of individualism. The strength of this phenomenon will depend upon culture characteristics in the specific institution, for example, unifying rites and symbols, stories, myths, and role models.

Organizational risk propensity likely affects the decision-making behaviour of senior management including the influence of the university president as the chief executive officer. The opposite is likely true as well. Mintzberg (1980) states that political managers operate in a complex position requiring a reconciliation of a many diverse political forces acting on the organization. Sitkin and Pablo (1992) expand on this idea by identifying features that directly affect individual risk behaviour: cultural values, leader risk orientation, and organizational control systems. Sitkin and Pablo (1992) state that the composition of the group is most cited as predictor of risk behaviour. In the university setting, the concept of collegiality is a central element of the culture of universities. Sharing of power among colleagues and a strong inclination toward consensus-based management contribute to universities having conservative risk management with a tendency toward overestimating the negative aspects of business adventures, thus maintaining the status quo. A striking example of this group effect took place recently at the University of Virginia where the governing board was forced to reverse a major strategic decision (i.e., the Board voted unanimously to reinstate Teresa Sullivan as President, two weeks after the same board forced her resignation). The dismissal was a surprise to the broader university community and precipitated a backlash that resulted in the resignation of the board's Vice-Rector, a faculty vote of no confidence in the board, the resignation of a preeminent professor, and a warning from the Virginia State Governor (Gephardt & Nelson, 2012). Moody's Investor Services (Gephardt & Nelson, 2012, p. 1) reported that this dispute “highlights the stabilizing effects of the counter-intuitive shared governance model still in place at leading US universities.” Under this model, which Moody's describes as being unlike top-down corporate governance models and electorally-driven government models, the tenured faculty, alumni, students and major financial donors, all have a significant influence in university decision-making. Public universities like the University of Virginia maintain the shared governance model even though underlying economics affecting university operations has dramatically changed (Gephardt & Nelson, 2012).

Brown (1970) studied risk propensity in decision-making and concluded that school administrators are more risk-averse than their profit-oriented counterparts. He theorized that market mechanisms and a drive to produce profit act to promote risk-taking in businesses. Brown (1970, p. 473) proposed the idea of the school administrator “as a cautious man [sic], averting risk in his decision-making while the businessman is characterized as a bold risk taker”. It is probable that adventurous university presidents exist but their propensity to foist uncertain outcomes on the organization would not be unopposed. Perhaps cultural mismatches in risk propensity is one contributor to the high turnover rate among university presidents (Trachtenberg & Blumer, 2008). In the university, emphasis is often placed on organizational stability and a focus on internal dynamics. Universities in Canada have difficulty reconciling the urgency of risk-taking to their history and tradition, described by Bartell (2003, p. 52) as “an inherently unique cultural paradox”. Bartell (2003) enumerates the strategic characteristics of

universities and several of these seem to set a tone for university risk culture: (a) goals are difficult to measure, (b) numerous active stakeholders, (c) operations are labour-intensive yet the professionals that comprise the majority of the labour pool are diverse with silo organizational structure, (d) fundamentally different belief systems between professors and administrators, and (e) complex and demanding environment. Virtually all of these characteristics make it difficult for university management to undertake risky adventures.

Researchers have called for examination of a wide range of variables that may affect hazardous behaviour, including an organization's cultural orientation toward risk (Sitkin & Weingart, 1995). Harwood et al. (2009) used Grounded Theory to operationalize the concept of risk propensity, elaborating 10 dimensional ranges of risk propensity, for example:

Risk approach	crisis ↔ planned
Management style	micro ↔ macro
Risk perspective	negative ↔ positive

Harwood et al. (2009) call for an application of the their framework to a broader range of situations. Indeed, it may be useful to apply their model to entities in the university sector. The literature supports the notion that university administrative culture fosters the left-hand side of the above-listed dichotomies, i.e., exhibit organizational propensity toward risk-aversion. Many Canadian universities tend to have corporate values that respect history, reward conformity and utilize budgetary systems that aim toward a stable funding model (e.g., departmental allocations that approximate last year's budget plus or minus x%) as well as a host of external operational restrictions imposed by donors (e.g., endowments that must be held in perpetuity) and government (e.g., grants restricted for special purposes such as building projects). Also, it is not uncommon for universities to impose constraints upon their own operations in the form of levies, internal financial reserves, and other internally restricted covenants. Often the university solution to a risk-related question is more research and a restarting of the socialization process for the assessment of risk.

The pace of change as it relates to organizational culture is a subject of debate in the recent literature. As Robert Marshak (2004, p. 8) states, "Incremental and 'start-stop' models and methods of change developed during the Industrial Age are insufficient to address the needs of contemporary organizations operating in hyperactive environments. The concept of continuous whole-system change or 'morphing' is introduced along with the basic ideas, principles and requirements for how to engage in it". Whether the university sector now operates in a hyperactive environment is open to question, but there is little doubt that universities must absorb more risk if they embark on a quest to be more entrepreneurial. An important issue relating to university management is the degree to which the corporation engages in activities which radically depart from the comfort zone and the effect of risk-taking on performance.

Sporn (1996, p. 41) makes the following comments about university culture: "Universities are complex social organizations with distinctive cultures. Academic freedom and autonomy are inviolable values but changing environmental conditions exert strong influence on the primary functions of universities". Sporn (1996) also highlights several elements that affect university culture: ambiguous decision-making processes, orientation toward human resource issues, problematic definitions of service delivery, tenured faculty with significant autonomy and academic freedom. The list is similar to that of Bartell (2003) discussed earlier. If the above observations are correct that universities are averse to change, the relatively low response to dynamic environment conditions may affect outcomes such as financial performance. While the perspective of market based argument assumes the university will be advantaged by business-like behaviours, not all agree this would be beneficial. There may instead be a culture mismatch where the business techniques are at substantial variance with the core beliefs of academia (Dill, 1982).

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS OF STUDYING UNIVERSITY RISK PROPENSITY

This section draws upon the previous discussion in this paper to lay a framework for an empirical study of university culture and risk propensity. Risk-taking is a difficult phenomenon on which to focus research. Baird and Thomas (1985) hypothesized 41 variables that affect risk-taking, with sources identified for each from the academic literature. Other authors have discussed the fragmented nature of culture and the existence of sub-cultures (e.g., Morgan, 1986; Ylijoki, 2008). Each university has distinct (but pliable) cultures permeating teaching, research and community outreach and these sub-cultures potentially influence strategies and decisions. Various research foci are viable such as faculty culture, administration culture (the focus of this paper), or more functional concerns such as institutional health and safety. The competing external and internal environmental forces supply a useful model for a proposed research design. The hyperactive external environment provides powerful incentives for change, and potential financial penalties for failure to adapt. On the other hand, the status-quo internal environment builds disincentives for change. The effect of these forces can only be truly understood by studying the socially-constructed cultural interpretations held by university actors. Qualitative methods in field studies are encouraged by Välimaa and Ylijoki (2008), as well as positivist researchers such as Cook and Campbell (1979). These authors recognize that the provision of contextual meaning is a hallmark of high quality research. Accordingly, the cultural factors discussed above should be explored with qualitative interviewing techniques. Such an ideographic approach will illuminate the social environment of university culture by allowing the researcher to immerse into the flow of influences to obtain first-hand knowledge of the subject under investigation.

University risk propensity can be quantitatively measured using the 10 dimensions of risk elaborated by Harwood, Ward and Chapman (2009). The authors left it to future researchers to develop a scale for the application of risk propensity. Most studies deal with risk propensity as an individual construct, or an aggregation of individual measurements. The proposed study of university risk propensity would be an ideal opportunity to apply the 10 risk dimensions of Harwood, Ward and Chapman (2009) to the organization level of analysis. The study should recognize the multi-level environment in which the research is to be conducted – for example, the previous sections of this paper make it clear that *second-order* constructs exist in the university context. Accordingly, it will be important to ensure that individual-level data are capable of being assembled at various levels (e.g., faculty and administrative work units). However, simply aggregating perceptions at the unit level of analysis does not answer the call for research that crosses levels of analysis. The proposed research should explore the attitudes of various echelons of university entities to see if there are cultural differences in risk preference. Administrators of university operations would be particularly applicable to echelon division due to the existence of layers of management and operating staff. In addressing the hierarchical nature of the data, the main feature of the research design should be the use of multi-level methodology such as Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM, e.g., Aitkin & Longford, 1986; Kreft & De Leeuw, 1998).

Multi-level data occurs when responses are grouped (nested) within one or more higher level units of responses. In the university risk propensity study, employees are nested into departments. The departments are also nested in either academic or administrative units, which are nested in the university generally. The important point is that individuals within each group should be expected to be more alike than individuals from different groups. In the university risk propensity study, the researchers should predict level one responses from level two characteristics (e.g., does the intensity of risk-aversion predict financial performance?) In this way, the research would benefit from the basic idea underlying the application of HLM that there would be separate analyses of the units at the lowest level of the hierarchical structure (university employees), and the results of these analyses (regression coefficients) become the dependent variables being predicted from variables at the level of departments and universities (Aitkin & Longford, 1986).

Empirical work could study the effect on university financial performance as the dependent variable. Performance in this context could be defined differently than for profit-oriented businesses. There is an abundance of publically-available financial performance information readily available in the published financial statements of Canadian universities and from Statistics Canada. There are four important areas of university financial management that are particularly relevant for the selection of dependent variables in the context of the study of university culture and risk. In the discussion that follows, one key financial performance indicator is recommended for each area of financial interest.

- 1) Operations: ratio of own-source revenue to operating revenue
(own source revenue ÷ total operating revenue)
Given the fiscal challenges facing most of governments in Canada, the university is vulnerable to declines in grant funding. However, seeking own source revenue implies a heightened risk attitude for the university as it reaches to non-traditional revenue sources.
- 2) Asset Management: capital spending ratio
(capital expenditure ÷ current replacement value of capital assets)
To provide an excellent level of service and to properly steward physical assets for future generations, there is an ongoing need for capital investment. University capital is very costly and requires a significant element of risk-taking.
- 3) Fundraising: endowment per student
(market value of endowed assets ÷ number of full time equivalent students)
The size of a university's endowment is often viewed as a proxy for its financial strength and success.
- 4) Debt Management: debt per student
(total long term debt ÷ number of full time equivalent students)
The amount of outstanding debt owed by the university per student will provide an indicator of the university's tolerance for debt risk.

The proposed study of the relationship of university risk propensity to the dependent variable measures of financial performance will add to existing knowledge of how university culture affects the willingness of Canadian university managers to enter into risky adventures, and how this risk propensity affects university financial performance.

CONCLUSION

The discussion in this paper illustrates that the Canadian university sector is subject to continuous demands toward change. This includes a call to be more business-like, potentially requiring a fundamental adjustment to organizational culture, in particular propensity of the organization to accept risk even though the traditional university organization in Canada exhibits a strong preference for the status quo. This paper sets the stage for investigations into the relationship of culture and risk in higher education.

The proposed research recommended in this paper would have several limitations and opportunities for further study. First of all, the proposed area of study is a single sector (university environment). Although this is a limitation, it does provide a useful platform to elaborate theoretical ideas. The research would only consider risk culture, although there are many other aspects of university organizational culture that could be explored. This provides fruitful opportunities for future research. As indicated in this paper, there is certainly room for both qualitative and quantitative approaches. As stated by Hoy (1990, p. 149), "The tension between research on climate using multivariate statistical analyses

and studies of culture using the tools of the phenomenologist and ethnographer provides a healthy competition”. Välimaa (2008) also encourages cultural studies of higher education to employ both qualitative and quantitative methods. However, the researcher will have to acknowledge a personal implication in the research project. This is somewhat ironic given that the search for socially-constructed cultural meaning is itself an interpretation by the researcher. The proposed study would be cross-sectional in nature (this is proposed as a prequel to a longitudinal study which would more appropriately account for temporal aspects of culture that develop over a long period of time) and this would limit the explanatory power of the findings from the analysis. A cross-sectional design does not allow for confident causal conclusions. Despite the weaknesses of cross-sectional surveys, this design can be useful in providing a picture of how people feel about a subject (Spector, 1994) and is one of the major research methods used in organizational behaviour studies.

Future research could elaborate the effect of each variable and baskets of variables. For example, there may be differences in university culture of big and small institutions, urban and rural, research-intensive and predominantly undergraduate, or established and new higher-education entities. Exploratory findings could be empirically tested in various combinations to determine how the theories work in practice at Canadian universities and from the different perspectives of university insiders. The work could be generally extended to other parts of the not-for-profit sector.

In conclusion, this paper has discussed the nature of the Canadian university sector and the important influence of organizational culture in assisting or hindering adaptation and propensity to undertake risky adventures. The theoretical findings are useful because the paper identifies that the complex and distributed nature of university society makes it likely that substantive change will continuously attach to various parts of the organization. This is a contrary finding to some of the previous research which claims chaos as a unique phenomenon set in particular temporal periods. Prior research has surfaced the idea that cultural characteristics are “continuously underestimated structuring principles” (Välimaa et al. 2012, p. 238). This paper endorses the call for engagement with cultural context so that risky adventures can be more informed, thus improving the possibility of more optimistic outcomes.

The discussion in this paper would be particularly useful to university administrators interested in evidence-based management. If the external environment continues to call for a more business-like approach, greater efforts will be required by the university to foster an organizational culture that rewards, or at least does not discourage, change. This discussion of university culture and risk propensity can be seen as a wake-up call for university administrators and as theoretical support and an outline for future research.

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TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING AND EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING: INSIGHTS FROM LEADERS PARTICIPATING IN TRAINING¹

A recent focus of leadership research is on the positive impact of effective leaders on the well-being of their employees. Scholars have argued that leadership training and development interventions may have positive benefits for employee well-being. We conducted in-depth interviews with a small group of health care leaders completing transformational leadership training who were perceived by their employees as having made significant improvements in their leadership scores. Data from this exploratory research provide insights into the leadership development process and its possible impact on employee well-being.

The purpose of this exploratory study was to build on previous research to acquire an in-depth understanding of the experiences of leaders participating in transformational leadership training. Since previous research we had conducted showed transformational leadership was a predictor of employees' well-being, we were interested in talking to these leaders to find out specifically what they had taken away from their leadership training and what they acted upon, so we could understand more about the impact of the training on their employees' well-being. We were also interested in hearing about what might have assisted or detracted from the leaders' efforts to apply their training, as well as in learning about any perceived benefits or downsides of the experience, either for them personally or for their larger work group. As with many qualitative studies, the aim was not to produce generalizable findings, but rather to understand the individual experiences of trainees and identify any common patterns or themes in those experiences (Silverman, 2005).

LITERATURE

Transformational Leadership

Over the past 25 years, the subject of leadership has attracted considerable attention from the scholarly community. In a recent review of leadership research, Barling, Christie and Hopton (2010) concluded that transformational leadership (TL) is by far the most commonly used model in empirical studies, and it is the one used in our study.

Burns (1978, p. 20) saw the transforming leader as one who interacted with his or her employees in such a way so as to "raise each other to higher levels of motivation and morality," with the key being shared values and goals. Bass (1985) built on Burns' concept of the transforming leader and identified four sub factors, or dimensions, of what he referred to as the TL style, namely idealized influence,

¹ This study was funded by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. The first of these factors, idealized influence, concerns the behaviour of leaders and the ways in which they role model appropriate behaviour for the rest of the organization. The second dimension, inspirational motivation, relates to the ways leaders challenge their employees and provide meaning to their work. Here the leader works to develop team spirit, and displays optimism and enthusiasm. The third dimension of TL is intellectual stimulation, and it speaks to the leader's ability to stimulate employees to innovate, and develop new and creative ways to look at challenges and problems. Here the leader provides an environment where ideas can be shared openly and freely without fear of ridicule or criticism, even if the suggestions differ from those proposed by the leader. Individualized consideration, the fourth factor, views the leader as a coach and mentor, working with employees on an individual basis. Such a leader recognizes the existence of employees' individual needs for both achievement and growth, and works with each employee one-on-one to help them attain their "successively higher levels of potential" (Bass & Avolio, 1994, p. 4).

Transformational leadership has also been associated with important organizational outcomes such as positive work attitudes (De Hoogh, et al., 2005), organizational commitment (Dvir, Kass, & Shamir, 2004), empowerment (Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003) and organizational citizenship (Koh, Steers, & Terborg, 1995). Researchers have found significant relationships between transformational leadership and leader satisfaction (Shieh, 1997), and trust in the leader (Arnold, Barling, & Kelloway, 2001).

Transformational Leadership and Well-Being

Scholars studying subjective well-being define it broadly as experiencing "pleasant emotions, low levels of negative moods, and high life satisfaction" (Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2002, p. 63). It is also characterized as "an active state consisting of positive affect and high arousal" (Turner, Barling, & Zacharatos, 2002, p. 715). Research into employee well-being has been termed a neglected area that is essential to enhancing organizational effectiveness (Baptiste, 2008). Diener, Suh, Lucas and Smith (1999, p. 293) suggested that work may specifically be related to well-being because it provides a source of "positive social relationships", "a sense of identity and meaning" and an "optimal level of pleasurable stimulation." Organizational scholars focusing on employee well-being have identified a host of possible factors influencing job-related well-being, including leadership (Wright & Doherty, 1998, p. 481). Turner et al. (2002) proposed a positive impact of TL on the positive health of an organization stemming from the four dimensions of TL. They concluded that "precious little research has focused on the extent to which leadership might make a difference for individual well-being" (Turner, et al., 2002, p. 721). Other scholars have found some evidence of a relationship between improved leader effectiveness and employee perceptions of their well-being (e.g., Arnold, Barling, turner, Kelloway and McKee (2007); Feldt, Kinnunen and Mauno, (2000) Epitropaki and Martin, (2005). Diener et al. (2002) called for scholars to undertake studies that explore the developmental processes involving well-being.

METHOD

Participants

We recruited our study participants from a health care organization where we had recently completed a transformational leadership training intervention. As part of the intervention, we had surveyed employees pre- and post-training, and so we were able to identify which leaders were perceived by their employees as making the most significant changes in terms of their leadership behaviours. Accordingly, we used purposive sampling (Kemper, Stringfield, & Teddlie, 2003) to identify interview candidates who were in the top 10 in terms of perceived improvement in their average leadership score. Given their above average improvement in leadership ratings, we regarded these "extreme or deviant cases" as potentially "information-rich cases," that is, cases from which we could "learn a great deal

about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (Patton, 2002 as cited in Glesne, 2006, p. 34). The 12 individuals were contacted anywhere from ten months to one year and half post-training, and invited to discuss their training experience. Since one leader had left the organization post-training, we removed this individual from the sample. Three other leaders did not return repeated phone calls or emails over several weeks. From their lack of response, we concluded the individuals did not wish to participate in the study. Of the remaining eight leaders, all agreed to take part, but only seven leaders did participate as work scheduling and summer vacations proved an insurmountable problem with the eighth candidate. Of the seven final participants, five were female and two were male. They ranged in age from 26 to 55 years, with the majority being in the 46-55 age bracket. All worked full-time and their tenure with the organization ranged from 5 to 20+ years, with four having 16-20 years of service. Their titles ranged from coordinator to manager, with the majority being supervisor. The majority of participants were from long-term care and corporate support services. In terms of their pre-test leadership ratings, these leaders covered a wide spectrum, ranging from 18th to 45th place from top to bottom, in a pool of 65 leaders.

Procedure

Interviews are described as “one of the most important sources of information” (Yin, 1984, p. 82) and “one of the most powerful” among the qualitative methods (McCracken, 1988, p.9). Glesne (2006, p. 81) describes the particular strength of interviews as being to afford researchers “the opportunity to learn about what you cannot see and to explore alternative explanations of what you do see.” They allow for in-depth inquiry into how various phenomena are defined and experienced by individuals (Silverman, 2005), as well as how they are situated in their broader social and cultural context (McCracken, 1988). For such an application, open-ended interviews are deemed appropriate (Silverman, 2005).

The seven interviews comprising the study were conducted by the first author using McCracken’s (1988) long interview method, and lasted between 30 minutes and one hour and 15 minutes. To facilitate maximum participation, the interviews were held at a time and location of the participant’s choosing. The exchanges were semi-structured in that a series of “grand tour” questions, i.e. opening, non-directive questions, were posed, but new lines of inquiry suggested by the participants were also pursued (McCracken, 1988, p. 35). The use of grand tour questions is said to be effective as they “ask the interviewee for experiential detail that he or she can easily and readily answer” (Glesne, 2006, p. 84).

Each interview was audio recorded with the participants’ permission. After interviews, field notes were made as a reliability check, following the recommendations of Spradley (1979 as cited in Kirk & Miller, 1986). These notes were used to refine the interview guide and identify avenues for exploration in subsequent interviews. When many of the same themes and ideas were being repeated in the interviews, we determined that we had reached redundancy in the data collection and deemed it would be appropriate to stop interviewing and move to the analysis phase (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Transcripts of the interviews were produced so they could be coded using Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) open coding method. An inductive approach was used such that all seven interview transcripts were read by the first author to identify emerging themes, ideas, acts or events. Sentences and short paragraphs were selected as the most appropriate unit of analysis. These units were then examined more closely by the first author and compared to identify similarities and differences between the ideas, incidents, acts or events (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A coding sheet that grouped these themes, ideas, acts or events into related categories was created, with abbreviations for each coding item. This preliminary coding sheet was used by the first author to code three interviews. A small number of additional codes became apparent from this review, and these were added to the coding list.

