**Letter from the Editor**

BY ALBERT J. MILLS

**Making Sense of Ice Cream and Sexual Discrimination**

The current Fall (2017) issue of the Workplace Review could whimsically be called an issue about making sense of ice cream and sexual discrimination. Neither is particularly funny, but the reference to sensemaking refers to methods of addressing small business concerns and workplace discrimination against women. In the first instance "making sense" refers to the case study method and its value for encouraging scholars and practitioners alike to draw on experience and the logic of the case for identifying problems and opportunities, as readers will see in the case of the Lickety Split Ice Cream Shop. In the latter instance, "making sense" refers to the method of focusing on the micro aspects of behaviour as people come to develop a sense or "understanding" of their experiences and how to deal with them. Our issue this fall includes two articles using sensemaking, and two articles tackling the issues of sexual discrimination and sexual harassment.

**Making Sense of Corporate Strategy**

In the first of our two sensemaking articles, Carmel Teasdale and Amy Thurlow (MSVU) examine how NB Power "makes sense of changes it its role as an electricity provider in a rapidly changing environment." To that end, they undertake a textual analysis of NB Power's *Reduce and Shift Demand* document designed to explain to various stakeholders their shift in market product. Teasdale & Thurlow undertake their analysis of the document using "Weick's (1979) psycho-social properties of sensemaking" to broaden our understanding of how corporate management is influenced by micro processes, and in turn, devise ways of making sense of change for the customers of NB power. In the process, Carmel and Amy take us through the various sensemaking processes that corporate managers face and draw on in the development of changing strategic directions.

**Making Sense of the Experience of Teaching Business**

In our second sensemaking paper, Nicholous Deal (SMU) reflects on his experience as a teaching assistant. Like the previous article, Nick draws on Weick's notion of sensemaking. Given the focus on his own experiences, he also draws on the method of autoethnography to reflect on his teaching practice, and what sensemaking can bring to management teaching. Nick's exploration of, and reflection on, his experiences through various sensemaking properties encourages us to undertake further research on the links between teaching and sensemaking.

**Intervening against Sexual Harassment at Work**

In the first of two articles on sexism at work, Jacob Che, Lisa Gibbs, Marla Grady, Laurie Marchbank and Jennifer Spearman (SMU) examine human resource interventions for dealing with sexual harassment. The article is timely as accusations of widespread sexual harassment in Hollywood are hitting the headlines as we go to press. In particular, they review intervention strategies including an "organizational climate intolerant of sexual harassment, proactive policy measure, sexual harassment training, and bystander intervention." They assess each intervention in turn for its effectiveness, and conclude that in terms of strategies for dealing with sexual harassment, "there is limited evidence as to what works." They conclude with an appeal to practitioners to "use these findings to become aware of what is currently being done in organizations in response to sexual harassment and what considerations need to be made when implementing strategies."

**The Case of the Missing Women in Management**

In our final article, Jennifer Bennett and Wendy R. Carroll (SMU) examine the extent of "representation of women in cases used to teach executive MBA students." Their findings indicate that "there is a significant underrepresentation of women as senior leaders in the curriculum studied." They conclude that such case studies can serve to legitimize sexual discrimination through the marginalization of women. This may be particularly so when lack of female representation is a phenomenon across a substantial number of cases.

**The Case of the Lickety Split Ice Cream Shop**

Our case section in this season's issue presents us with a three-part detailed description and analysis of the development of an ice cream shop. The case takes use through the processes and dynamics of integrated forms of business management issues, explores the break-even analysis, and the management of human resources. Presenting the case, Robert A. MacDonald (Crandall University) provides a series of narratives that are "field researched and decision-based", designed to place the business student "in entrepreneurial, small business situations." MacDonald informs us that the case was "developed for application in an introductory business class at the undergraduate level."

**Workplace Review and Peer Review**

All the papers in this and earlier editions were originally presented at the Atlantic Schools of Business (ASB) conference: the five papers in this volume for example, were all presented at the 2016 conference in Halifax (hosted by Saint Mary's University). As such, papers accepted for publication in the Workplace Review have undergone peer review as part of the ASB submission process. ASB reviewers are drawn from business scholars across the Atlantic region, other areas of Canada, and increasingly, from international scholars. We also welcome submissions of papers that have not been submitted to the ASB conference. In such cases, the papers are sent out for peer review.

To submit a paper for review, please contact Ellen Shaffner, Managing Editor:

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**MAKING SENSE OF NB POWER'S ENERGY EFFICIENCY CHANGE:
WILL CUSTOMERS GET ON BOARD?**

Through the lens of Weick's (1979) psycho-social properties of sensemaking, this paper provides a textual analysis of a *Reduce and Shift Demand* initiative. The authors offer insights into how NB Power makes sense of changes in its role as an electricity provider in a rapidly changing environment.

## INTRODUCTION

The landscape of electricity generation and use has changed significantly in the past 50 years. Changes in technology have provided power companies with the ability to change their business. Renewable electricity generation using wind, solar and hydro energy sources are becoming more common and cheaper to install. Industries are using by-products, for example, methane from landfills, to create smaller quantities of electricity to be used, referred to embedded generation. Changes in technology have also impacted customers, increasing the number of timers to manage electricity and reduce consumption, including programmable thermostats and smart appliances that can be connected to the power grid and use the extra energy generated by solar or wind power. But customers may be also negatively impacted by new technologies that provide convenience but require electricity, such as tablets, cell phones and gaming systems.

It is in this changing environment that utilities are changing their business model. Power companies were once electricity providers to customers, generating electricity to meet customer demand. More recently, these utilities have realized that they are now required to manage that demand, not just to meet it. And in managing the electricity