To increase the validity of the analysis, we incorporated peer-review into our coding process (Glesne, 2006). The second author read and coded clean copies of the same previously mentioned three interview transcripts using the expanded coding sheet. We then compared results to assess inter-rater reliability (Weber, 1990). Agreement was reached on 78% of the coding. Discrepancies in coding were discussed and consensus was reached on the outstanding items. The coding sheet was revised to reflect changes and then the first author coded all seven interviews a final time. Code abbreviations were typed into the transcription, and then the units of analysis were grouped under the selected categories. Per Miles and Huberman (1994), a data matrix was then created incorporating representative excerpts from participant interviews under the designated categories and sub-themes.

RESULTS

As noted earlier, the purpose of the interviews was to understand the individual experiences of leadership trainees and identify any common patterns or themes in those experiences. Analysis of the interview data suggested a number of themes. In recognition of the fact that our participants were the best judges of their experiences and can best articulate what it meant to them, we support the presentation of themes with extensive quotes from the participants.

Limited Unaided Training Recall but Specific Recall Improved with Prompting

All of the interview participants remembered participating in the training, but they had difficulty recalling many specifics without prompting. Not one of them was able to define transformational leadership or recall one of its four dimensions. When asked what they did recall, two spoke about the logistical aspects of the training, such as the location, room set-up and details about the presenter. Two recalled that there was discussion of people having different leadership styles.

With some prompting, such as a brief description of the transformational leadership dimensions, participants seemed better able to discuss the dimensions and more importantly to describe relevant behaviours. For example, when asked how a leader might demonstrate intellectual stimulation, almost all interviewees were able to correctly respond that such a leader would adopt a questioning approach with employees. For example, several participants volunteered they could ask: "What do you think you should do?" and Kate expanded saying: "What do you think about that? How would you handle it? What are your thoughts?"

Similarly, knowledge of the behaviours of a leader demonstrating individualized consideration was also generally very good. Sonya explained: "Well, I guess everybody's different. Everybody has a different role to play, and a different personality, different needs, different wants. And you have to deal with them one on one." Here, one participant recalled the specific details of the training session where we had discussed one thing a highly valued leader had done relative to individualized consideration:

I think the one thing that really stayed with me was the story of the man who came in every morning and spent time talking to the staff and how, when the staff reflected on him, that they felt he was a really good manager and he didn't do anything except have a talk with them in the morning and be personable with them. [Kate]

The situation was somewhat different when it came to discussions of idealized influence and inspirational motivation. Interviewees did not seem able to describe behaviours representative of these dimensions quite as easily and in many cases not at all. For example, in trying to describe idealized influence, which concerns the behaviour of leaders and the ways in which they role model appropriate behaviour for the rest of the organization, June said: "Oh I remember that term...ohhh...I don't know...idealized influence...I suppose that is all stuff that we learned in the past too. It's the ideal, the ideal, not the reality, it's a goal." Later in trying to sum up inspirational motivation, which speaks to the

ways in which a leader helps employees find meaning in their work by displaying optimism and enthusiasm and involving employees in envisioning positive future states, June clearly struggled again in coming up with an explanation: “Oh, man, inspirational motivation. I am not on today; it’s not a good day.”

Interestingly, the two trainees who had the most comprehensive recall of all the transformational leadership dimensions were front line employee supervisors who had risen through the ranks of the organization and who had had no previous leadership training.

Training Content Viewed as Already Familiar but Not Acted Upon

Of the seven leaders, only three referenced having had previous formal leadership training. In discussing the training session however, most (5 of 7) expressed that the training session content was already familiar. This is evidenced by such comments as this one from Patty: “there were a lot of things that I already knew” and from Kate: “It’s not anything new.” Or, as June explained:

I had taken other leadership courses, so I felt a lot of this was not new. And it had been a couple of years before, not a long period of time, I’d say two years before that. And, so I really felt it was not new to me. Not that you can’t learn new things, but it wasn’t new information to me.

Henry noted when reflecting on his learning from the training: “I think I have a little bit more knowledge and a little different approach to people. I don’t think it’s respect because I’ve always had a lot of respect for everybody.”

Comments from several participants highlighted a disconnect between knowing what a good leader should do and actually acting on that knowledge. Melissa commented: “I guess it reinforced things that I already knew, um, but don’t practice” and Kate shared this opinion, saying “I think a lot of what he [the trainer] said are things that you just don’t think about, but they’re not anything new. It’s not anything new, it’s things that you already know, it’s just that you don’t apply it.” June touched on the problem of leading by rote: “Even though a lot of it was not new, some of it was presented in a different way. It just makes you stop and think about all the things that you do automatically sometimes.”

Recall of Leadership Goals Surprisingly Good

When the focus of the conversations turned to the personal transformational leadership goals the trainees had set for themselves, the situation was markedly different. Six of the seven trainees had very good recall of anywhere from one to three goals.

The best recall was of goals related to individualized consideration, followed by intellectual stimulation. From the discussion of such goals, it was evident that, as instructed, participants had set small, doable and very specific tasks for themselves. Many were focused on increasing their visibility and personal interaction with staff in small ways as demonstrated by Kate’s comment: “I remember one of my goals was that I was going to make sure I went out every morning and said hello to people before I started work.” Melissa shared that one of her goals was: “I’m going to do a walk-about every day, or three times a week.” Another leader elaborated in more detail:

As I said, I’m trying to be spending more visual time with the staff. Five minutes. Sometimes five minutes is plenty. They don’t want you in their face all day, either. [Sonya]

For three of the leaders, their recall was limited exclusively to individualized consideration goals. June explained that it was the one goal that really mattered to her:

... I don’t remember if I did five [goals]; that’s the only one that sticks in my mind. I guess to me that was the really important one, and the one that I really, really wanted to do. I can’t remember the others. I don’t think I did them.

Intellectual stimulation was the other major area where this group of trainees reported they had made some efforts. Five of seven trainees discussed a goal that had an intellectual stimulation focus so

that, rather than simply volunteering the answer to an employee's question, they used other tactics to try and actively engage their employees in finding the solution. For example, one participant noted:

Oh, one thing I did do, I try consciously to do, is that if someone comes to me and I try to get them – normally I would just give them the answer – but I will try and walk them through it. [Melissa]

Idealized Influence was an area where a few of the participants reporting making efforts. Two trainees said they set goals related to role modeling. For example, one leader in a very demanding role talked about how she seldom took time for a real lunch break and tended to eat at her desk instead. Recognizing that this was not healthy for her and was setting a bad example for her staff, Patty set a goal to not eat her lunch at her desk so as to take a real break from work and have some down time: “And the other thing I decided to do was to take time for me once a day.” The second leader also set a goal that was focused on changing personal behaviour. In this case her supervisor had pointed out a need to model appropriate leadership behaviour. This goal was related to addressing conflict early and not practicing avoidance:

One of my big things here, and this is still something that I have trouble with, I don't like conflict and crisis. If I can avoid, I will. There's things you can't avoid... Right, but I know I have to do it. And it's a part of my job, and it needs to be done to fix what's going on. [Sonya]

The area of inspirational motivation was the one that drew the least amount of attention from these trainees. Only Henry discussed a goal related to this area:

There's a lot of negativity in the [department name] at times in certain individuals, and what I try is try to work with them and let them know that not everything is negative, that things are positive. And, when they do something that's positive, let them know it's positive. And I point it out to them – “See what I mean, not everything's all negative. There are positive things that can come.”

TFL Training Application Often Deliberate, Strategic

From the conversations with participants, it was clear that leaders were often very deliberate in their application of their leadership training. In some cases this seemed to be because the leaders were trying to change their behaviours and this required a concentrated effort to make sure it happened. Here's how one leader, who arrived at work much earlier than her staff and who had a tendency to enclose herself in her office and work the whole day, described her attempt to change that pattern:

I made myself go out there every morning and spend some time talking to people [Kate]

Similarly, Bill focused on establishing personal rapport with employees before launching immediately into a work related request:

I think listening to them, and communicating with them a little more, talking about things that were also not involved with work. “How ya doing?” or, “What did you do last night?” That kind of thing, or what went on over the weekend. I find that they tend to open up a little more when you do that kind of thing than if you just approach them with, “Well, we got to deal with this and we have to come up with an idea.”

Another leader, Sonya, also had to break established patterns, but these appeared to be more cognitive ones. She described using self-talk, such as telling herself “You know, well, I'm gonna try and remain positive about that” or “I'm not gonna judge until I know.” This was in an effort to herself to remain more positive in her outlook about work and her work environment.

In another case, one of the participants wanted to increase her visibility and she was very up front with her employees about that and strategic in terms of how she handled visibility with her day and night time staff. The deliberateness of her actions is evident in her discussion of goal implementation:

Yeah, it was to increase visibility and I was going to do that by visiting the evening shifts at least once a week. Not every day because that would be impossible. [Patty]

Two other leaders appeared very strategic in their attempts to apply aspects of their training relative to specific individuals. Henry commented his focus was: “behavioural problems with individuals, and that's where I spent a lot of time.” Sonya described in detail her efforts to work with a “negative” employee and give her personalized attention:

I do try to talk a little with everybody, but my main focus is her, to set the tone for everybody else for the day. Because I find if I don't, she can be very, well not malicious, that's not the right word, but negative. To the rest of the staff as well, and it can be very trying for everybody. You know, “I don't want to be here if she's here.” So, for me, it's giving that little bit of extra attention. It's one of those things that she needs, that everybody needs, I guess. [Sonya]

Some of the participants also had direct supervisors who had been through the training. They commented that they were often aware that their leaders were actively implementing their training. June noted: “I think in the back of my head I thought, ‘Oh, you went to leadership training’” and Melissa commented: “I could see evidence of my supervisor – certainly with the walk-about. So he does make a deliberate attempt, by saying ‘Good morning.’” Two other leaders spoke in more detailed terms about the deliberate efforts made by their supervisors to change their own behaviour.

Peer/Leader Support and Organizational Changes Promoted Success

From discussions with trainees it was clear there were also factors that helped leaders succeed with their adoption of the transformational leadership style. Several noted the benefit of peers also having taken the training as it created a common reference point and a consistent approach with employees. Sonya phrased it this way: “So, he's using it, [she's] using it. We're all trying to use the same concept, and we all try to talk about it sometimes” and, as a result “everybody's on the same sort of page now.” Patty explained it this way:

So I think that that helped that everybody had to do leadership training, or the transformational leadership training at the same time, it put everybody in the same mind set. .

Similarly, Sonya commented that when her group was having difficulty with issues it was helpful to be able to draw on their common training, saying “...especially when we have staff meetings, of course, we all get going and you try to bring it in focus: ‘Okay, did we go for nothing, or are we really going to practice some of this stuff?’”

Other trainees commented on the changes their own leaders had made and how that had then facilitated their own changes. For example, Bill noted “I think he's given us a lot more responsibility in the way that, you know, you solve the problem and come up with an idea and solve it. More than I think before.” Patty elaborated in more detail about her leader:

I'd say she's done probably the best out of the whole facility. She's done a very good job because we were pretty honest too when we, you know, did her survey. So, she's done well, so that's also helped us... I think because [Tina] changed so much... we had the ability to change because she let us be, she let us do our job.

Several other leaders commented on organizational changes that were made before and after the training implementation phase and on how these changes had improved their situations. In particular, two leaders saw their span of control decrease and they felt that this was important to their success. One noted, “I feel like I've made a difference with [department] staff, but again, I'm saying that's part of getting to deal with them more. You know, more individual time, and more time to spend with them.”

Personal and Organizational Factors Inhibited Sustained Efforts

While it was clear this group of leaders had some success implementing their goals, trainees also spoke about many factors that inhibited their ability to sustain their transformational leadership efforts. These could be categorized into personal and organizational inhibitors. For example, several participants commented that their own attitudes and personalities were sometimes problematic. For some, it was occasionally a matter of just remembering the new focus, for as Sonya noted: “And it’s so easy to forget. You really have to remind yourself. Just back up, and try to do it the right way.” For Kate it was a matter of convincing herself that successful implementation of her goals, especially her goals related to increasing her personal interactions with staff, were important:

I won't say that I don't want to do that, it's not that I don't want to do that, but it felt like a waste of time at first. It felt like, “Oh, I have so much to do today and I don't have time to do it, so I have to get back.” Like, this is wasting my time.

Personal work style was also sometimes problematic for leaders, especially those trying to focus on intellectual stimulation where the leader is required to help employees through the problem solving process:

I work hard...like I'm a person that needs to be busy, so I work all the time. And I'm more of a ‘tend to do things myself’ – rather than take the time to explain or describe what I want to other people. [Kate]

In terms of organizational challenges, one of the most cited was work overload. Six leaders touched on workload as making it difficult to focus on their leadership goals. Staffing shortages was another big drawback. As June commented, “If one person is gone, all you can do is give out pills and do the necessary things, and hope that nothing else happens. You don't see the staff the same.” Or, as Patty relayed it, “Again, it was a little difficult because you want to be a good leader, and it's hard to be a good leader when you only have 50% of your complement; you're struggling.”

Two participants touched on the problem of competing priorities relative to sustaining their leadership effort. Melissa noted that, while it was a prime focus for a time within the organization, she felt it was pushed aside in favour of other initiatives: “I just think that we, that you, get going on something and then three other things happen and the ball gets going. And, it's not the hot issue of the day anymore.” June leader raised the challenge of having too many conflicting priorities and not having time for them all, saying:

And, again, if I had more time I could do more, but I feel sometimes that my hands are tied, and I really can't do, I can't be a leader.

Patty, the one leader who had set a personal goal related to making time for a real lunch break, found that she could not sustain this seemingly modest goal because of her heavy workload and lack of control over her job, and her disappointment was obvious:

I failed horribly at that, even though I meant to. And I felt very strongly about that, when I did look at my goal planning and that sort of thing, just so I wouldn't be so frantic and that sort of thing when I was talking to people.

Benefits of Training Application both Direct and Indirect

In discussing the benefits of the transformational leadership training program, it was clear that all participants felt there were many and that they were substantive. For example, several leaders commented that communication had improved with their staff and they felt a greater sense of connectedness. For example, Bill said, “I think there is better communication between the guys and me. I think listening and the communication is better...” Kate expanded on this theme, saying,

I don't know what they [employees] would say about that, but yeah, I did feel like I became more connected. Just by making the effort of going saying, “How are you doing today?”

Melissa talked about the training providing an opportunity to connect with leaders from other parts of the organization and this contributing to “better relationships” in the organization overall. June elaborated saying:

“It sort of helps you understand their point of view. We're dealing with dietary and housekeeping, and everybody, so sometimes it does give you a bit more insight into what their jobs are like and what they're going through. ”

This improved connection and communication also seemed to translate into better work situations for some participants. As Patty noted: “What seemed to have an impact was probably people being more open, and listening more, and being a little bit more realistic about things that can be achieved.” In fact, this leader found that her employees’ expectations for contact with her weren’t nearly as high as she’d expected, nor as high as her leader’s expectations.

Participants touched on several benefits that were specific to their employees. Leaders who worked to increase their visibility and one-on-one time with staff sensed that their efforts were appreciated and this fueled their desire to keep working at it. June noted, “So I'd say, you know, they were happy and that's why I'd really like to do it more often. The staff did appreciate it.” Patty echoed that comment saying, “You know they were happy that I made the effort to go see them specifically one on one and ask what they needed from me.” This personalized attention and the active efforts to involve employees more in problem solving also seemed to heighten employees’ desire to get involved. Sonya explained it this way: “You could find the interest from people as soon as you would say, “Well, what do you think, guys? What do you think we should do about this?” Leaders who had made such efforts on the intellectual stimulation front also spoke of their employees as becoming “a bit more empowered,” as being “more motivated,” and as being “happy” at the chance to play a more active role. Sonya seemed to feel there was a positive impact on the quality of the work done by people: “You know, and when you're brainstorming things, there's always somebody that's got new ideas. And you just learn so much from it. All the little things to make yourself better, and your work place better.” One leader commented that involving his staff in problem solving and decision making about work process changes made subsequent changes easier for both him and his staff. As Bill explained,

... It's funny because it's a circle sometimes. Kinda, when they first started with someone, like if you wanted to change something they were very much against change, but then when they were more involved, you know, they did it. And the next time you went to change something, they were like, “Well, we could do it just like we did before, this could work in this spot, or this area.”

Other leaders described how their efforts to work with “difficult” employees had a ripple effect, benefiting a larger group of employees. The extra attention devoted to these “negative” employees seemed to improve their mood. In discussing the impact of strategically targeting her “negative” employee, Sonya noted:

But I do find a difference in her, I definitely do. And I think the change of my approach towards her and how I deal with her has made a difference. Or at least I think it has. It's made a difference for me. In my feeling toward that I'm accomplishing something. That, I must have done something.

Henry, who had also worked at trying to improve the outlook of one of his more negative staff, found his efforts engendered improvements both in the employee and his larger work group:

I have one person who's really changed a lot. Yup. I was surprised when there was, when other people actually, other staff members, made comments about how this person changed... I would probably say about six staff came to me and said how this person changed. And I think it's good for that person.

DISCUSSION

As researchers involved with the leadership training intervention and subsequent interviews, we were initially surprised at the limited recall of the leadership training participants. However, upon reflection, we came to feel that it was rather naïve to have expectations of any significant recollections after a year or more had passed. Training participants had had to return to their already busy work schedules and much had transpired in their organizations. That said, it was clear from our exchanges that each of our participants had put some effort into implementing specific leadership development goals, and that they had experienced varying degrees of success and failure because of both personal and organizational factors.

As noted, five out of seven leaders said they had not really learned anything new during the training or that the content was very familiar. Perhaps it was this sense that they had 'heard it all before' or that they already had the fundamental values associated with good leadership that contributed to the leaders' inability to recall much of the specifics of the training. The time interval and the lack of any formalized training reinforcement program may also have played a role. Miller, Umble, Frederick, and Dinkin (2007) found such support programs, including coaching, mentoring and team-based work assignments post-training, were important for solidifying learning and creating important social networks to support developing leaders. While some of these networks did seem to develop informally, there was no concerted effort to make this happen.

Given the very limited recall of the overall training session and its content, we were somewhat surprised by the ease with which many trainees could recall one or more of their goals. Upon reflection, however, we realized this was the one component of the training that had required very personal engagement. Since the majority of these trainees said they had also acted actively worked on applying their goals, this training program content had been reinforced with practice and thus more likely to be easily accessible. This finding seems to provide support for the need for ongoing reinforcement of the content to help trainees apply their goals in their daily activities and to make those lasting linkages with the program content (Block & Manning, 2007; Miller, et al., 2007).

The fact that the majority of goals recalled by trainees were related to individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation is also interesting. The course facilitator did stress these two dimensions in the training, and it would appear trainees replicated this emphasis in their goals. Several of the individualized consideration goals were related to increasing leaders' casual interactions with staff and getting to know them as people with interests outside of work. Participants talked about being confined to their desk all day trying to keep pace with the paperwork, and losing touch with their employees and the work they were doing, and wanting to rectify this. Others noted that this type of employee interaction was not something they had previously viewed as a priority, but agreed it had been beneficial in terms of breaking down barriers and improving personal relationships. In the literature, there is discussion that such behaviours can serve to enhance the leader's approachability and that this in turn can create perceptions in employees' minds that the leader is more supportive (Offermann & Hellmann, 1996). From their qualitative studies with managers, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) have learned that some of the more apparently "trivial acts" performed by managers, such as chatting informally with employees and listening attentively to them, are actually perceived by employees as being significant. Employees of such managers are said to feel more visible, less anonymous, more respected and part of the team (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003). It is not much of a stretch to suppose that employees who feel more visible, more respected and part of the group would experience improvements in their sense of emotional well-being.

It is interesting that few of the participants spoke about goals related to idealized influence and inspirational motivation. While it is true the other areas were emphasized more by the facilitator, leaders

were encouraged to set three to five goals in total and to try to set at least one goal in all four areas. It is not clear whether leaders did not set goals in these areas, or simply could not recall them. In some respects, the idealized influence goals seem to be among the more personal leader goals in the sense that, in executing them in the workplace, they require the leader to reveal more of themselves to their employees, such as personal values and beliefs. As to inspirational motivation, perhaps the leaders did not feel they could credibly set or implement goals related to this dimension. From the interviews, it was clear that several of the participants were working under very difficult circumstances, such as working shorthanded on a regular basis and being responsible for too many staff in too many locations. Perhaps these leaders were themselves having difficulty making sense of such work situations and remaining positive in the face of such challenges.

We believe the study data support the statement that all participants found acting on their leadership goals difficult. As was actually mentioned explicitly by two participants, they already knew what “good leadership” was all about, but six of seven participants mentioned their job or their own personalities sometimes impeded their success. Gilbreath and Benson (2004), and Kelloway and Day (2005) highlight many of the job characteristics that can negatively impact the health of a workplace, and participants identified several of the same issues in our interviews. For example, they cited workload and work pace, work scheduling, and job control as issues. Others mentioned other initiatives that displaced the focus on transformational leadership and made sustaining a focus on improving their leadership difficult. Block and Manning (2007) touch on this same issue and highlight the importance of having senior leaders adopt a long-term view on leadership development.

In talking about what they perceived to be positive outcomes of the study, several leaders referenced improved communication and collaboration. Others mentioned that simply getting to meet and interact with leaders from other parts of the organization helped break down barriers, and a few participants mentioned having a common leadership approach as being helpful. These points are all in keeping with the findings of other health care leadership studies (see e.g. Block & Manning, 2007; Miller et al., 2007). Miller et al. found specific evidence that support programs, consisting of coaching and mentoring, and team-based work assignments post-training were particularly helpful in solidifying leader learning and in developing important social support networks. No ongoing support or post-training assignments were included as part of this program, but most participants did acknowledge some ongoing support would be beneficial.

One additional and very important benefit of the training was the positive effects that seemed to accrue to entire work groups as a result of leaders focusing on difficult or negative employees. As mentioned in the results, at least two leaders strategically and deliberately made such efforts, and improvements were noticed by other employees in the work unit. One leader even noted that the improved relations with her “problem employee” had produced positive benefits as well for herself. She felt better about the way she was dealing with this individual, and the improvement influenced her future interactions with the employee. This latter finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that subordinate well-being and leader behaviour are linked in a feedback loop (van Dierendonck, Haynes, Borrill, & Stride, 2004). In this case, the trainee’s actions improved the situation, and there were spillover benefits to other employees. van Dierendonck et al. (2004) report that in some situations the reverse is true. They describe a *loss spiral*, a term coined by (Hobfoll, 1988), whereby relations between a leader and an employee continue to deteriorate because increases in employee’s negative feelings subsequently feed decreases in leader’s supportive behaviours; this interaction further feeds the employee’s negativity and so on. The researchers stress that leaders need to be made aware of how their behaviour potentially affects their relations with employees, and they need to be trained in how to break such downward spirals. This study suggests that transformational leadership behaviours, particularly individualized consideration, may be one viable option for leaders dealing with negative employees.

LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was based on interviews with seven participants from a pool of 65 trainees. While our initial goal was to interview the 12 leaders whose leadership scores put them in the top 10 for average score increase, this proved to be more difficult than we expected. Had the timing of the interviews been closer to the end of the training intervention, we might have received greater participation. However, we also feel that the time delay helped inform the results by serving as a test of just what leaders were able to recall from the training after an extended period. The fact that so many of the interviews surfaced the same issues and themes increases the validity of the findings, as does the high level of inter-rater reliability achieved during the coding process.

We recognize that, like all methods, interviews have some inherent limitations. Interview participants are human and as such are prone to incomplete recall, and problems of articulation (Yin, 1994). Offsetting this is the fact that they are the “experts” on their experience. They know what they learned and what they did as a result. The fact that the lead author conducted all the interviews also ensured some consistency in the approach and the questioning. As well, having participated in all aspects of the training and having ongoing contact with organizational members, the lead author was able to establish her trustworthiness as a researcher, which also helps to increase participants’ willingness to “speak fully and frankly” (Glesne, 2006, p. 102). This prolonged engagement with the organization and role as a participant observer in the actual training also afforded additional knowledge that we were able to draw on during the analysis and write-up stage. At times, we sought to validate participant comments with our organizational sources, similar to the use of “local facilitators” in ethnographic research (Glesne, 2006, p. 74). Through careful questioning, so as not to reveal the identity of any of our participants, we were able to secure details about groups affected by organizational realignments, other training initiatives and the like. We were able to confirm that such changes were not widespread and/or actually occurred after the post-test data collection, and so they did not likely affect the integrity of the research program in significant ways. These are important verification methods to address validity issues (Glesne, 2006).

We feel it important to highlight that we recognize we are not hearing from one very important audience, namely the employees themselves. It would have been revealing to juxtapose leader interview comments with those of employees, but this aspect was not included as part of this study.

In summary, the findings from this study suggest that the leaders we interviewed did make concerted efforts to implement at least one or two of their leadership development goals post-training. These leaders placed the greatest emphasis on goals related to individualized consideration, followed by efforts to improve their use of intellectual stimulation, but placed little to no emphasis on idealized influence or inspirational motivation goals. All of the leaders found implementing their goals to be challenging, to a large extent because of already heavy workloads and other organizational priorities, but also in a few cases because of their own personalities and views. The fact that leaders received the same training organization wide was seen as helpful because it ensured more of a consistent approach and helped to improve communications within and between groups, but post-training support was seen as lacking. In most cases, leaders were able to identify tangible benefits arising from their efforts to act on leadership goals, and these benefits accrued to their employees as well as to the leaders themselves.

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CEO PRESTIGE AND ACQUISITION LIKELIHOOD

From a six-year sample of S&P500 companies, we find evidence that the personal prestige of the acquiring firm's CEO affects the likelihood of making an acquisition. We note distinct effects of prestige due to informal power and to status. Status tempers the ambition due to informal power.

INTRODUCTION

Mergers and acquisitions (M&A) at best have an insignificant short-term effect on value creation for the acquiring firm, and over longer-term, a negative impact (Jensen & Ruback, 1983; Fuller, Netter et al. 2002; King, Dalton et al., 2004; Tuch & O'Sullivan, 2007; Aybar & Ficici, 2009). So the continued use of M&As in spite of this evidence therefore raises the question of motivation as an important topic of research. Research clusters around two main arguments about why acquisitions are done. First, firms believe that they will create value (Seth et al., 2002) or synergy (Chatterjee, 1986) by acquiring another firms because it enables them to diversify into new markets, seek economies of scale or scope (Walter & Barney, 1990), or accelerate product development (Capron, 1999). However, other studies suggest the driver behind acquisitions instead lies with the executive responsible for the acquisition. This "managerialist" view argues that acquisitions are made primarily to personally benefit the decision-making executive, whether by obtaining extra financial rewards (Wright, Kroll et al., 2002), reducing future employment risk (Amihud & Lev, 1981), preserving family control (Miller et al., 2010), or succumbing to personal hubris (Roll, 1986; Hayward & Hambrick, 1997).

However, another source of possible benefit to CEOs that has received little attention is their personal prestige. Prestige is undoubtedly important for the CEO, providing advantages such as higher compensation (Wade et al., 2006), and making it easier to foster resources and lower costs (Malmendier & Tate, 2005; Chen et al., 2008; Bothner et al., 2009). Its value is also apparent for the firm through higher IPO valuations (Pollock et al., 2010), better firm growth (Kor & Sundaramurthy, 2009), and improved investor perceptions (Certo & Hodge, 2007). CEO prestige has been described both a significant source of informal power due to social networks extending beyond the company (Shaw et al., 1998), and as a form of "status capital" (D'Aveni, 1990). Yet earlier research suggests these two purported sources of prestige exert contrasting influences on M&A activity, with higher power linked to more acquisition activity (Chikh & Filbien, 2011), while higher status makes M&As less likely (Palmer & Barber, 2001). We therefore lack an understanding of how CEO prestige affects acquisitions. This question is important since M&As are among the riskiest strategic moves, and involve long-term, substantial and complex resource allocations (Bower & Gilbert, 2005) with the highest stakes and the most substantial resource irreversibility (Chen & MacMillan, 1992; Nutt, 2001).

This paper asks to what extent does CEO prestige affect the likelihood of making an acquisition. Based on earlier characterizations of CEO prestige, we describe it using the distinct perspectives of informal power and status. We argue that CEOs "take" prestige from lower-power actors, and "receive" prestige due to the deference of lower-status actors. While deference occurs in both, "deference to those with the power to hurt or help you" is distinct from "from deference to those you honor and respect"

(Pearce, 2011, p. 7). Our results suggest that high-status executives are more hesitant about engaging in M&A activity, while those with more informal power are more likely to acquire other firms. We also present evidence suggesting that high status tempers the M&A ambitions of high power CEOs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role of CEO Attributes in Acquisition Likelihood

CEO attributes have been recognized as an explanation for acquisition risk-taking beyond traditional firm- and industry-level antecedents. Experienced executives may be more willing to acquire other firms because they have learned lessons from prior acquisitions (Haleblian et al., 2006). However, executives approaching the end of their career become more risk averse and less likely to acquire as they realize that they may not necessarily be able to benefit from the acquisition's longer-term returns (Matta & Beamish, 2008).

Compensation schemes alter an executive's risk propensity, where stock options encourage acquisition activity by providing an upside pay option (Sanders, 2001). On the other hand, equity ownership results in an U-shaped relationship with acquisition activity, where increasing equity initially emphasizes potential loss and suggest less likelihood (Sanders, 2001), but eventually full ownership encourages acquisition, since owners are considered more credible than agent CEOs by the market and cannot be fired (Eisenmann, 2002).

Some research has attempted to probe psychological effects on acquisitions. Executive hubris, the unassailable belief that one is acting in the best interests of the shareholder based on overconfidence in their ability to affect outcomes, can result in increased likelihood to acquire (Roll, 1986; Hayward & Hambrick, 1997; Malmendier & Tate, 2008). Coupling this overconfidence with a heightened craving for attention also leads to increased acquisition likelihood (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007).

Hypothesis Development

The dual nature of CEO prestige has been identified by several studies. Finkelstein (1992) suggested dual informational and symbolic roles. Certo (2003) argued that personal prestige consisted of a combination of human capital, the public's belief in one's "smartness" (Piketty, 1998, p. 115) and social capital, the "good ol' boys" network that promotes loyalty and the ability to co-opt (Finkelstein, 1992) through direct and indirect links to other individuals and institutions (Adler & Kwon, 2002).

Prestige is also one of the four unique sources of executive power (Finkelstein, 1992), each acting independently with strategic outcomes (Chaganti et al., 2001). While prestige is the sole form of informal power among these sources, formal power is derived from the other three sources: organizational structure and hierarchical authority (structural power), the ability to act on the shareholders' behalf or reduce board influence (ownership power), and the experience needed to deal with environmental contingencies (expert power) (Finkelstein, 1992). Formal power results in more acquisition activity (Finkelstein, 1992) because one can ignore dissenting views (Chikh & Filbien, 2011). However since informal power has origins outside the firm, while formal power derives from structures and relationships within the firm, we do not expect to be able to infer similar relationships with strategic action. For instance, while formal power tends to increase with tenure, prestige power does not (Buchholtz & Ribbens, 1994). Likewise, formal power can help in recovery from bankruptcy, while prestige power does not (Brockmann et al., 2004). Informal power therefore has distinct effects on strategic outcomes from formal power.

We therefore have little understanding of the role of informal power that underlies prestige on acquisition likelihood, nor do we understand how informal power and status interact. We next build upon the informal power and status perspectives of CEO prestige to derive a set of testable hypotheses.

“Receiving” Prestige: The Status Perspective. CEO prestige is “the property of having status...due to membership in elite social circles” (D’Aveni, 1990, p. 121). Individuals in a group collectively define a shared set of performance expectations based on taken-for-granted beliefs, according to Expectation States Theory, a principal model of status (Fisek et al., 1991; Berger et al., 1998). The social group defines a legitimated prestige structure based on the performance expectations of the group members (Balkwell 1995; Berger et al., 1998), where lower-status members defer to the higher-status members based on status characteristics such as age, experience, rank, education, social network or other socially significant characteristic. This deferential behavior legitimates the structure in that it explains and supports its continued existence (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Deference has been noted in studies of individuals (Berger et al., 1998), in financial firms (Podolny, 1993), and in semiconductor companies (Podolny et al., 1996). In essence, executives “receive” prestige through the respect and admiration of lower-status organizational members (Magee & Galinsky, 2008).

CEO Status and Acquisition Likelihood. In return for deference, high-status executives at the apex of the legitimated prestige structure are expected to act consistently with legitimated behavior norms. Otherwise, those who deviate from the accepted socially behavior norms lose status (Younggreen & Moore, 2003) through two mechanisms: major changes in the executive’s performance, or activation of a new status characteristic (Berger et al., 1998). If the executive acts in a risky way, performance outcomes become more extreme, with a higher likelihood of total or partial loss (Sanders & Hambrick, 2007). As performance fails to meet expectations, lower-status members within the prestige structure conclude that status is no longer due to the status characteristic upon which the structure is based. Sanctions are imposed (Giordano, 1983), which may include the search for an alternative status characteristic to judge relative status (Webster Jr. & Rashotte, 2010). If the executive lacks this characteristic, while a lower-status actor possesses it, status is transferred from the executive to the other actor. In this way, status “leaks” from higher-status actors to lower-status actors (Podolny, 2005). To avoid leaking status, high-status actors are reluctant to engage in relationships with lower-status actors (Podolny, 2005). Because executives treasure their status as an intrinsically valued resource (Huberman et al., 2004), they are naturally highly reluctant to surrender the benefits it bestows (Fredrickson et al., 1988; Cannella & Shen, 2001; Khurana, 2001). We should therefore observe a negative relationship between CEO prestige and the likelihood of engaging in acquisitions.

Hypothesis 1: CEOs with higher status are less likely to acquire firms than CEOs with lower status.

“Taking” Prestige: The Power Perspective. Alternatively, consistent with resource dependency theory (Pfeffer & Salancik 1978), personal prestige is formed through the ability of high-prestige actors to dominate lower-prestige actors because of their superior ability to control resources (Magee & Galinsky 2008). Executives consider prestige as a form of informal power (Fredrickson et al., 1988; Finkelstein, 1992) based on associations with powerful and elite contacts as well as tacit knowledge and skills (Finkelstein, 1992), where executives control access to other social networks and the resources those networks control (Brockmann et al., 2004). In essence, executives “take” prestige from others, taking advantage of lower-prestige actors who are more dependent on others for key resources such as information (Bunderson & Reagens, 2011).

CEO Informal Power and Acquisition Likelihood

The advantage in resource access and control encourages extreme behavior (Bunderson & Reagens, 2011) because as high-power members, they have easier access to information, lower transaction costs (D’Aveni, 1990), and they can more easily recover from any loss if the bet proves

wrong. Therefore, in the case of inappropriate strategic action, high prestige CEOs can acquire new resources at lower cost than their less prestigious counterparts (Chen et al., 2008). With a greater ability to undo the effects of a regretted choice, executives have a lower aversion to risk (Josephs et al., 1992). High-prestige actors therefore have little to lose by risky action. This extra resilience can also be stored for future use (D'Aveni, 1990) and persuades executives to take on more risk. In one study, CEOs with more extensive elite connections were more likely to complete acquisition deals in spite of a negative market reaction to acquisition announcements (Chikh & Filbien, 2011). We therefore expect a positive relationship between a CEO's power and the likelihood of engaging in acquisitions.

Hypothesis 2: CEOs with higher power are more likely to acquire firms than CEOs with lower power.

CEO Informal Power and CEO Status Interaction

Finally, there remains the interaction case where CEOs possess both high power and high status. Studies point to two contrasting arguments on the relationship with acquisition likelihood. On one hand, their superior power can compensate for any risk of status leakage. A study of Formula 1 teams supports the idea that high power can effectively overcome the status leakage arising from interacting with lower-status actors (Castellucci & Ertug, 2010). Likewise, status combined with informal power derived from centrality in prominent social networks provides both the incentive to increase status and the power necessary to implement change that results in increased acquisition likelihood (Palmer & Barber, 2001).

Alternatively, extremely high status executives, "CEO celebrities," become distracted from their duties towards the firm (Bothner et al., 2008; Malmendier & Tate, 2009) because their superior power affords them the discretion necessary to pursue personal pet projects, while their superior status affords them the ability to foster resources in spite of early failures in these pet projects. For instance, the former co-CEO of Research In Motion, Jim Balsillie, eventually spent more time on trying to acquire a National Hockey League franchise and to establish a new international relations think-tank than on managing the firm. Although he lacked the power to force the NHL to grant him a franchise, his status provided him the visibility and the access to key social networks necessary to pursue his ambition. In diverting their attention to matters beyond the firm's strategy, high power executives with high status become less prone to address their firm's strategic issues and therefore they are less likely to acquire others. We therefore offer two contrasting hypotheses on the relationship between CEO prestige and the likelihood of engaging in acquisitions.

Hypothesis 3a: CEOs with higher status and high power are more likely to acquire firms than CEOs with lower prestige (low power and low status).

Hypothesis 3b: CEOs with higher status and high power are less likely to acquire firms than CEOs with lower prestige (low power and low status).

In summary, the moderated relationships result in four possible combinations of informal power and status. Table 1 summarizes the hypotheses, with acquisition likelihood described relative to the case in the lower left quadrant where CEOs have both low informal power and low status.

Table 1: Theorized Effects of CEO Prestige on Acquisition Likelihood

		Status	
		Low	High
Informal Power	High	Higher likelihood (resource control) H2	Higher likelihood (power compensates for status leakage) H3a Lower likelihood (distraction) H3b
	Low	-	Lower likelihood (status leakage) H1

METHOD

Sample

In our search for high sample variance, we developed an initial panel of 704 CEOs of S&P500 firms between 2005 and 2010, resulting in 2828 unique cases. Within the panel, there were 407 acquisitions that include a publicly disclosed purchase price according to the Thomson SDC M&A database. With missing data and removing outliers, the final panel consisted of 643 CEOs of S&P500 firms with a total of 2584 cases between 2005 and 2010. T-tests detected no significant differences in CEO age or CEO tenure between sampled and non-sampled cases. However, sampled firms were significantly larger than non-sampled firms. A subsequent t-test pointed to firms that acquired other firms being larger than those that did not. The sample spanned 62 2-dig SIC industries, with no single industry representing more than 7% of the sample and thereby suggesting that no single industry dominates.

Variables

Dependent variables. We employ two measures of acquisition risk-taking: a dummy variable identifying whether or not an acquisition was made in a given year (*M&AInYear*), and the number of completed acquisitions per year (*NumberM&As*). We use a direct measure of risk-taking based on resource size rather than a ratio measure since it allowed for better control of firm size through a separate control variable and avoided possible spurious results due to correlations among the denominators on both sides of the regression equation (Devers et al., 2008; Wiseman, 2009). Data was drawn from COMPUSTAT, BusinessWeek Executive Profiles, SEC 10K and DEF14A filings, and company websites.

Independent variables. CEO prestige is measured in terms of personal status and personal informal power. Since all cases consider the CEO, the top-ranking executive of the acquiring company, rank is not a status characteristic considered in this study. The status measure is instead based on the CEO's education background. We use two measures of status, gauging the extent to which the CEO's education can be considered elite. First, we note the *highest level of education* (0=no high school, 7=doctorate), followed by the *prestige of the academic institution* on a 0-3 scale (Finkelstein, 1992). Data was obtained from 10-K and DEF14A reports available from the SEC EDGAR database, and BusinessWeek Executive Profiles.

CEO power appears in two forms, informal and formal (Finkelstein, 1992; Daily & Johnson, 1997; Brockmann et al., 2004), both of which are considered in this study. Prestige power, derived through associations with others who are powerful and elite, is informal. We measure this informal

power by the number of the CEO's board directorships (*number of corporate boards*), where more directorships imply higher informal power. The *number of corporate and non-profit boards* is also measured. We also consider the relative prestige of the firm on whose board the CEO sits, since being a director of Google would be considered more prestigious than sitting on a board of a small, local company. We therefore note the stock rating at the end of each calendar year of each company using the rating of the firm's general financial condition provided by Standard & Poor's Stock Quality Index (Finkelstein, 1992). The scale extends from a 0 for a non-rated firm, to 10 for a firm rated A+ by S&P. To determine the *S&P board rating*, we sum the scores of the firms on whose board the CEO sits. However, executives also possess a formal power, drawn from their role and position within the firm.

Principal component analysis revealed a two separate CEO prestige factors: one for *CEO education status*, the other for *CEO informal power* (eigenvalues =2.08 and 1.45), together explaining 70% of the total variance. Sampling adequacy (KMO=0.60) exceeded the generally acceptable minimum of 0.5 (Hair et al., 1998). Reliability was acceptable (Cronbach α =0.64) (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988; Finkelstein, 1992). All independent variables were centered to reduce the effects of multicollinearity (Jaccard & Turrisi, 2003).

Control variables. To compare the effects of formal power with those of informal power, we measure the *CEO structural power* through the CEO total compensation relative to the mean compensation of the other members of the top management team (Daily & Johnson, 1997). Compensation data was obtained from EXECUCOMP and from SEC DEF14A proxy statements. Alternatively, since chairman duality can be a source of formal power, we note whether the CEO also has the chairman title in the dichotomous variable *CEO chairman*.

To control for alternative explanations for acquisition risk-taking, we include CEO-level and firm-level controls. At the CEO-level, we include controls for *CEO age*, *CEO tenure*, and *firm tenure*, all factors associated with affecting risk-taking preferences. At the firm level, we consider prior performance, slack and size. First, *firm performance* in the year prior to the investment accounts for the prospect theory-driven perception of potential gain or loss in risk attitudes of the executive (Wiseman & Gomez-Meija, 1998). *Firm performance* was measured as the firm Return on Assets (ROA) relative to the average of all S&P500 firms in the same 2-dig SIC industry for a given year. A common gauge of firm profitability, ROA captures the degree to which management has effectively deployed firm assets, thus it is useful in assessing the performance implications of business strategies (Geletkanycz & Hambrick, 1997). Secondly, firm slack affects risk attitudes because of the availability of extra resources in case of surprise opportunities or to react to crises (Bourgeois, 1981). Risk-taking is more likely for firms with the resources to fund them (Holmes Jr. et al., 2011). *Potential slack* captures the ability of a firm to secure resources with debt financing. Since some firms have zero debt, I used the debt-to-equity ratio to measure the inverse of *potential slack*. There are two contrasting views about the relationship between slack and risk-taking. On one hand, as Geiger and Cashen (2002) argue, potential slack incurs future expenses in the form of interest payments, triggering potential changes in analyst opinions, affecting future debt costs and the stock price, and accentuating bold action, such as innovation. Alternatively, the 'hunger-driven view' of potential slack (Hambrick & D'Aveni, 1988) suggests when slack levels fall, executives will act more boldly in an attempt to restore them (Palmer & Wiseman, 1999), while high-slack firms become complacent.

Moderating variable. With data from COMPUSTAT, we defined industry *demand uncertainty* as demand turbulence or the standard error of the overall industry net change in net sales over a five-year time period prior to the investment announcement (Dess & Beard, 1984).

Models

We are interested in the extent to which CEOs acquire firms in a given year, so our unit of measure is the CEO-year. We considered whether a fixed effects model or a random effect model would be most appropriate for testing the hypothesis. Although they have similar features, the principal difference is in their assumptions of error correlation (Rabe-Hesketh & Skrondal, 2005; Bollen & Brand, 2008). A random effects model assumes that our data is a random sample of a larger population of CEOs, so that the time-invariant variables are not correlated with the time-varying variables. Since the error coefficients are generally smaller than those of a fixed effects model, smaller effects can be detected. However, if the assumptions are not true, then the model produces biased coefficients. A fixed effects model assumes that the time-invariant differences between the individual CEOs do correlate. If the random effects assumptions are true, both models should converge to the same coefficient values and that the fixed effects model needlessly permits the latent time-invariant variables to correlate with time-varying ones. The null hypothesis in the Hausman test states that the random effects model is true, while the alternative hypothesis is that at least one coefficient differs and so the fixed effects model is more realistic. We compared our random-effects models with fixed-effects models using the Hausman test, and random-effects models were always preferred. Postestimate testing confirmed the presence of within-group autocorrelation of the time-varying variables since some CEO attributes such as compensation depended to a large extent on the prior year's value.

We therefore test the hypotheses using a random-effects model of the pooled six-year data spanning 2005-2010 with added corrections to account for within-group autocorrelation and heteroscedasticity. We also use two separate models to provide a more robust test of the hypotheses. The panel logistic model tests the likelihood of making an acquisition in a given year, while the panel Poisson model tests the number of yearly acquisitions. Logistic models are considered inferior to Poisson models because they ignore information about multiple acquisitions in the same year, but logistic models are superior to Poisson ones because they are less sensitive to impact of acquisitive outliers (Palmer & Barber, 2001). So we consider support strong when both types of model provide confirmatory results, and to be tentative when only one type of model provides confirmatory evidence.

RESULTS

The variable statistics and the bivariate correlations are shown in Table 2. The distinction between informal and formal power appears warranted since a reliability test of *CEO informal power*, *CEO structural power* and *Chairman duality* revealed a Cronbach alpha of only 0.44, below the generally accepted threshold in management literature of 0.6 (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988; Geletkanycz & Hambrick, 1997). There is also a strong correlation between *CEO informal power* and the quadrant factor variable. Since these variables are not used together in any model, this is not a concern.

We first test the effects of *CEO informal power* and *CEO status* using the logistic and Poisson regression models shown in Table 3. The autoregressive correlation with a one-year lag to correct for autocorrelation requires groups of at least 2 observations, which reduced the sample by 88 CEOs. Unequal spacing within groups eliminated another 12 CEOs, leaving a sample of 543 CEO with 2454 cases. Base models containing only control variables are listed as Model 1 for a likelihood model and Model 3 for a Poisson model. Comparing these models to Models 2 and 4 that include CEO informal power and status effects suggest significant effects.

Table 2: Variable Statistics and Correlations

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 M&A in year	0.14	0.35	1								
2 Number of M&As	0.17	0.47	0.90 ***								
3 M&A investment (ln)	0.97	2.47	0.96 ***	0.89 ***							
4 Y2005	0.16	0.36	0.03 +	0.04 +	0.03 +	1					
5 Y2006	0.16	0.37	0.04 *	0.04 +	0.04 *	-0.19 ***	1				
6 Y2007	0.17	0.37	0.08 ***	0.07 ***	0.07 ***	-0.18 ***	-0.20 ***	1			
7 Y2008	0.17	0.38	-0.04 *	-0.04 +	0.05 *	-0.20 ***	-0.20 ***	-0.20 ***	1		
8 Y2009	0.17	0.38	-0.05 **	-0.04 *	-0.05 *	-0.20 ***	-0.20 ***	-0.20 ***	-0.21 ***	1	
9 CEO Age	0	6.24	0.03	0.04 *	0.04 *	-0.05 **	-0.03 +	-0.02	0.00	0.03 +	1
10 CEO tenure (ln)	0.02	0.83	0.02	0.03	0.03	-0.03 +	-0.02	-0.01	-0.00	0.01	0.35 ***
11 Firm size	0.00	1.26	0.13 ***	0.15 ***	0.15 ***	-0.02	-0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.11 ***
12 Firm debt/equity	0.00	0.55	-0.04 +	-0.00	-0.03	-0.02	-0.04 +	0.00	0.04 *	0.02	0.07 ***
13 Firm performance	0.00	0.07	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.06 **	0.07 ***	0.05 *	-0.08 ***	-0.11 ***	0.02
14 CEO cash compensation (ln)	0.00	1.08	0.04 +	0.05 *	0.04 *	0.20 ***	-0.01	-0.05 **	-0.06 ***	-0.04 *	0.08 ***
15 CEO Structural Power	0.00	0.51	-0.05 *	-0.02	-0.05 *	-0.03 +	-0.01	-0.03 +	0.04 +	0.00	0.09 ***
16 Chairman duality	0.63	0.48	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.01	-0.00	-0.02	0.30 ***
17 CEO Status	0.00	1.50	-0.18 ***	-0.18 ***	-0.17 ***	-0.01	-0.00	0.01	0.01	-0.00	0.06 *
18 CEO Informal Power	-0.31	0.80	0.17 ***	0.14 ***	0.17 ***	0.01	0.01	0.00	-0.00	-0.01	0.15 ***
19 Quadrant	0.00	1.26	0.15 ***	0.12 ***	0.15 ***	0.00	0.01	0.00	.- 0.01	-0.01	0.16 ***
20 Uncertainty			0.05 **	0.03 +	0.06 *	-0.08 ***	-0.01	0.06 **	0.09 ***	0.01	0.07 **

Variable	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
9 CEO Age											
10 CEO tenure (ln)	1										
11 Firm size	-0.06 **	1									
12 Firm debt/equity	-0.02	0.08 ***	1								
13 Firm performance	0.05 **	-0.03	-0.15 ***	1							
14 CEO cash compensation (ln)	-0.07 ***	0.15 ***	0.03 +	0.00	1						
15 CEO Structural Power	0.15 ***	0.00	-0.01	-0.00	0.18 ***	1					
16 Chairman duality	0.37 ***	0.10 ***	0.05 **	0.01	0.08 ***	0.13 ***	1				
17 CEO Status	-0.02	-0.10 ***	0.04 *	-0.00	-0.01	0.02	0.02	1			

18 CEO Informal Power	0.16 ***	0.12 ***	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.03 +	0.19 ***	-0.31 ***	1		
19 Quadrant	0.12 ***	0.12 ***	0.02	-0.03	0.01	0.03	0.15 ***	0.01	0.68 ***		
20 Uncertainty	-0.00	0.22 ***	-0.02	-0.00	0.07 ***	-0.00	0.05 *	0.05 **	-0.06 **	0.06	1

Table 3: CEO Prestige Multilevel Panel Regressions (DV: M&A Likelihood)

Variable	Logistic Regression		Poisson Regression		Hyp.
	Base Model	CEO Prestige	Base Model	CEO Prestige	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	
Intercept	-2.29 (0.17) ***	-2.29 (0.16) ***	-2.26 (0.17) ***	- 2.22 (0.17) ***	
Year 2005	0.46 (0.18) *	0.51 (0.17) **	0.85 (0.19) ***	0.79 (0.19) ***	
Year 2006	0.51 (0.18) **	0.46 (0.17) **	0.80 (0.18) ***	0.76 (0.18) ***	
Year 2007	0.68 (0.17) ***	0.69 (0.16) ***	0.95 (0.18) ***	0.91 (0.18) ***	
Year 2008	0.18 (0.19)	0.19 (0.18)	0.35 (0.19) +	0.33 (0.19) +	
Year 2009	0.13 (0.18)	0.18 (0.17)	0.24 (0.18)	0.22 (0.18)	
CEO Age	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	
CEO Tenure	0.16 (0.06) *	0.11 (0.06) +	0.18 (0.07) *	0.11 (0.07)	
Firm Size	0.21 (0.04) ***	0.20 (0.04) ***	0.27 (0.04) ***	0.23 (0.04) ***	
Firm Debt/Equity	-0.34 (0.13) **	-0.28 (0.11) *	-0.13 (0.11)	-0.08 (0.11)	
Firm Performance	-0.06 (0.74)	0.27 (0.72)	0.02 (0.77)	0.12 (0.78)	
CEO Cash Compensation	0.11 (0.05) *	0.07 (0.04) +	0.05 (0.05)	0.04 (0.05)	
CEO Structural Power	-0.37 (0.09) ***	-0.35 (0.09) ***	-0.16 (0.10)	-0.14 (0.10)	
CEO Chairman	-0.03 (0.11)	-0.05 (0.10)	-0.16 (0.12)	-0.19 (0.12)	
CEO Status		-0.16 (0.04) ***		-0.21 (0.05) ***	H1 (-)
CEO Informal Power		0.25 (0.05) ***		0.33 (0.07) ***	H2 (+)
CEO Status X Informal Power		0.05 (0.04)		0.18 (0.06) **	
N	2454	2454	2454	2454	
No. of CEOs	543	543	543	543	
Wald χ^2	94.40 ***	154.01 ***	92.83 ***	150.82 ***	

There is a significant direct effect ($p < 0.001$) between *M&A likelihood* and *CEO status*, in Models 2 and 4, suggesting that CEOs with higher education status are significantly less likely to make an acquisition. This supports Hypothesis 1, which argued that CEOs with higher status were less likely to acquire other firms. There is also a significant ($p < 0.001$) relationship between *CEO informal power* and *M&A likelihood* in Models 2 and 4, suggesting that CEOs with more informal power through directorships are more likely to make an acquisition. This provides evidence supporting Hypothesis 2, which argued that CEOs with more informal power were more likely to acquire others.

Several relationships with the control variables are noteworthy. First, when the effects of CEO prestige are added to Model 1, the significant coefficient with *CEO tenure* becomes non-significant. This suggests that informal power and status may overwhelm the effects of CEO lifecycle, where they take more risks as they develop their power network and learn from past experiences, consistent with institutionalization of power (Ocasio, 1994). Secondly, potential slack has a partially significant effect with M&A likelihood, since there is a significant coefficient in the logistic models (Models 1 and 2) but

no significant coefficient in the Poisson models (Models 3 and 4). Since the debt-to-equity measure is the inverse of *potential slack*, the significant result is consistent with the idea that extra slack allows executives to engage in riskier strategic behavior such as M&As. Thirdly, cash compensation in the form of salary and bonus encourages M&A activity, however its effect becomes non-significant when prestige is considered. Fourthly, CEOs with more structural power have a lower likelihood of acquiring firms. Finally, as expected, larger firms are more likely to engage in an M&A. We conclude that there is significant evidence of longer tenured CEOs and CEOs of larger firms more likely to acquire firms because of significant coefficients in both the logistic and Poisson models, but only partial support for the other control relationships, since they have non-significant results in the Poisson model.

Testing Hypotheses 3a and 3b assumes an interaction effect between *CEO informal power* and *CEO status*, but the results in Table 3 are mixed. While there is no significant relationship in the logistic Model 2 for *CEO Informal Power*, the Poisson model (Model 4) does have a significant interaction effect ($p < 0.01$). Together, we conclude that there is partially support for an interaction effect between CEO informal power and CEO status. To more explicitly examine how the interaction of CEOs with both high informal power and high status affects the likelihood of engaging in acquisitions, we create a factor variable *Quadrant* that splits the sample into 4 quadrants according to *CEO informal power* and *CEO status* values above (“High”) and below (“Low”) their median values. The resulting model coefficients are listed in Table 4.

Compared to executives with low power and low status, those with low power and high status are less likely to acquire other firms, supporting Hypothesis 1. CEOs with high power and low status are more likely to acquire, supporting Hypothesis 2, while those with high power and high status are also more likely to acquire, supporting Hypothesis 3a, albeit with a slightly smaller coefficient. Hypothesis 3b finds no support.

Table 4: Logistic and Poisson GEE Panel Regressions of M&A Likelihood (DV: M&A Likelihood)

Variable	Logistic Model 5	Poisson Model 6	Hypothesis
Intercept	-2.47 (0.18) ***	-2.28 (0.20) ***	
Year 2005	0.45 (0.15) **	0.85 (0.19) ***	
Year 2006	0.39 (0.15) **	0.79 (0.18) ***	
Year 2007	0.62 (0.14) ***	0.93 (0.18) ***	
Year 2008	0.08 (0.17)	0.33 (0.19) +	
Year 2009	0.12 (0.15)	0.22 (0.18)	
CEO Age	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	
CEO Tenure	0.13 (0.05) *	0.15 (0.07) *	
Firm Size	0.20 (0.03) ***	0.23 (0.04) ***	
Firm Debt/Equity	-0.29 (0.11) **	-0.07 (0.12)	
Firm Performance	0.44 (0.70)	0.18 (0.78)	
CEO Cash Compensation	0.06 (0.03) +	0.04 (0.05)	
CEO Structural Power	-0.36 (0.08) ***	-0.15 (0.10)	
CEO Chairman	-0.01 (0.10)	-0.22 (0.12) +	
Quadrant (informal power, status)			
1 (low, low)	1	1	
2 (low, high)	-1.22 (0.41) **	-1.23 (0.25) ***	H1 (-)
3 (high, low)	0.61 (0.13) ***	0.46 (0.15) **	H2 (+)

4 (high, high)	0.46 (0.15) **	0.30 (0.17) +	H3a (+) H3b (-)
N	2454	2454	
No. of CEOs	543	543	
Wald χ^2	160.63 ***	143.87 ***	

DISCUSSION

The results generally support the idea that high-status CEOs are less likely to engage in M&A activity and that high-informal power CEOs are more likely. Most interestingly, when both status and power are available to a CEO, their superior power overrides their reluctance to act arising from their high status, and they are again more likely to acquire firms. However, the smaller coefficient for high status and high power CEOs compared with those with high power and low status suggests that status tempers the ambition of informal power.

Of course this study examines only one type of strategic investment – acquisitions, leaving the question of other strategic moves such as alliances, joint ventures, and R&D unanswered. We only note the likelihood of investment, not the magnitude or timing of the investment. The sample also primarily considers large, well capitalized U.S.-based firms that list on the S&P 500. We therefore cannot necessarily extend our conclusions to smaller firms, non-U.S. based firms and privately held firms.

CONCLUSIONS

We find evidence among a six-year sample of S&P500 firms of CEO prestige influencing the likelihood of making an acquisition. We also evidence suggesting that the ambitions of high informal power CEOs are effectively tempered by high status.

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OUT WITH THE IN CROWD: CONSTRUCTING THE INDIVIDUAL IN A CROWDSOURCING ENVIRONMENT

Originally introduced as a strategy for lowering outsourcing costs and improving corporate efficiency, crowdsourcing has proven to be much more about dialogue within communities than the implementation of management technique. This paper suggests that the true potential in crowdsourcing and its derivatives, i.e. crowdfunding, is found in the way this phenomenon is able to engage individuals in the collective construction of identities. These collective identities emerge through dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981) among the participants in the on-line environment. Following Bakhtin's (Bakhtin, 1981) theory of dialogism, we explore the ways in which three examples of crowdsourcing have facilitated dialogue, in stark contrast to the monological method reflected in the scientific management approach of the original outsourcing model.

INTRODUCTION

Originally a contraction of crowd and outsourcing, the term "crowdsourcing" emerged in the late 1990s to describe a process of corporate outsourcing that allowed companies to draw on stakeholder groups (i.e. customers) for feedback, product ideas, etc. (Howe, 2006). The idea was to reduce the costs associated with outsourcing call-center type functions and focus groups by providing a channel for stakeholders to communicate with the company directly.

Schenk and Guittard (2009) have traced early examples of crowdsourcing back to 1998, when American multinational pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly pioneered InnoCentive, a crowdsourcing platform designed to allow consumers to provide feedback to the corporation. Although there has been relatively little research done on the crowdsourcing phenomenon from an academic perspective, the professional literature has extensive coverage of the growth of this approach over the past decade. And the online coverage of crowdsourcing initiatives is quite vast. Dozens of blogs are dedicated to the topic (e.g. <http://crowdsourcing.typepad.com>) (Schenk & Guittard, 2009, p. 3)

Although Crowdsourcing as a concept was introduced to the business community, essentially from a scientific management perspective, the real benefits in terms of organizational and social development may be found within another paradigm. The driving forces behind the growth in crowdsourcing have not necessarily been the scientific management tenets of productivity and efficiency (although these factors do enable the process), but more so in the construction of collective identities among individuals who become communities. One hallmark of contemporary postmodern thought is an interest in contextualizing and exposing both the intersectionality and indexicality of identity construction

processes. Consequently, we propose that a postmodern approach to understanding how community emerges within a crowdsourcing context will provide insight into the ways in which communities form within organizations and society. Such insights are potentially significant in terms of augmenting the scant theorizing around such organizing efforts, while simultaneously offering real caveats and suggestions in terms of crowdsourcing practices as well.

Crowdsourcing or Outsourcing?

From the perspective of the central firm or organization, crowdsourcing and outsourcing are conceptual bookends of a continuum of practices. Particularly important for our discussion is situating both practices in their (undeclared) foundational assumptions rooted in Tayloristic, indeed neo-Fordist beginnings. Schenk and Guittard (2009) provides a diagram of the process of crowdsourcing versus outsourcing as conceptualized from the scientific management perspective, and it is reproduced below as a stepping stone from which we may offer another perspective as a counterpoise.

As we conceptualize this process, the crowdsourcing would be more like akin to a process based interconnection between individuals and communities. This is remarkably difficult to portray in a diagram, for there is no central locus from which to form a perspective. Unlike the firm-centric perspective pictured above, it is not about entities that provide to a central concern. Instead what we are concerned with is the process of mutual dialogue and intersecting needs and wants. This process based view is situated within theories of dialogue and augmented by communicative media, with important ramifications for identity and notions of community or comment spaces.

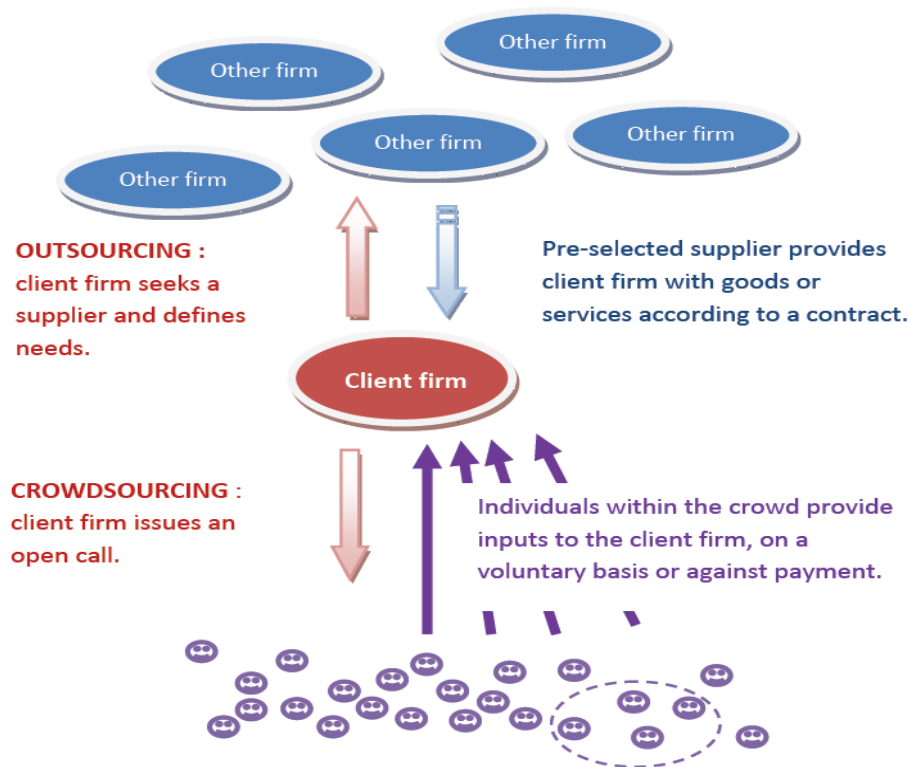


Figure 1: Crowdsourcing vs. Outsourcing

(Schenk & Guittard, 2009, p. 6)

And even in platforms where feedback is possible (Twitter, Facebook, etc) the lack of direct contact with individuals either in the form of dialogue or other interaction, means that much of what is posted can take the form of a monologue – a very limited form of engagement:

While individuals may reflect on their own individually defined social network, and using social networking sites may be supportive in sharing and experiencing one another's self-representations of experience in media, people remain individuated, atomized, with the pervasive sense conveyed being one of collective monologue. Participation is linearly routinized in a timescale of immediacy. While anyone can 'see' the productions of their own social network, in seeing they gain more of a sense of commodity circulation than shared experience, vision and understanding. Although ostensibly a medium for creative individual expression, users produce and consume media more as if in a hall of mirrors than in a jointly created carnival of collective expression of selves (Bakhtin, 1984). (Lewis et al., 2010, p. 357)

Social benefit is not inherent in internet connectivity, as evidenced in the use of e-commerce or a corporate web presence. These forms of communication do not facilitate dialogue; they simply provide another channel for information dissemination to potential customers. Consequently, the medium is not the entire message.

Bakhtin (1984) tells us that this lack of collective expression is a barrier to the construction of meaning, and to meaningful communication. Dialogism reflects an understanding of meaning as emerging through a conversation, as a result of dialogue. As such, the meaning cannot be fully known to either the organization or the participants until the dialogue has occurred. Through this interaction, collective identities are built around shared meanings. This forms a subtle reworking of the often quoted Graham Wallas line "How can I know what I think till I see what I say"¹ into something like "how can we know who we are until we see what we say to each other".

This focus upon process and dialogue requires reiteration, for it forms the foundation of our contentions regarding a different paradigm for the understanding of crowdsourcing. When Sampson (1993) in (McNamee, 1996) writes of Bakhtin's position, "Neither meaning nor self is a precondition for social interaction; rather, these emerge from and are sustained by conversations occurring between people" (p. 98-9), he reminds us that we are talking about dialogue preceding meaning and identity.

Bakhtin's position, that meaning emerges in dialogue, is quite the opposite to the monologic view of meaning construction which is found in traditional organizational models of communication:

. . . monologism denies that there exists outside of it another consciousness, with the same rights, and capable of responding on an equal footing, another and equal I (thou)...Monologue makes do without the other; that is why to some extent it objectivizes all reality. Monologue pretends to be the last word. (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 318)

This leads to what McNamee (1996) summarizes as the inevitable conclusion of monologue, "for the speaker to assume the position of objective observer, evaluator...". Thus it is possible to see how the monolistic view of the firm in figure 1 is embedded within a network of assumptions which privilege the firm and furthermore have implications for efficiency rationalizations to rise to prominence. These are the tenets of scientific management.

In the dialogism approach, the speaker is one participant sharing ideas with others, collectively building meaning. In the case of social media, especially because so many voices may be heard, it is

¹ Wallas quoted in Weick (1995, p. 12)

quite possible that individuals will make sense of the same language in different ways. Although a speaker may put forward her position on a topic in a blog or on YouTube, it is quite possible that others who choose to join the discussion may find different meaning in the same text. This is consistent with how Bakhtin (1981) emphasises that discursive meaning is not created in isolation. It is an ongoing process involving dialogue between individuals enacting language in response to previously established meaning and in anticipation of future meanings.

If we accept then that crowdsourcing has emerged as a form of dialogue within social media, where meaning is collectively constructed, it follows that one reason this phenomenon has become so successful is because of its focus on the individual voice in a collective forum. As pointed out by Kent (n.d.), “Social media revolve around what is essentially a central tenet of dialogue: the value of the individual.” and there is likely great potential among highly interactive media such as blog and micro blogging sites, to offer opportunities for rich dialogue. One specific area where there are some interesting examples of this potential is a specific type of crowdsourcing: crowdfunding.

Crowdfunding, one specific form of crowdsourcing, occurs to a great extent through blogs and micro blogs such as Twitter. It has developed out of a model of individual commitment leading through dialogue to collective action. Crowdfunding is a poignant example of meaning constructed through dialogue, as the participants in these conversations are essentially enacting emerging meaning and subsequent identity by providing funds in support of an initiative. This form of fundraising has proven to be successful in some situations, creating engaged communities participating in what is typically a socially-minded action.

Social Activism and Action

Crowdfunding is a growing phenomenon in North America and Europe, and an area of great interest to entrepreneurs and non-profit organizations. Essentially, it provides a social media channel to investment and development. In most cases, this investment has a social action component, to support local business, or help a community development initiative. And it has emerged to a great extent as a response to the limited investment capital available to small entrepreneurs after the stock market upheaval of the last decade.

Crowdfunding happens exclusively through social media networks, and in many ways mirrors examples of social activism that are taking place through those same channels. As (Kahn & Kellner, 2004) point out, there has been a surge of grassroots movements attempting to carry out “globalization from below” in opposition to “the capitalist strategy of globalization-from-above”. (p. 89). And the individuals and groups engaged in this type of activism are not necessarily the traditional activist organizations. “As the virtual community theorist Howard Rheingold notes (2002), advances in personal, mobile informational technology are providing rapidly the structural elements for the existence of fresh kinds of highly-informed, autonomous communities that coalesce around local lifestyle choices, global political demands, and everything in between.” (Hammer & Kellner, 2009, p. 89).

Crowdfunding is an interesting example to consider, given the focus upon finance within a dialogic framework. The provision of financial resources is typically centered upon a specific type of instrumental rationalization. Indeed this type of quantifiable realm for optimization is hallmark of modern finance based decision making situated in a scientific management. If we are to consider the paradigmatic reframing of crowdsourcing, the specific area of crowdfunding is a poignant place to start.

Warehouse Expansion

One regional example of a very successful crowdfunding campaign comes from the Brooklyn Warehouse in Halifax. When traditional forms of financing a renovation and expansion were not

accessible to the owners of this restaurant, they reached out through social media to launch a crowdfunding project. The owners made an arrangement with their landlord to share the costs of adding a porch front addition to the restaurant. Through crowdfunding, they set out to raise \$30,000 in 60 days to cover their share of the costs. When the project closed in February 2012, they had engaged 116 backers and raised over \$23,000 to result in 77.3% funding of the project.

As described in print media coverage of the project:

Crowd-funding project is an alternative to conventional financing and a feel-good way for customers to pool their resources, support the restaurant's expansion and reap the rewards through good food. Donors can pitch in anywhere from \$10 to \$2,500 and will receive in turn an equally valued meal, company clothing or permanent recognition on a wall of supporters to be constructed in the Halifax restaurant.

Restaurant co-owner Leo Christakos said, "We were literally bursting at the seams and it was time for us to do something with our business." So they decided to replace the restaurant's summer patio with a permanent, all-season atrium and nearly double the seating capacity. He added, "The interest that we'd pay back to a bank and the interest that we're currently paying to our landlord — who has helped us fund the construction — is high, so instead of borrowing that money to fund it, we'd rather pay that back to our customers in good food and good taste."

"It's meant to be a positive process and the feel-good aspect should be there.

"We're offering back good will and we're building a sense of community because the donor is becoming part of the process. They're making the decision to support what you're doing and they want to see you succeed." (Cosgrove, 2011)

The media report above highlights both the idea of joining an emerging community, but importantly also show how the optimization of financial resources is part of the dialogue that enables such a community to emerge. This is not a private loan process, but rather an open and transparent discussion about resources needed for organizational growth and becoming part of something through the creation of meaning. If "angel" investing is about people with money looking for investment opportunities, then this is about people having dialogue about the need for financing, making community, and then this translating into financial support.

We earlier linked crowdfunding, dialogue and certain types of social media usage. In the case of the Brooklyn Warehouse example we are investigating, we see evidence of such social media usage. Below is the blog post² that launched the crowdfunding project, engaging participants through social media:

"Hey!
We're at it again.
Changing all the rules.

We are inviting you, the Fans of The Brooklyn Warehouse, to our crowdfunding blog with the hope that you can afford a small (or large) donation in an effort to fund the patio expansion currently underway and in return, receive a nice tasty reward for your support.

² From the Brooklyn warehouse blog at <http://brooklynwarehouse.ca/wordpress/?p=1400>

Not many people know about Crowdfunding so we've taken the time to explain how it works and what it's all about. One aspect about a successful crowdfunding campaign is that it must rely on you, not only to donate, but also to get the word out to others; it's basically word-of-mouth, which is how we built our business in the first place.

So, jump in and check out the campaign, see if any of the rewards fit your budget and appetite; and don't forget to donate! Follow the blog, make your comments or add a backer's post. Then, send the link as an invitation to people in your social network that you think would find this site, the rewards, or The Brooklyn Warehouse something worth looking at. Check It Out! http://brooklynhfx.blogspot.com/p/about-this-project_17.html

Thanks for your support!
Leo, George & the Crew"

In this case, the crowdfunding project offered community members a chance to embrace a non-traditional response to raising capital. The social benefits of the project were as important as the value exchanged in terms of food for investments. This community-minded action reflects a growing dialogue on a larger scale in terms of "Mainstreet versus Wallstreet".

Interestingly, the Brooklyn Warehouse has recently proposed some collective meals in response to requests from crowdfunding investors. In basic terms, individuals are interested in meeting and sharing a meal with others who participated in the project. This transference from social media, to a social gathering is an interesting development in the dialogue around this project.

In the case of the Brooklyn Warehouse, geographic community appears to be important. Many individuals posting on the blog indicated support for a local restaurant in their local community. However, engagement in a crowdfunding community does not necessarily require geographic proximity. In fact, one of the advantages of the medium involved is that distance doesn't matter.

Move to the Front of the Bus

In another recent example of crowdfunding, a bus monitor from New York State was given over \$700,000 after a three day campaign to fund a vacation. The background in this case involves four grade seven boys bullying a 68 year old bus monitor while another student captured the incident on video. The video went viral on YouTube and caught the attention of an individual who was horrified by what happened. He started a crowdfunding campaign to raise some money to send to the victim of the bullying, raising approximately 700,000 in just three days. The outpouring of generosity for Ms. Klein was accompanied by comments about how some of those who contributed had been bullied themselves, or knew of someone who had been bullied. The very personal message that individual contributors took from this case led to a very rapidly growing and committed community of support for the victim.

The outcome, \$700,000, was well beyond what the organizer had envisioned. He set up the crowdfunding venture to raise \$5,000 to send Ms Klein on a "nice vacation". But the dialogue that followed produced such an overwhelming response that now Ms Klein plans to retire. And a corporate donor, Southwest Airlines, has provided a vacation as well.³

This example offers another view of the crowdfunding phenomenon. Not only are the participants geographically dispersed, they are also not a pre existing community of any sort. The

³ <http://news.nationalpost.com/2012/06/22/fund-for-bullied-grandmother-karen-klein-surpasses-half-a-million-dollars/>

commonality in this case is that the construct of bullying is a temporally and geographically shared experience; a community of people across time and space who are only linked and then activated into action through interactive media offering a chance for unanticipated dialogue.

Becoming Awesome

The first examples of crowdfunding we offered include the funding of an expansion of business capacity and one which might be thought of as a charity effort. Our last example from Halifax is the “awesome phenomenon”. This example is important because it involves outsourcing of financing with an overarching goal not related to productivity or charity, areas which seem obvious matches for crowdfunding efforts. In the case of Awesome Halifax, it’s all about capturing a nebulous, subjective, aesthetic sense of “awesomeness”.

From the Awesome Halifax website⁴:

“The Awesome Foundation isn’t your average foundation. We’re not a charity or a not-for-profit. We’re a group of local citizens who simply believe that the world, and specifically our city, needs more awesome. And we’re opening our own wallets to help Haligonians make that happen.

In total, there are 30 of us. Together, we are the Trustees of Awesome. Every month 10 Trustees get together and chip in \$100 to form a grant of \$1,000. Our groups of 10 rotate every month so that each of us gets to help make awesome happen four times a year.

Defining Awesome

So what exactly constitutes awesome? Truthfully...we don’t really know. That’s partly what makes this Foundation so great. But there is some general criteria that we’ve come up with to help define it. For us, awesome ideas have all or some combination of the following qualities. They are:

- 1. Memorable*
- 2. Random/unexpected/out of the norm*
- 3. Positive or will yield positive outcomes*
- 4. Unique or take a unique twist on something common*
- 5. Smile-worthy (the idea makes many people smile)*
- 6. Awesome for more than just you*
- 7. Worthy of the statement “Yes! That’s awesome!”*

The statement that the group does not know what “awesome” is but nevertheless wants to nurture it is important. It becomes clear that dialogue conflated with action is the only way through which meaning can be negotiated in this self-admitted vacuum of definition. This is an action of dialogue with instrumental outcomes that precludes atomization of individuals and indeed of community actions. This is a “we’ll know awesome when we do it” rather than “I know awesome when I see it” approach.

⁴ <http://awesomahalifax.com>

CONCLUSIONS

Social media provides a forum for community building in the form of crowdsourcing, and specifically within crowdfunding. Although this phenomenon initially began as an exercise in corporate efficiency – outsourcing to a crowd – the true value of crowdsourcing is now emerging in the potential for community building as individuals construct collective identities within networked communities through dialogue.

Examples of recent crowdfunding success stories provide insight into the importance of authentic community building opportunities through crowdsourcing networks. In strong networks such as the bus monitor story, the geographical community was very dispersed, but the personalized message, the way in which individuals could authentically identify with the story, created a great deal of support and significant resulting funds. In the example of the Halifax Brooklyn Warehouse, the community was certainly more geographically based. But the personal connections – a sense of belonging to the restaurant, and to the community it serves, facilitated the commitment needed to successfully fund the renovations. And the fact that the contributors are now interested in meeting and eating together in the physical space they helped to create, speaks to the strength of that collective identity. In the example of Awesome Halifax, we see a particular case where the sense of community is strong but the desired instrumental outcomes are near impossible to articulate until the network actually embarks upon collective action.

As illustrated in Bakhtins' theory of Dialogism, it is the conversation that creates the meaning. The community emerges as meaningful from the network. Not as an output in an efficient strategic process, but as a collective identity which is enacted in the form of shared ideas... visible as feedback, funding, or activism. Our examples, when viewed through dialogism, stand in stark contrast to Turkle's lament for both individual identity and community when she highlights the atomization and collective alienation of individuals through technology in her book *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (2011). Community arises out of dialogue, forged in meaning. Transparent and informed use of certain media may be enabled out of a scientific management style of instrumental rationality, but certainly do not seem doomed to be constrained by it.

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UNDERSTANDING WORK-LIFE BALANCE THROUGH EXISTENTIALISM

This paper examines the dilemma of work-life balance and how we can make sense of the choices people make in the quest for a happy and meaningful life. The relationship between work and non-work activities is complex especially today as devoting oneself to work seems to have become the path to a meaningful life for many people. One way to make sense of how people navigate their lives is through Existential philosophy. Existential concepts including death, contingency, situatedness, choice, authenticity and bad faith can be used to understand the relationship between an individual's work and non-work life, and how the pieces of a life fit together.

INTRODUCTION

Reflecting on the meaning of life may be spurred by psychological crisis but it may also arise from an acute awareness that Henry David Thoreau was correct: most people do lead lives of quiet desperation. (Bellioti, 2001, p. 10)

Work, be it a necessary evil due to the financial imperative or our first love, seems to be one of the most important determinants of whether a person considers his or her life to be meaningful. "Work is the most common experience of adult life... some love it, others hate it, but few of us are able to avoid it... because we spend two-thirds of our waking life on the job, work is the way we come to know the world and are known to the world... work becomes our identity, our signature on the world... to work is to be and not to work is not to be" (Gini, 2000, p. ix). However, ultimately the pieces that make up a life, especially one's work life, must fit coherently together in order for one to feel that life is meaningful. Albert Camus' legendary Myth of Sisyphus demonstrated what could arguably be the predicament of the human condition in relation to work, but also in life in general. Sisyphus is condemned by the Gods to push a stone up a hill only to have it roll back down, and this continues forever (Camus, 1967). Although some people love their work and their life, a Sisyphian picture of the futile life is undoubtedly the case for many others, whether they would choose to admit it or not. For a significant number of people, life and work can be mostly daily drudgery, a treadmill of existence they are compelled to run upon, and from which they gradually watch time and their life pass by.

There is a growing concern of the inadequate balance between one's work life and non-work life (Bunting, 2004; Clark, 2000; Ciulla, 2000; Judge et al., 2006; Nippert-Eng, 1996). In the recent past, work and home have been viewed as two separate spheres of life, but it is becoming increasingly apparent that what happens in one can significantly affect the other. As has been frequently pointed out, life is an unpredictable journey and we are not given a set of rules on how to make choices and live our lives. "Meaningful work isn't just about the meaning of the paid work we perform; it's about the way we live our lives... it's the alignment of purpose, values, relationships, and activities that we pursue in life" (Chalofsky, 2003, p. 58). Since a life is made up of various parts, work is only one of potentially many "places" where meaning is created or found. To make sense of the puzzle of work-life balance we can use existential philosophy to provide a way to understand individual existence and how choices are made in

the pursuit of the meaningful life.

In this paper we first discuss the meaningful life and the nature of work including the challenge of work-life balance. Then we outline how existentialism can be used to bridge these two areas and thus make sense of the work-life balance discussion.

THE MEANINGFUL LIFE

The question of what makes up a meaningful life has baffled philosophers and lay people alike for centuries, dating back to the days of Socrates and Plato (Baird, 1985; Baumeister, 1991; Belliotti, 2001; Klemke, 2000). Is meaning discovered? Is meaning created? Is there any meaning at all? The question of meaning is of much greater concern now in Western society due to the more critical, questioning nature of people, the general effects of scientific discovery, longer life-spans, a better economic situation for many, and critical world events such as the 9-11 attacks (Baumeister, 1991; Cottingham, 2003; Eagleton, 2007; Gems, 2003; Hanfling, 1989; King & Nicol, 1999; Wrzesniewski, 2002). The question of meaning is particularly poignant due to the gap which has been left from a diminishing emphasis on religion for many people. "For most of human history no one had to search for the spiritual in their lives...at the core of every culture was a religion, with sacred times and places set aside for public rituals...for many these holy places are less and less familiar today" (Fairholm, 1996, p. 17). Additionally, the events of September 11, 2001 in the United States had a significant impact upon many individuals. Since 9-11 many are re-evaluating their lives and their work, as they search for a deeper meaning in life, more than just achieving career success (Garcia-Zamor, 2003; Howard, 2002; Weiss, Skelley, Haughey, & Hall, 2004; Wrzesniewski, 2002).

Historically, for most people meaning has been based on a religious belief, living a "good life," and honoring a greater power, with the hope of a utopian afterlife. Others, such as Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, have held a nihilistic perspective, i.e., that there is no meaning to be found and that the question itself is absurd (Belliotti, 2001; Schopenhauer, 2000). "That human life must be some kind of mistake is sufficiently proved by the simple observation that man is a compound of needs which are hard to satisfy; that their satisfaction achieves nothing but a painless condition in which he is only given to boredom; and that boredom is direct proof that existence is in itself valueless, for boredom is nothing other than the sensation of the emptiness of existence" (Schopenhauer, 2000, p. 69). Still others argue that if meaning is to be found in life, it must be created by the individual (Metz, 2001). Some note that meaning is only temporary, and that people continually fluctuate between boredom and fleeting feelings of fulfillment (Schlick, 1989).

Most philosophers agree that a universal meaning of life does not exist, because meaning is only in the eyes of the beholder and can therefore vary greatly (Belliotti, 2001; Frankl, 1985). "There is no such thing as a universal meaning of life but only the unique meanings of the individual situations" (Frankl, 1985, p. 55). They would also agree that in order for a life to be meaningful, it is necessary that the individual feels that his or her life is meaningful (Baird, 1985). It does not matter how the life is judged by others, only how it is perceived by the individual. Frankl (1985) argues that meaning can be found in any activity, even within the concentration camps of Nazi Germany in which he was a prisoner. Some philosophers contend that meaning must be discovered, like finding buried treasure – which implies that it is out there somewhere to be found by each individual. Creating meaning, on the other hand, implies that meaning is made, built, or crafted (Baird, 1985). For Baumeister (1991), a meaningful life is made up of purpose, value, efficacy and self-worth, and that when all four of these factors are met, life is meaningful. Wohlgennant (1989) defines meaning "as a feeling that human beings generally have when they achieve a sufficient number of objectives that they have set themselves, or when they can bring about the realization of values they recognize" (p. 35).

The search for meaning is clearly dependent on the conditions of a person's life, as not everyone has the same choices about how he or she is to live. Some people are not in a position to pay much attention to the deeper issues of meaning as they are consumed with basic survival (Baumeister, 1991; Maslow, 1943). This is especially true of those living in the developing world but also applies to many in the developed world as well. "Desperate people do not ponder the meaning of life. When survival is at stake, when the events of each day or each hour carry a sense of urgency, life's meaning is irrelevant... meaning of life is a problem for people who are not desperate, people who can count on survival, comfort, security, and some measure of pleasure" (Baumeister, 1991, p. 3). This fits with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory which can be viewed on a continuum with survival needs at one end and self-actualization or a meaningful life at the other end (Maslow, 1943). This continuum however should not imply that a life devoted to survival cannot still be meaningful. They are not mutually exclusive and in fact a focus on survival can make a life meaningful given such a clear and present purpose. However, it seems that the question of meaning is a greater concern today because many people have more time to dwell on it.

There appears to be a paradox currently taking place in Western society – an increasing trend toward superficiality (materialism, celebrity worship, internet obsession), and at the same time, there are indications that people are also hungering for a more meaningful existence. Despite great advances in medical care and technology, and a much higher average standard of living, general well-being and happiness levels have not changed in decades (Easterbrook, 2003; Myers, 2000; Seligman, 2002). Anxiety, depressions, use of medication, and suicide levels have, in fact, all dramatically increased, and meaning has become increasingly attached to security, comfort, consumption and material gain (Cottingham, 2003; Easterbrook, 2003; Fromm, 1955, 1976; Handy, 1994; Myers, 2000; Wattanasuwan, 2005; Whalen, 1999).

The belief that increased wealth and materialism along with the resulting greater security and comfort would be the path to fulfillment and happiness has not materialized. "The great self-confidence of the Western technological nations, and especially of the United States, was in large part because of the belief that materialism – the prolongation of a healthy life, the acquisition of wealth, the ownership of consumer goods – would be the royal road to a happy life" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999, p. 822). However, the emphasis on materialism, physical comfort, and safety has resulted in what some are calling a "meaning deficit" within both the individual and society (Fox, 1994; Fromm, 1976; Maslow, 1971; Needleman, 1991). "Self-actualization tendencies must compete with many other tendencies as man proceeds to make his own nature...conceivably, man may evolve in such a way as to lose his self-actualization drive and diminish his potential" (Greening, 1971, p. 9). Fromm (1976) notes, "we are a society of notoriously unhappy people: lonely, anxious, depressed, destructive, dependent – people who are glad when we have killed the time we are trying to save" (p. 5). We have become accustomed to a rather mundane existence, resulting in a loss of self but we still long for a different existence (Gaarder, 1994, p. 15). Frankl (1985) emphasizes that the problem is that people do not know how to live in this world and face what he refers to as an "existential vacuum." "No instinct tells him what he has to do, and no tradition tells him what he ought to do; sometimes he does not even know what he wishes to do. Instead, he either wishes to do what other people do (conformism) or he does what other people wish him to do (totalitarianism)" (Frankl, 1985, p. 128). Therefore, despite unparalleled technological and material progress, finding meaning is difficult especially when it comes to work.

It is clear that there are no absolute answers when it comes to the meaningful life; that a meaningful life is determined by how the individual subjectively experiences and constructs his or her "puzzle of life," and therefore makes sense of his or her life. This highlights the need to understand the relationship between work and non-work and how they fit together to form a life.

WORK

Over the centuries work has changed substantially, and today, globalization, technology, and a shift to a service economy are rapidly altering the nature of work, with the consequence that the distinction between work lives and non-work lives has become blurred (Fox, 1994; Handy, 1984; Law et al., 2002; Moen, 1998; Ransome, 1996). For many people, their work community is the most important community that they belong to even replacing family, church and social groups (Fairholm, 1996). Despite the increased importance of leisure in recent years, it is “still secondary to work” (Mutlu & Asik, 2002, p. 19).

Work provides the economic means to live, however it can also be an avenue to fulfill social needs, shape self-identity, influence status and self-esteem, be an outlet for creative expression, a means of growth, and a major source of fulfillment in life or what Maslow termed “self-actualization” (Ciulla, 2000; Gini, 2000; Handy, 1984; Karp & Yoels, 1981; Law et al., 2002; Maslow, 1971; Moen, 1998; MOW International Research Team, 1987; Mutlu & Asik, 2002; Ransome, 1996; Rinehart, 2006; Seligman, 2002). Put differently: “People work for money – but they work even more for meaning in their lives” (Pfeffer, 1998, p. 112). The importance of work has grown significantly to the extent that some people now frame work within a religious context, and the organization that they work for acts as a secular religion (Ashforth & Vaidyanath, 2002; Bell & Taylor, 2004; Bowles, 1989; Herman, 2002). Ransome (1996, p. 53) argues that, “Work constitutes a crucial manifestation of the basic human need of expression through action.” Scholars are increasingly arguing that a person’s work is strongly connected to his or her life and that work “cannot be understood apart from the whole” (Hughes, 1997: 389). Mutlu and Asik (2002, p. 18) contend that, “self-actualization is the outcome of an unending process of development and could also be realized through work.” No matter how work is viewed, it is clear that for most people it is a major component of what defines them as human beings (Karp & Yoels, 1981; Law et al., 2002; Moen, 1998), and is an integral part of who we are, i.e., the “whole person” (Fairholm, 1996). In short, “We find our identities and our meanings only within communities, and for most of us that means at work, in a company or an institution” (Solomon, 2004, p. 1028). Many scholars have noted the increased connection between career and life (Law et al., 2002), and Fox (1994) has gone so far as to argue that work should be redefined within the context of humanity’s place in the world. Work, then, can either significantly contribute to or detract from the individual’s quest for a meaningful existence.

Unfortunately, however, organizational mergers, downsizing, technology, acquisitions and strategic alliances have resulted in employees spending less time with one organization, many people having periods of unemployment, an increased trend toward contingent and part-time work, and people having multiple careers, all of which creates stress to individual workers (Nachbagauer & Riedl, 2002; Ransome, 1996; Rifkin, 1995; Turner, Barling, & Zacharatos, 2005; Zikic & Richardson, 2007). The ‘job for life’ concept of the past has now become obsolete for many people (Collin & Young, 2000; Hall, 1996). Additionally, many workplaces are being described as “toxic environments” with a variety of problems for employees: high levels of stress, depression, feelings of being treated unfairly, bullying, burnout, low productivity, high absenteeism, turnover, workaholism, and work-related health problems (Browne, 2002; Bunting, 2004; Gini, 2000; Goldthorpe, 1968; Jamal & Baba, 2000; Kelloway & Day, 2005; Kimura, 2003; Korman, 2001; Leiter & Maslach, 2001; Lerner, Levine, Malspeis & Agostino, 1994; Malakh-Pines & Aronson, 1988; Turner et al., 2005).

There are a multitude of ways to consider the role and meaning of work in a life, predictably resulting in a lack of agreement on the topic: “That work has been arbitrarily privileged over other forms of activity and discourse in contemporary Western societies has not led to any consensus about the meaning of work nor about the orientations that workers conventionally have about work” (Grint, 2005, p. 24). One intriguing method to determine the importance of work which has emerged in recent years, is the

Job-Career-Calling model outlined in *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Bellah et al., 1985). In this model, work can be viewed in three different ways with very different outcomes and potential influences on a meaningful life. A “Job” is work done just for the money. It is not necessarily something people enjoy and in fact may be something that they actively dislike. What is important is the income from the job that is needed to live. Individuals are not very invested in such work and it is not where they find happiness or meaning. Most of us have had to do this kind of work at sometime in our working lives. A “Career” is about much more than money. It is work where there is much greater investment of time, money, and emotion. People in careers want ongoing growth and development and envision a productive future in that work, whatever it is, whether their career is as a lawyer, teacher, or janitor. They want their work to be something that they enjoy and are much more attached to a career than a job. It is a significant part of self-identity, and research shows it significantly impacts on the ability to find meaning in life (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, & Rozin, 1997). Lastly, there is work that would be considered a calling. A “Calling” is work that people would do even if they had no need for money or that they would do for free. It is work that they feel incredibly drawn to and that they feel is their life purpose. It is the number one source of their sense of self and meaning in life. Callings do not have to be religious conversions, though that is primarily from where the term originates. A Calling, by definition, means that the work is of such importance to the individual that it no longer feels like “work.” The Job-Career-Calling model helps us understand the importance of work in an individual’s life but it has been subjected to limited research, and the research has been predominantly quantitative. The model helps in the examination of how people orient themselves to their work according to the three categories. It illuminates the varying degrees of investment a person has in their work and suggests a hierarchy of satisfaction, i.e., less for job, more for calling. It also suggests that it may be possible to reframe the understanding of one’s work and therefore result in increased work satisfaction.

Adding a new voice to the dialogue concerning the meaning of work is the ‘Spirituality and Work’ movement. The topic of spirituality and work first appeared in the early-1990s and has grown quickly over the past fifteen years (Dalton, 2001; Elmes & Smith, 2001; Fox, 2003; Fox, 1994; Garcia-Zamor, 2003; Gibbons, 2000; Harrington et al., 2001; Howard, 2002; Lips-Wiersma, 2002, 2004; McCormick, 1994; Mitroff & Denton, 1999a; Ottaway, 2003; Tischler, 1999). This interest in spirituality and work has resulted in a plethora of research, a presence at academic business conferences, and consulting businesses. Spirituality and work is viewed from many perspectives and has been defined in a variety of ways. Some scholars regard it from a religious perspective, i.e., bringing God into work practices, while others view it from a secular perspective. This secular spirituality perspective is well described by Harrington et al.: “Spirituality at work is not about religious beliefs...it is about people who perceive themselves as spirited beings, whose spirit needs energizing at work. It is about experiencing real purpose and meaning in their work beyond paychecks and task performance” (Harrington et al., 2001, p. 155). Dalton (2001) maintains that “it is possible to speak of spirituality as a universal human activity because life is filled with experiences that drive us to question and seek answers on the meaning and purpose of existence” (p. 18). Further, Mitroff and Denton (1999b) define spirituality “as the basic feeling of being connected with one’s complete self, others, and the entire universe” (p. 83). No matter how it is defined, it is clear that spirituality in the workplace is an attempt to bridge the gap between work and the overall pursuit of a meaningful life.

Of course, no discussion of one’s work life and meaning would be complete without considering adult development and the problems of turning points or crisis times that we may encounter as we age. A person at age forty may view his or her life very differently than when he or she was thirty or twenty years of age, and therefore we need to include in our discussion the topic of adult development, and especially the adult lifecycle: “Most men undergo a mid-life change in style of work and living. Early adulthood produces qualities of strength, quickness, endurance, and output. Middle adulthood is a season when other qualities can ripen: wisdom, judiciousness, magnanimity, unsentimental compassion, breadth of perspective, the tragic sense” (Levinson, 1978, p. 25-26). As an individual changes, so too may his or

her relationship to work. The research on adult development indicates that there are “turning points” in a life; the “mid-life” crisis and in more recent years, the “quarterlife” crisis (Robbins, 2008; Thorspecken, 2005). Crisis points in life have been described as key times in a person’s life when he or she is struggling with major choices that affect their life, especially as it pertains to meaning. “Emerging adults experiencing the quarterlife crisis might be searching for relief from confusion as to which path in life to follow” (Butler, 2005, p. 65) and especially of interest to scholars has been the middle stage of adulthood, this being when many people seriously reflect upon their life: “As a person enters the Mid-life Transition, he or she is likely to review his/her progress and ask: ‘What have I done? Where am I now? Of what value is my life to society, to other persons, and especially to myself?’...he must deal with the disparity between what he has dreamed of becoming” (Levinson, 1978, p. 30). Interestingly, the mid-life years are frequently also a time when people experience a career plateau (Nachbagauer & Riedl, 2002). It is then when people may change their expectations for their life prompting them to seek out mid-career renewal (Grierson, 2007; Hollis, 2008; Leider, 1976).

The interplay between a life lived and considered, the role of work in such a life and then the implications of providing for a sense of meaningfulness in that life are the concerns we bring to this paper concerning work life balance. To bridge between work and non-work aspects of this discussion, and help us understand how individuals make sense of their lives we propose an informed use of Existential philosophy.

EXISTENTIALISM

Existential philosophy provides compelling insights into the nature of the individual self, the circumstances and dilemmas of everyday life, and in particular, it gives us a way to view the creation of individual meaning, i.e., the *authentic life* in existential terms. Existentialism “attempts to understand how events in life fit into a larger context...involves the process of creating and discovering meaning, which is facilitated by a sense of coherence (order, reason for existence) and a sense of purpose (mission in life, direction)” (Reker & Chamberlain, 2000, p. 1). Existential philosophy can arguably be traced back to Socrates when he famously stated that a key problem of humanity was a lack of self-examination - “the unexamined life is not worth living.” However, the initiator of existentialism, as we know it today, is considered to be Soren Kierkegaard, as he was reportedly the first to reject the emphasis on universalism in favor of a focus on the individual - “my listeners, do you at present live in such a way that you are yourself clearly and eternally conscious of being an individual?” (Kierkegaard, 1956, p. 195) Since Kierkegaard, many others have contributed to our understanding of existential philosophy – Buber (1958, 1967), Husserl (1967, 1970), Nietzsche (1974, 1990, 1999), Camus (1967b, 1972), Jaspers (1957, 1969), Marcel (1949a, 1949b, 1950), Heidegger (1967), Sartre (1956, 1962, 1970, 1975), Beauvoir (1983), Tillich (1952) and Frankl (1978, 1985), each providing his or her own unique perspective (Collins, 1952; Cotkin, 2003; MacDonald, 2001; Reynolds, 2006; Wahl, 1969). Despite existentialism’s ancient history, it is more recently rooted in nineteenth century Europe and only really came into prominence in the twentieth century following the end of World War II (Allen, 1973; Barrett, 1962; Cotkin, 2003; Tanzer, 2008). After the war, Europe went through a long period of recovery and the general population experienced profound feelings of confusion, questioning, and disillusionment with religion and other social institutions, and were therefore, looking for a philosophical direction (Breisach, 1962; Cotkin, 2003; Reynolds, 2006). Heidegger, Sartre, and other philosophers provided answers and direction for individual life through their existential philosophy.

Existentialism is based on the premise that “existence precedes essence” – that people are thrown into the world and simply exist, and their essence is created through the lives they choose to live. The emphasis of existentialism is on the individual’s experience with life and not on a preconceived human nature. As Sartre famously explained: “What do we mean by saying that existence precedes essence...we

mean that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards” (Sartre, 1970, p. 28). This puts the onus, and hence responsibility, on the individual and how he or she chooses to live life. This notion of the individual creating meaning is quite different from the belief that humanity has a pre-determined essence (see Locke, Hobbes, or Rousseau) or that it is for example the mode of production that creates man’s essence (Marx & Engels, 1963; 1968), although Sartre was willing to strongly consider the latter possibility in *Search for a Method* (1963). In existentialism, essence and therefore meaning is created by the individual on an on-going basis throughout his or her life.

Although there are many types of existentialism, there is general agreement that existentialism is focused on how the individual self creates meaning in a chaotic world (Barnes, 1959; Breisach, 1962; Reinhardt, 1960; Reynolds, 2006; Sartre, 1956, 1970; Wahl, 1969). Existential thought highlights the enormous possibilities of human existence and what can “be” for individual life; the focus is on individual *Being* and the reflexive *Self* that is always being constituted. For the Existentialists, “Wherever man has seen his life and his world as infinitely possible, as infinitely variable, as infinitely problematic, there existentialism exists as a region of the mind” (Karl & Hamalian, 1974, p.13) and “philosophy is essentially the study of Being” (Wahl, 1969, p. 95), thereby broaching the question of what it means to exist. “Existence is reached most immediately and certainly in the existing self, although not even the existentialists can settle among themselves upon the exact nature of this self as revealed in a primary inspection” (Collins, 1952, p.196).

APPLYING EXISTENTIALISM TO WORK-LIFE BALANCE

People are border-crossers who make daily transitions between two worlds – the world of work and the world of family. People shape these worlds, mold the borders between them, and determine the border-crosser’s relationship to that world and its members. Though people shape their environments, they are, in turn, shaped by them. (Clark, 2000, p. 748)

In what at times seems a chaotic variety of concepts proposed by the existential philosophers, there are nonetheless six major existential concepts that are discernable and aid in understanding how work and non-work spheres of life intertwine. These concepts are death, contingency, situated, choice, authenticity and bad faith.

Death

Life is a limited experience, as all of us will die at some point. Death’s significance, for the existentialist, is that the recognition of death causes “anguish” as death ends all possibilities for the individual and rarely does a person know when their death will occur (Tillich, 1952). This has become increasingly important in Existential psychotherapy, a psychotherapeutic practice which “seeks to bring to the person’s living awareness consciousness of the non-being aspects of his potential” (Bugental, 1965: 15); that is, accepting the limits of one’s death gives meaning and finite boundaries to one’s life. This condition gives rise to the term used by German philosophers (such as Nietzsche and Heidegger) for the aware and temporally situated person, *Dasein*: “*Dasein*, Heidegger has told us, is always ahead of itself, always poised before possibilities as yet unrealized.... but there is for *Dasein* a final possibility, a possibility to end all possibilities, namely death” (Inwood, 1997, p. 69). For Heidegger, therefore, there are three reasons for people to focus on death to help give meaning to life: (1) the knowledge of death helps to shape life; (2) the awareness of impending death gives freedom of action, and; (3) death forces us to focus on time as it puts an end to possibility (Harman, 2007; Inwood, 1997).

Death is the only certainty in life. All living organisms die; there is no exception. However, human beings alone are burdened with the cognitive capacity to be aware of their own inevitable mortality and to fear what may come afterwards. (Wong, 2008, p. 65)

Heidegger states, “it is only in full...awareness of our own mortality that life can take on any purposive meaning” (Stokes, 2002, p. 151), but the importance of death goes far beyond just inevitability, for “There is nothing timeless about man; on the contrary, he is time-riven” (Harper, 1972, p. 48). The awareness of time passing and inevitable death, reinforces the need for individuals to make choices and not to “put off” life as some may be inclined to do, not recognizing that time is ticking away on their mortality each day. Solomon (1974, p. xiii) notes, “a threat of imminent death – or even a passing thought of our mortality – is sufficient to wrench us out of our current involvements – even if but for a moment – and force us to look at our lives.”

From an existential perspective, the individual’s awareness of death affects the urgency of his or her choices throughout life, and therefore affects how time is viewed. A recognition of one’s mortality should increase awareness that time is limited, and, that at the moment at least, they have freedom to live life as they see fit. “Death is potentially (as awareness and meditation) an incentive to dedicate oneself to what matters, to ignore the trivial and to start living an authentic life” (Tomer & Eliason, 2008a, p. 11). One’s awareness of death will be a major influence on the degree of urgency with which one views life and therefore makes their choices. Some people treat death as an objective experience, i.e., everyone dies and so I can distance myself from that thought, whereas the existentialist challenge is to treat death as subjective, and focus on death as innermost experience, i.e., the end of your existence. This is profoundly difficult as we are busy living our lives and view death as an abstraction, a concern that is far in the future. However, people can face their impending death and use this as motivation toward a more meaningful existence. Given our focus upon work life balance, death is especially useful to put life in perspective when it comes to viewing work and non-work activities.

Of course, for most of us the timing of death is a mystery; it can come at any time. It can appear gradually in our old age or it can be thrust upon us suddenly and unexpectedly and “Purely rational thought, though it can explain the causes of death in scientific terms, can never account for the fact that we can die at any moment and are beings who, in any case, must die sooner or later. The length of our lives seems to be fixed in a purely arbitrary way which, being inexplicable, defeat the powers of reason” (Roubiczek, 1964, p. 113). Consequently, we cannot plan our lives with certainty and the person who delays doing what he or she would really like to do in life until retirement may find themselves out of luck. Many people are counting down the years until they retire so that they can then take part in activities that would be very rewarding to them. However this strategy is dependent on them maintaining good health, and may, in the end prove to be the wrong strategy depending on how their future unfolds. This leads to our discussion to the second pertinent theme of the existential philosophers, contingency.

Contingency

Human existence is contingent; little of life can be predicted with certainty, and therefore, the struggle to live a meaningful, authentic life is “contingent” on many factors. “Contingency flows away from us on every side as though our every act were a stone dropped in a pond. Our smallest acts, our most casual choices, have the potential of reaching to any point in their consequences. We can never imagine all the possible permutations and ramifications of our doing and not doing” (Bugental, 1965, p. 297). Since our existence is continually evolving and the self is changing, what may be meaningful at one point in time may have little or no meaning at a different point in time. Therefore, the effect of one’s work may be very different as we go through the aging process. Bugental (1965, p. 40) states, “Man lives in contingency...can and does take action that affects his awareness and experience...takes such action

without ultimate guide posts of universal values or built-in instincts...in constant relation with his fellows while yet being separate from them.” Despite efforts to live authentically, it is difficult for most people as many events seem beyond their control. Therefore, slipping into “bad faith” is always a potential danger, and shadows every person’s existence. For example, an occupation may be meaningful for many years for an individual but later in life hold little interest besides the salary; unfortunately, a typical situation for many people (Grierson, 2007; Hollis, 1993). Each day people are faced with a variety of choices and possibilities; many of which they are fearful of and which cause anxiety, since the results could be positive or negative.

Such dilemmas highlight the challenge for the individual as he or she lives, for it is not enough to choose what one’s existence is at a particular point in time. Instead, the search for meaningful existence is never-ending as people move along the continuum of their life, continually ‘interpreting’ (or re-interpreting) the world around them, thus creating themselves, while at the same time needing to make sense of unforeseen events, e.g., the recent financial crisis. The challenge is to confront one’s contingency and accept the uncertainty which is one’s life; because, ultimately, we can not anticipate these events and must accept the ‘unknown’ nature of the human existence.

Choice

Since we are conscious and free, we can choose our lives, and thus we bear ultimate responsibility for our lives (Breisach, 1962; Bugental, 1965; Reinhardt, 1960; Reynolds, 2006; Solomon, 1972). For the individual, then, life is a purely subjective experience and therefore, of primary importance is how choices and actions (and the subsequent results of those choices and actions) are interpreted, and affect the self. Sartre argues that, “Existentialism, in our sense of the word, is a doctrine that does render human life possible...which affirms that every truth and every action imply both an environment and human subjectivity” (Sartre, 1970, p. 24). Each individual places a value on the various aspects of his or her life, both work and non-work; these valuations ultimately create meaning, and constantly change.

Sartre notes somewhat pessimistically that we are “condemned to be free,” i.e., freedom brings choice and subsequent responsibility for our actions (Sartre, 1956). Freedom of choice is a concept that many do not accept, preferring instead to believe that life is not up to them. Some may believe that it is easier to deal with life if we think that we are really not in control, and therefore cannot be totally responsible for our lives. However, if we are free, as existentialism strongly emphasizes, all actions (and non-actions) in life are choices, and in the end we define ourselves through our choices. Our freedom gives us these choices, choices that result in the path that we follow, and ultimately in the life that we live: “Life is nothing until it is lived; but it is yours to make sense of, and the value of it is nothing else but the sense that you choose” (Sartre, 1970, p. 54).

The belief that humans have total freedom of choice has been echoed by many scholars including the psychologist Viktor Frankl who argues that even when we cannot control actions, we can still choose how to react to any given situation. Frankl uses the example of his own experiences of being in the concentration camps of Nazi Germany to illustrate that even in terrible circumstances humans can choose how they view and react to life (Frankl, 1985). Sartre agrees with Frankl’s contention that the individual is “free as a conscious being to choose the meaning that s/he will give the facts in his/her situation” (Lavine, 1984, p. 359). According to this philosophy, a person’s life is made up of the sum of his or her decisions that are made each day. “Man is nothing else but what he purposes, he exists only in so far as he realizes himself, he is therefore nothing else but the sum of his actions, nothing else but what his life is” (Sartre, 1970, p. 41). Even though people for many reasons may pass up opportunities in life, Sartre (1956, p. 472) also says, “We can even choose not to choose.” And, in not choosing, he is arguing, we have taken an action and made a choice. However, this ability to choose does not mean that we are not subject to our context as well.

Situatedness

Naturally, all people do not have the same degree of freedom in life and therefore their choices, because all lives are not situated the same, are held within what Sartre refers to as one's 'facticity' (Sartre, 1956). Choices are made from the possibilities that the individual has in front of him or her at a particular point in time, and therefore, choice can be considered a relative concept. Frankl (1985, p. 143) contends that, "Man constantly makes his choices concerning the mass of present potentialities; for which of these will be condemned to non-being and which will be actualized?" Therefore, all life is situated within a personal context, or world, and is created within that perceived world. "The existentialist meaning of the world is disclosed only when the question is subjectively formulated: "How do I exist in the world"" (Schrag, 1977, p. 27)? In effect, we then create the world in which we live.

Additionally, we are not completely isolated and unaffected by others. People are situated within the world and, therefore must deal with daily living which Heidegger calls "average everydayness" (Heidegger, 1976). And we share this world with others, and are, arguably, dependent on other people to give meaning to our lives as meaning tends to come through our relationship to other people. "By declaring that man is responsible for and must actualize the potential meaning of his life, I wish to stress that the true meaning of life is to be discovered in the world rather than within man or his own psyche, as though it were a closed system" (Frankl, 1985, p.133). If meaning is discovered as we exist in the world and perhaps greatly based on the values of the majority, then this may account for the importance placed on work and why people may choose the work that they do. Work is of such importance today because success and status in life tends to be measured in relation to other people – salary and position. For example, medical and law professions are, in Western society, highly sought after occupations as these professions provide both a high status and a significant salary. This attitude undoubtedly has the potential to lead to an overemphasis upon one's work in one's life.

Authenticity

Existentially, the overwhelming existential challenge for the individual is the creation of "authentic" or meaningful life, and this is unique to each individual. "Meaning in life is obtained through an authentic existence. The conditions for achieving this kind of existence are commitment to actualize one's possibilities to choose and decide about the possibilities and to act on them" (Orbach, 2008: 284). The starting point for authentic action is the recognition that meaning must be determined by the individual self (Lavine, 1984). Such an individual must accept responsibility for his or her life and make living an authentic life a continual and never-ending goal: "Man moves physically, morally, and intellectually in view of an end, in order to attain a greater richness of his own being and existence as well as in order to enrich and enhance the being he finds in the surrounding world" (Reinhardt, 1960, p. 198). Authenticity is subjective to the individual and only manifests itself in the life that is ultimately lived, a life in which he or she is conscious and free. The imagined life is not authentic, but the actualized life based upon the freedom to manifest from awareness of choice is.

So the authentic life is contingent on how the individual views the world and his or her beliefs about meaning, and "each individual has to come to her own conclusions about authenticity" (Golomb, 1995, p. 200). Therefore, authenticity cannot be judged by another person, but can only be assessed by the individual herself. I may believe that my friend is living the "wrong" life however the authenticity of another person's life is not for me to decide. It is subjective and so this judgment of life can only be made by the individual. Bugental (1965) states, "authenticity is a term used to characterize a way of being in the world in which one's being is in harmony with the being of the world itself...we are inauthentic to the extent that we are in conflict with the givenness of being" (p. 33). The authentic person recognizes that human existence is a mystery, and he or she ventures forward creating meaning as he or she journeys

through life (Breisach, 1962). In effect, the individual “chooses” who to be and then leads his or her life in accordance with the choice.

However, since the self is reflexive and ever-changing, the effect of our work and non-work experiences may change. On an abstract level we know that we are a “different” person in our fifties than we were in our forties or our thirties. But it is important to recognize that this difference is not an abstraction; it is the condition of the human self as we exist over time. If we realize that our self is always changing, then it is easier to understand when our lives no longer fulfill our desires and when it is time to make new choices. Inevitably there will be ebbs and flows in a life and other aspects of life will emerge which will affect how we view ourselves. As people change throughout their lives they will tend to view their life through a new lens, perhaps with new possibilities. This has consequential effects upon how individuals then view their work. For example, upon graduation from university many students will tend to be seeking a job or career that pays them the highest salary. They may choose work based on financial need if they have large financial debt accumulated throughout their university years, and therefore pass up work that they would prefer in favor of work that pays the highest salary. However, as people age, their life circumstances will undoubtedly change, as well as their personal views on what is important to them. This means that they may look to other possibilities when it comes to work or to expand components of their life or to add new avenues of life.

Bad Faith

Instead of making authentic choices, people may instead tend to act in “bad faith,” meaning that the individual acts in accord with assigned definitions of self, taking neither full credit or blame for his or her actions. It is “an attempt to escape from . . . [individual] freedom by pretending that human affairs are unavoidable or necessary, as is the causal order of things” (Lavine, 1984, p. 361). This is echoed by Barnes (1959) who comments, “. . . man cannot bear the realization that all the values he lives by, his purposes, his projects are sustained by his own free choice; he finds it too great a strain to accept sole responsibility for his life. Therefore he takes refuge in the belief that somehow the external world is so structured that it guarantees the worth of its objects, it provides specific tasks which have to be done, it demands of each person a definite way of living which is the right one” (p. 48). Free will and free choice are difficult concepts, and many people do not even think about how they live their lives.

The challenge is to live the authentic life which each person must define for themselves, and most importantly, to try to avoid the inauthentic life or living in bad faith. However, authenticity is a dynamic state of existence and meaning for the individual will change over time. Much of life will be unexpected and our situation of life will continually change. There is a changing context of life and we are influenced by many factors: family, beliefs about meaning, values, friends, and social norms, e.g., contribution. Heidegger says that we “fall” (fallenness) into inauthenticity and become what is expected of us in the “public arena” and behave according to the norms and rules of society. We escape from our true selves into a public life that is untrue or false. “A self worth wanting – a ‘complete’, ‘emotional’, ‘moral’ sort of thing, to which adjective such as ‘true’, or ‘authentic’ tend to be attached – is something with a character; where emotions, decisions, actions and reactions spring from a reasonably coherent cluster of beliefs and values” (Wilkes, 1999, p. 29). We choose our self through the choices we make in our work and non-work areas of our life based on our own internal evaluative process of perceived possibilities. “Man must make himself man through the mundane labor of decision-making. . . He will choose the alternative which best fits with the referent criterion if he has an explicit awareness of all the significant factors involved in the decision. Thus explicit awareness is necessary for effective decision-making.” (Johnson, 1971, p. 11). We cannot choose our life in good faith without questioning our own being which highlights the need for self-reflection if we are to make appropriate choices about our lives, including our work lives. This resonates with Socrates’ famous statement, “the unexamined life is not worth living,” and this has been interpreted as “the unexamined life is a wasted life,” because it means that someone is sleepwalking

(unconsciously) through life (Morris, 1999). Socrates argued that we must question who we are and what is important in our life, and that it is only through self-awareness that we then choose our lives and live a meaningful life (McClelland, 1951). The opposite is to live in “bad faith” or “inauthentically”, a sort of unconscious living with a non-acceptance of one’s freedom. For example, a person may stay in a marriage or job in which they are not happy but never even know or acknowledge that it is the source of their unhappiness. Living in “bad faith” is based on self-deception and falsehood, with the opposite being self-awareness and recognition of both our circumstances and our freedom to choose: “We say indifferently of a person that he shows signs of bad faith or that he lies to himself... [we] shall willingly grant that bad faith is a lie to oneself, on condition that we distinguish the lie to oneself from lying in general” (Sartre, 1956, p. 48).

As noted previously, many people have believed that the path to a meaningful life was through economic success which means that work must be a priority. However, this has not led to happiness and fulfillment (Frankl, 1978). People are searching for more than economic success in the workplace, and again, this may help to explain both the rise of the spirituality and work movement and the existentialist’s prescient grasp of the nature of human alienation and therefore of our need for authenticity. Even though Fromm is not considered to be an existentialist, this view seems somewhat similar to his (Fromm, 1976) concept of a “having” orientation to life versus a “being” orientation to life. Fromm argued that the majority of people in Western society are focused on a *having* orientation where the goal of life is to accumulate and own; a *being* orientation, on the other hand, is about experiencing life. “I refer to two fundamental modes of existence, to two different kinds of orientation toward self and the world, to two different kinds of character structure the respective predominance of which determines the totality of a person’s thinking, feeling, and acting” (Fromm, 1976, p. 24). So, according to Fromm, a having orientation, i.e., having a spouse, having a car, home ownership, requires very different values and attitudes toward life, than someone who is oriented towards being, and who experiences joy and fulfillment within daily existence.

Additionally, a person may at times be living an unconscious life and/or be living in bad faith, and not know this. The mid-life period seems to be for some at least, a time of increased awareness and possibly an awakening to the signs of “bad faith.” Many people come to midlife pondering the question “what am I doing with my life?” The mid-life questioning, according to an existential framework, can be viewed as a gap or incongruence between “real” life and “authentic” life. “How many of us, arriving at mid-life or later, having done all the “right” things, having served the expectations of our family and our tribe, feel so little at home in our lives” (Hollis, 2008, p. 55)? If the individual feels his or her life is no longer or perhaps never was authentic (i.e., living in bad faith), then it is not surprising for him or her to experience anxiety and depression (Grierson, 2007; Hollis, 1993). Some people at this stage of life can make changes to their overall life however others may find this difficult depending on their situation of life.

CONCLUSION

Through an examination of some specific views concerning perspective on the role of work in an individual’s life, we have found our way to discussing an existentialist perspective on the same. We have highlighted and summarized some key tenets of an existentialist perspective as being pertinent to the discussion of the role of work in one’s life. This examination has created the potential for an interesting perspective upon the notion of work life balance. As illustrated, so many of the foci of existentialism point towards ideas of aware navigation of choice and change, but with the inevitable backdrop of a finite existence. This simple observation means that considerations of work life balance that are not fluid, choice driven and processural, ultimately constitute acting in bad faith. Put simply, the journey of making

authentic choices trumps any objective definition of a balanced life and the pursuit of a balanced life to the exclusion of situated choice is inauthentic.

Ultimately, it does not matter how we view work or non-work; all that matters is that we choose our self by choosing our life freely. The meaningful life may indeed be the “balanced” life or however else a person chooses to live but this must be judged by the individual, not society. According to Sartre, we must never allow our humanity to be defined by others, only by ourselves (Sartre, 1956). Additionally, no matter how well society may view a type of work, e.g., medical doctor or teacher, or even the notion of the “balanced” life, it may be the wrong choice for that particular individual. Put another way: “I may be connected to value, contribute to a wide network of relationships, and be deeply appreciated by my society, but if I lack the feelings, attitudes, intentions, and beliefs appropriate to my situation, my sense of meaninglessness will be acute” (Bellioti, 2001, p. 80). And so it is up to the individual to ascertain whether the need for balance is authentic or externally imposed. Make no mistake about it; there are multiple areas of existential danger at play here. The potential danger in the appeal of the concept of work life balance is that it is held in a series of intersecting discourses which concern belongingness, meaningfulness, and even a sort of labour temperance. In a perfect storm of discontent, ambiguity and loss of meaning, we find similar conditions to those which lead to the post WWII explorations of existentialisms. Perhaps this time, there is a real opportunity to undertake the difficult challenges that concern the very act of being aware of the role of choice in authentic living. With the specific contemporary dialogue concerning work life balance, the danger is not in how we choose to live, but rather in how we make the choices that therefore lead to a meaningful life.

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COMMUNICATION SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

This paper presents best practices derived from the first year of offering discipline-specific communication support to international students of Commerce at Dalhousie University. A literature review of Asian international student learning behaviours and needs and on pedagogical approaches reveals that ESL students require discipline-specific language and writing help. This assistance should occur within an educational environment that is culturally responsive and regards international students not as deficient in skills but as positive contributors to the academic community. International students would benefit from changes in pedagogical approaches, faculty and staff attention to discipline-specific language development, and the facilitation of cross-cultural peer relationships.

BACKGROUND

Dalhousie and other Canadian universities have experienced increasing numbers of international students. Statistics Canada data reveal that the number of international students doubled between 1992 and 2008. In 2008, 9.3% of university students in Nova Scotia were international students, placing Nova Scotia among the largest providers of international education in Canada. These international students have enrolled in increasing numbers in the fields of business, management, and public administration. While the percentage of Canadian students enrolled in business fields remained about the same from 1992 to 2008, the percentage of international students in business fields rose from 14.5% to 23.2%.

The Faculty of Management at Dalhousie University and the Commerce program in particular have experienced dramatic growth in the numbers of international students. Since 2009, the number of Chinese students at Dalhousie has more than doubled from 291 to 699. The number of international students in the Bachelor of Commerce program has risen from 100 in March, 2009, to 220 in March, 2012. Of the 955 students enrolled in the Commerce program, then, 220, or 23%, were internationals. However, Chinese students in the Faculty of Management, according to the Retention Committee, have the highest attrition rates in the university.

These numbers indicate a clear and pressing need to address the academic requirements of the international student population as well as our responses to this growing population as the host institution. This paper identifies best practices in making fruitful changes to our approach. The first section presents a literature review, which is followed by observations of current practice at Dalhousie. The final section offers recommendations on how to facilitate change.

LITERATURE REVIEW: INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION

This section offers an overview of issues in international student education with an emphasis on Asian international students in Canada enrolled in faculties of management. The increase in numbers indicates an urgent need to understand both international student issues and the issues of the university in adjusting to these changes while meeting the expectations of industry. Similar challenges have been faced by other institutions in Australia (Arkoudis & Tran, 2007; Zhang & Mi, 2010), New Zealand (Campbell & Li, 2008; Hebblethwaite, 2010), and the UK (Ryan, 2011).

International students often arrive in Canada without the background necessary to meet academic expectations. Difficulties with language interfere with the abilities to listen to lectures, understand course expectations, read sophisticated academic texts, produce writing assignments, complete examinations, and converse with instructors and domestic student peers. Zhang and Mi (2010), in a study of international students in Australia, assert that language issues (reading, writing, listening, speaking) are the most urgent problems among international students. Yang's (2010) study attributes English Language Learners (ELL) challenges to "underdeveloped English conversational ability" (p. 157) and addresses the difficulties students experience in attempting to engage in academic dialogue. Campbell and Li (2008) found that Asian students' difficulties, most notably with writing assignments, "came from their insufficient knowledge of academic conventions" (p.382). Zhang and Mi as well as other scholars (e.g. Kameda, 2012) note that cultural differences exist in rhetorical conventions, cultural schemata, writing perspectives and expectations as well as in the focus on argument. Academic literacy requires "disciplinary enculturation" and understanding of conventions, which are "embedded in cultural values and beliefs" (Campbell & Li, p.390).

Instructors play key roles in developing this knowledge of academic conventions. Arkoudis and Tran (2010) argue that because writing in the university is discipline specific, subject instructors are essential for developing language skills. Campbell and Li (2008) confirm the importance of instructors in equipping students with the language of their academic discourse. Delivering this knowledge, however, has proven challenging for educators.

Multiple studies have explored the issues surrounding international education in Western universities. The learning differences between Asian and Western students have been a primary focus of many of these studies. Ward's (2001) literature review "The impact of international students on domestic students and host institutions" offers a summary of the literature conducted to 2001 on cross-cultural differences in teaching and learning. Ward notes the research on individualism-collectivism (IC). This research finds that students from individualist cultures "are more likely to want to 'stand out' in class, to ask questions, give answers and engage in debate" and to exhibit competitiveness. In contrast, students from collectivist cultures "are more strongly motivated to 'fit in.' They are less likely to be verbally interactive in classes and are usually unwilling to draw attention to themselves" (Ward, 2001, "Cross-cultural Differences in Teaching and Learning," para. 2). According to these theories, then, Canadian students and instructors, coming from an individualist culture, exhibit behaviours that conflict with the cultural expectations of predominantly Asian international students.

Cheng (2000), however, sees this view of Asian learners as a "dangerous over-generalisation" (p. 435) and the view of Asians as reticent and passive as "a groundless myth" (p.438). Tian and Low (2011) dismiss studies that claim passivity is an emanation of Chinese culture as limited or inconclusive in evidence. Seeing the problem as a Western versus Eastern dissonance tends to elevate the West and to stereotype, and therefore simplify, the East. Despite various cultures of origin, Asian students become lumped into "a single cultural basket," an homogenization that reinforces cultural stereotypes (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 710). Kumaravadivelu summarizes the most common stereotypes of Asian

students: “They (a) are obedient to authority, (b) lack critical thinking skills, and (c) do not participate in classroom interaction” (p. 710). Kumaravadivelu points out that these stereotypes have persisted despite inconclusive or contradictory research findings. Clark and Gieve (2006) warn against these “reified, abstracted, and frozen” (p.69) conceptions of culture. They argue that viewing Asian students as a single homogenous group lacking in critical thinking skills, withholding from classroom participation, exhibiting passivity, and relying on surface learning and attributing these deficits to Confucian heritage reinforces stereotypes and denies individuality.

Stereotypes contribute to the devaluing of Asian students. Asian students are frequently seen as operating at a deficit, as lacking the critical thinking skills and level of engagement necessary for success in university. Instructors may believe that ESL students should overcome this deficit, “rise” to acceptable standards, and assimilate. Ward’s (2001) work confirms this tendency. She cites Smith’s (1998) study of instructors of international students in the United States that found that instructors tended to adopt an assimilationist approach. These instructors maintained the importance of a uniform (and culturally situated) standard by which to measure understanding and achievement and failed to consider the difficulties that international students may experience in reaching this standard.

As Holmes (2004) asserts, there are “unexplained conventions” that students must adapt to for success in western universities: The “onus is on these Chinese students to reconstruct and renegotiate their primary culture learning and communication styles to accommodate another way”, a process, Holmes claims, that disadvantages and further differentiates students (p. 303). Tran (2011) argues that “reciprocal adaptation from international students and academic staff rather than the onus of adaptation being placed on international students is paramount to the enhancement of teaching and learning and the sustainable development of international education.” (p.80). Her study suggests that reciprocal adaptation of academics and international students is critical to the process of internationalizing the curriculum.

Ward’s (2001) literature review reveals, however, that “for the most part educators (particularly those at the tertiary level) make few, if any, changes in either the process or content of classroom activities” (“Impact in the Classroom: Section Summary”, para.1). This assertion is confirmed by Knight (2000, as cited in Ward, 2001) who found minimal interest from faculty members in internationalizing pedagogy or the curriculum. Research a decade later confirms that pedagogy has not adapted to the changing demographics of the university. Arkoudis and Tran (2010) report that assistance for international students is relegated to support staff despite evidence that indicates that lecturers are key in the development of student writing and essential for the learning of the discipline. Their research indicates that lecturers do not address ESL needs on a departmental level. Departments demonstrate a “lack of course planning related to integrating disciplinary and language learning or guidelines that can inform lecturers’ practices” (p. 172). Instructors may not know how to internationalize course content or how to alter the process or content to respond to ESL needs.

Evaluation methods must also consider the changing student population. Ryan (2005, cited by Smith, 2011) “cautions against assessment that tests ‘the mastery of academic discourse’ (99) more than mastery of learning” (p.15). Smith argues that exams may handicap ELLs with the need to express themselves conceptually under time constraints, a potentially “discriminatory” practice that assesses language ability more than mastery of content: “The realities of a multicultural educational setting mean that the academic community cannot sensibly ignore the possibility that one of its prime assessment technologies may be unfairly discriminating against an increasing proportion of its student population” (p.22). Group work, discussions, and projects, on the other hand, contribute greatly to the academic and social experiences of students (Campbell & Li, 2008). Group work increases understanding of course content and academic and cultural expectations, enhances intercommunication skills, and offers the possibility of forming relationships with native students.

Holmes (2004) summarizes the challenges for host institutions. In order to become more culturally responsive, institutions, in Holmes' view, must move from a "mind-set of a *deficit* to a *difference* view of Chinese learning and teaching methods" (p.304). In addition, Holmes advocates discipline-specific preparation in cultural, educational, and linguistic knowledge. Perhaps most importantly, Holmes recommends that host institutions identify ways to value international students, different business practices, and alternative world views. Reducing the deficit view and emphasizing the significant contributions that international students make through their varying practices and world views can invigorate the educational environment and strengthen the global business foundations of domestic, as well as international, students.

This literature review reveals that international students often enter Western universities unprepared to deal with academic expectations. Universities are equally unprepared to deal with these students. Pedagogical practice and the university culture have not adapted to a changing student population. Although research demonstrates the importance of teaching academic conventions and the language of the disciplines, little changes in pedagogy have occurred. Despite the benefits of internationalization, these benefits have not been exploited. The School of Business Administration at Dalhousie has attempted to address the needs of international students by providing discipline-specific language support for international students.

Business Communication Support

In Fall 2011, I started in a newly-created, part-time position supporting international students in the Commerce program and particularly with the course Business Communication, a required course for all Commerce students taken sometime prior to the first work term in the Winter of the second year of study. The purpose of the position was to address the needs of international students, to facilitate their success in the Commerce courses, and to prepare students for the co-op term.

During the fall term, students required assistance with assignments in the writing-focused Business Communication course as well as with assignments for an International Business course. In addition, students requested assistance with interpreting assignment expectations, understanding English colloquialisms and academic language in textbooks and mass media, and adjusting to Canadian culture. In the second term, students required assistance in preparing assignments for the oral portion of Business Communication as well as written assignments in other courses. The number of students requesting assistance dropped dramatically an average of 8 per day, with a high of 18, to an average of 6 per day, with a high of 14 students in one day. Discussions with students indicated four reasons for coming less regularly for help: First, second term courses generally did not require writing; and second, having attained merely average marks in the written section of Business Communication, students opted instead to focus on subjects in which they could succeed such as accounting. Third, students seemed more adjusted to academic demands and required less assistance dealing with the reading requirements and culture shock. Finally, my part-time schedule contributed to limited availability of services and did not fit well with many international student schedules.

Two one-hour conversation groups per week were also held in the second term. These sessions were designed to allow students an opportunity to practice oral presentations with a small and supportive audience and to provide a time to practice interview and conversation skills. Instructors were invited to share their expertise as occasional guests. These groups ranged in size from 2 to 6 and averaged 4 per session. While this number is disappointingly small, the students who attended on a regular basis were highly successful; they joined various societies on campus, participated in events such as the Research Symposium and First-Year Case Study Competition, attended job fairs, and interviewed for and received part-time positions in the community. The confidence of these students increased dramatically. To

develop cross cultural peer relationships, a student volunteer joined the conversation groups once per week. She was able to provide insights on course requirements and the job market, participated with three international students in the first-year case competition, and facilitated networking into the local community.

In addition, I engaged in a number of departmental activities in the Faculty of Management, including committees, case study competitions, research symposiums, and awards events, which familiarized me with perspectives and experiences of both students and faculty. I worked with students on co-op term reports and provided support for a student who was accused of plagiarism, helping him prepare for his hearing, understand the academic integrity process and his errors, and re-establish his confidence. During the second term I also attended classes in which international students were presenting to offer support, maintained regular contact with the Business Communication instructors, and began networking to facilitate the integration of international students. In addition, I helped redesign the assignments for a 100 level management course so that the assignments were more understandable to second language learners. These activities developed my familiarity with international student concerns.

To understand more fully the experiences of international students, I have engaged in research on international student education with a particular focus on Asian students, international education in Canada, and students in management fields. A chart outlining the key points of these studies was compiled to determine the aspects most applicable to our situation with the international commerce students at Dalhousie. This research has resulted in a compilation of the best practices as well as identified areas for future research.

DISCUSSION

Students in the Dalhousie Commerce program experience many of the problems addressed in the literature. My experiences with and observations of these students, interactions with instructors in meetings and classrooms, and readings of instructor and marker comments on student papers all indicate that the issues addressed in the literature are evident in our program. I did not conduct a scientific study, and the comments and papers shared with me represent a small percentage of the population. Nonetheless, I believe these observations may be generalized in assessing the international student experience in the Bachelor of Commerce program.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

I have repeatedly heard from instructors that international students who come to a Canadian university must adapt to the culture as it is. Some instructors refuse to make accommodations for students and insist that international students who cannot adapt quickly are deficient and do not belong here. Although instructors often regard this deficiency as a language deficiency, these instructors make limited changes in their uses and displays of language. Some instructors do not provide students with Powerpoints, which would enable students to focus on listening to the lecture and enable them to review the notes later. The structure of lectures is often unclear and transitions and linking words are sometimes omitted. Students complain that some instructors turn their backs on students, denying them the opportunity to link the sound with the facial movements and expressions. And although instructors have been told that ESL students often cannot read cursive writing, instructors and markers continue to write in this form, forcing students either to ignore the feedback or to ask someone for help. These behaviours unintentionally serve to reify the dominant culture, exacerbate language barriers, and disadvantage international students.

Students have, however, often found the pedagogical approaches of instructors to be positively suited to their needs. International students refer to their instructors as generally “nice”, accessible, and helpful in understanding difficult concepts. They value instructors who post Powerpoints because they often miss information as it is delivered in class and having the slides allows a way to retrieve key words and concepts. They also voice a preference for instructors who ban distracting cell phone and computer use. Instructors who place students in intercultural groups for projects also tend to have more culturally inclusive classroom dynamics.

Intercultural Peer Relationships

Many first-year international students at Dalhousie indicate that they have no Canadian friends, even though some students have been here nearly 18 months, having attended an English language school before enrolling at Dalhousie. This social barrier is also evident in the classroom. In one class, for example, domestic students occupied the top left section of the classroom while international students occupied the lower right section. International students, however, express a desire for stronger relationships with Canadians.

Facilitation of cross-cultural communication has been successful in crossing this divide. Group projects in some first-year courses facilitated students’ interaction with peers. International students in the conversation groups indicate that they prefer intercultural group projects. Some teaching assistants in one course asked students to form their own groups, while other teaching assistants randomly assigned groups. Students strongly prefer assigned groups because when students placed themselves in groups, groups were either domestic or international and were rarely mixed. International students express a strong preference for multicultural groups and domestic student contact. Students report that it is initially quite uncomfortable to participate in a multicultural group; they report feeling embarrassed about their language skills, and they feel like outsiders. Despite this initial discomfort, students report feeling very satisfied with their group interactions by the end of the project period. They credit group projects as the most beneficial means of establishing friendships with Canadian peers. They do, however, indicate that Canadian students have a tendency to complete presentation assignments at the last minute. This tendency creates academic difficulties for international students, who prefer more time to practice.

Events such as the first-year case study competition also contribute to developing peer relationships. A first-year student served as a peer support volunteer and attended one of the weekly conversation groups. One of the international students told her that she was unable to fill a team for the case study competition and wanted to include a native speaker of English. The peer support volunteer enthusiastically joined the team, which then included one Malaysian, two Chinese and one Canadian. Surrounded by a largely domestic student population in the competition, these students initially appeared intimidated, but as they went through the day and observed and interacted with peers, their self-confidence deepened. The competition served well to integrate the students, who now report feeling more at ease in their peer group.

Evaluation Methods

Instructor and marker feedback contributes to students’ success and their understanding of their discipline. Students report appreciation of instructor and marker feedback; however, feedback on papers varies in quality and quantity. Students show me instructor feedback for three reasons. The first is to learn from errors and make necessary changes in later assignments. The second is to share their success. The third reason is to have me interpret the marker’s comments. International students cannot read cursive writing, nor do they understand abbreviated comments like “awk”. Students highly value instructor

comments. Their confidence and abilities improve through effective feedback, and they pay close attention to it.

The rubric used in business communication courses deducts 10% for a single spelling error. The rubric deducts 5% for each grammatical or mechanical error up to 20%. These penalties for errors have an extremely negative effect on English as a second language speakers. For one thing, they are highly focused on retaining this 30%. This focus inhibits the language play and experimentation that would lead to faster language development. Instead, students focus on simple words and manners of expression. Despite seeking help through the Dalhousie Writing Centre or from me as an international student business communication advisor, students often lost marks. At times this was a result of instructor or marker error. Students have returned to me with papers that have lost marks for run-ons that were not run-ons and for stylistic choices that reflected the voice of the student writer and did not contain errors but perhaps did not match the stylistic preference of the grader. One student lost the full 10% for spelling “practice” with a “c” rather than an “s”. Markers do not mark spelling errors beyond the first one or grammatical errors beyond four, so students do not receive feedback throughout the paper. This practice hinders language development.

In addition to inadequate feedback, some feedback has been culturally insensitive. For example, one student brought his paper to me so that I could read him the following cursive comment: “You write very well for a Chinese student.” Another student, who worked with me on a draft and had only two errors marked on the paper, one of which was a marker error, received the comment, “Your English needs a lot of work!!” These responses attribute deficiencies to cultural origin rather than linguistic error.

Evaluative tools must be designed to ensure that the course knowledge, rather than linguistic knowledge, is assessed. On an exam, one instructor asked students to create a business plan on a “shoestring” budget. The ESL speakers had no idea what this meant and could not answer the question. The exam, then, evaluated skills with English colloquialisms rather than business acumen. A quiz in another class asked students how to ensure a résumé received an adequate number of “hits”. The international students were unable to answer the question. Such language uses rely on knowledge that accumulates with cultural experience and assesses students on cultural familiarity rather than subject knowledge.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Several measures can be taken to facilitate international student success. As noted in the literature, internationalization “rarely emerges spontaneously or in a naturally organised fashion” (Ward, 2001) and requires School of Business Administration commitment.

Assurance of English Competence

Although students should not be expected to be familiar with the colloquialisms and jargon of business English or the cultural elements that influence Canadian language and rhetorical devices, students should be able to construct simple English sentences, recognize and use basic vocabulary, and converse in English. Unfortunately, students who lack proficiency have been admitted into the program. *Standards for admission should be raised.*

Abandoning the Deficiency-based Perspective

As Zhang and Mi (2009) assert, “Rather than focusing on ‘what international students are not able to do,’ a deficiency-based perspective” educators must focus on “‘what international students are able to do’” (p.385). Morita (2004) argues that discussion topics must “incorporate international students’ perspectives as legitimate sources of knowledge” (p. 599). ***Viewing international students as assets to our programs will enable us to develop a stronger community, potentially increasing our global appeal and our retention rates.*** Efforts should be made to capitalize on international student strengths—their perspectives on global markets and their ability to communicate cross-culturally, for example. A group project in which students are asked to analyze a business plan might capitalize on international student knowledge by asking students to assess a business from the student’s home country. The advantage of being familiar with the language used in the studied organization would empower the international student and enable the student to participate in group work equally.

Reciprocal Adaptation

As evident in the literature (e.g. Campbell &Li, 2008; Tran, 2011; Ward, 2001), the burden of adaptation is often on the international student. This view is evidenced at Dalhousie by the number of instructors who have stated that if students come to a Canadian university they must adapt to our ways. This belief, however, serves to elevate the position of the dominant culture and establishes a standard that international students cannot meet. Key to developing a successful program is the need to ***change the attitude that students are entering a Canadian university and must adapt to our ways.*** We are training students to enter a global business arena. We should model, for native and non-native speakers alike, the behaviour and attitudes that will be required in a global context. We need to demonstrate and model the methods of intercultural communication our students will employ in the future. Some of our current practices, unfortunately, serve to alienate the international student population. In a business context, this alienation of a key stakeholder group would be inappropriate.

Pedagogical approaches should adapt to a changing student population. It may initially appear difficult to adapt our teaching styles to an international audience; however, this adaptation is necessary to accommodate a changing student population and may, in fact, serve to make our delivery to all students clearer and more accessible. Adapting pedagogical approaches might include providing clear and consistent lecture formats, providing summaries of key points in lectures, defining key terms, allowing extra time for international students to formulate questions and answers, adjusting evaluation methods to enable international students to display knowledge, allowing more time for tests, and making effective use of Blackboard to support lecture and discussion material. The acceptance of international students into the program necessitates mutual adaptation.

Facilitation of Intercultural Peer Relationships

As Ward (2001) states, ***facilitation of intercultural relationships is necessary to maximize the benefits of internationalisation.*** Intercultural small group work, peer-pairing, and lecture groups facilitate intercultural communication, develop language skills in non-native speakers, assist international students in adapting to a new environment, help in eliminating negative stereotypes, and may increase retention rates. Collaborative learning enhances academic performance and creates social cohesion. Work in small groups offers peer learning support and creates a collaborative learning environment (Hebblethwaite, 2010). Ward (2001) effectively argues that peer interactions must empower the international student:

An important point for consideration, however, is that peer interactions should involve equal status contact. If programmes are set up to place local students in the expert or donor role and international students in the learner or recipient role, the programmes are less likely to empower the

international student and to enhance intergroup relations. It is important for international students to contribute something tangible to the interactive process. Whether their contribution is framed as cultural informant, language teacher or some other role, it is essential that their contribution can be recognised by both parties. ("Part II: Section Summary and Points for Consideration", para.2)

Instructors who require group work, therefore, should seek to establish intercultural groups and identify ways to empower international students and ensure equal status among group members.

Lecture groups also may be usefully incorporated. Lecture groups are small groups within larger lecture classes. Students can be placed into intercultural groups to share lecture notes, participate in discussion, and complete in-class assignments. This approach would eliminate the physical barrier between domestic and international students and encourage cross-cultural communication.

Content-based Language Instruction

Content-based language instruction should be offered throughout the Commerce and Management programs. Content-based language instruction focuses on the teaching of language within the disciplines in which they are used. This recommendation is consistent with Zhang and Mi's (2009) proposal that ESL support for listening and speaking skills should be provided in the first two years of university and for academic writing throughout the university years for linguistically challenging courses. Studies by Beasley and Pearson (1999) and Snow and Kamhi-Stein (1997) illustrate the benefits of collaboration between content and learning support specialists in increasing ELL success. Because the language of business is particularly heavy with jargon and colloquialisms and because the varied forms of business communication are discipline specific, language instruction and assistance are more effective within a business communication context. The Using English for Academic Purposes site (<http://www.uefap.com/vocab/vocfram.htm>) offers a list of the 2000 words occurring most frequently in academic English. This site contains a sublist of vocabulary in business. Instructors of first-year courses might be aware of the need to teach this vocabulary to all students. In addition, writing and communication support from people knowledgeable in business communication is necessary.

In addition to providing support throughout the undergraduate program, ***writing requirements leading up to the co-op term should increase*** to ensure that students continue to maintain and develop skills. Courses that require no writing assignments might be slightly redesigned so that students have more opportunities to write.

Continue to provide international student communication support. The language of business is particularly laden with colloquialisms, and the forms of business communication are purpose and audience specific. Students of Commerce and Management require support from people knowledgeable in the requirements of the discipline. The Commerce program has changed the order in which students take courses, and International Business will now precede Business Communication. International Business requires the ability to listen, read, and write in academic language. It also requires group work. International students report that this course is the first time they have ever done a group project. Therefore, there is a particular need for support attached to this course. Students may require, for example, assistance not just in referencing but in how to paraphrase and summarize explanations of group work expectations, and the teaching of terms common in business English. As Arkoudis and Tran (2010) suggest, positioning academic writing support in a service area away from the core disciplinary activities contributes to the lack of common approach and separates language and academic support from teaching.

Facilitate learning of academic expectations by developing or providing uniform School of Business Administration standards and resources. A single, preferably Canadian, handbook on

grammar, formatting, and referencing, required as a supplemental resource for all classes, would alleviate some of the issues with understanding expectations.

Changes in Evaluation

Ensure evaluative tools fairly assess what is being taught. Instructors should review evaluative tools to ensure they assess the course material rather than cultural experience or speed in reading or writing. Tools should be designed to enable students to demonstrate their knowledge.

Rubrics should not penalize international students through overemphasis on spelling, grammar and mechanics. Rubrics that are too severe in penalties for errors inhibit language growth by preventing students from experimenting with new terms and structures. Rubrics that deduct 10% for a single spelling error and 20% for more than four grammatical errors force students to simplify content to increase the odds of earning this 30%. Rubrics that overpenalize students for errors are counterproductive to successful language development.

Provide more effective feedback in writing intensive courses. Because markers in some courses currently stop marking spelling errors after a single spelling mistake and grammatical errors after four mistakes, students are denied feedback throughout the body of the paper. This lack of feedback results in limited potential for growth. As Arkoudis and Tran (2010) suggest, international students rely heavily on feedback as a way to understand the language of the discipline. Particularly in the first two years of study, greater attention should be paid to feedback as a way of developing academic literacy and teaching the conventions of the discipline.

Train markers and TAs to be culturally sensitive. Instructors, sessional assistants, and markers should be made aware of the problems in attributing errors to cultural deficiencies. Instructors could ask for blind review of papers marked by graders and TAs to lessen the likelihood of bias.

Encourage Instructors to Conduct Research

To familiarize instructors with issues regarding the international student population and to involve instructors in changing the culture of the organization, **research opportunities instigated by the changing dynamics should be pursued.** The literature review reveals gaps that might be exploited. For example, studies might be conducted on how Asian students perceive the quality of our education, methods of explicating academic conventions, cultural distance in small group work, domestic student perceptions of international students, differences between international and domestic student classroom behaviours, the teaching of content-specific discourse, Eastern student expectations of Western universities, and methods of retention.

Conducting research not only serves to further the research aims of the university but develops the knowledge necessary for changing the approach to this increasingly international student population. Instructors familiar with the needs of both international students and global industries will offer a richer educational environment, which would lead to a stronger Dalhousie reputation and higher retention rates.

CONCLUSION

The international student population in the Dalhousie Faculty of Management has grown substantially; however, we also have the highest attrition rates. The high attrition rates may be due to students' lack of preparation for an English-speaking, Western university. Or, attrition may be due to the Faculty of Management's inability to meet the needs of these students. It is likely that a combination of these problems has resulted in our inability to retain students. While the school has begun to offer

language assistance, this assistance has been pushed to support staff rather than institutionalized. In addition to offering individual help with language issues through a business communication advisor, the school also must make changes in culture and practice. The burden of adaptation cannot be placed solely on the international students. These changes do not have to compromise the content of the program. Culture changes can occur through the facilitation of peer relationships and a focus on the benefits international students bring to the program. Pedagogically, changes include designing lectures and assignments with this new, more international, audience in mind; providing adequate feedback; and creating assessment tools that enable EAL students to demonstrate knowledge. These changes can ensure retention and provide an opportunity to create a program that models best practice in international business education.

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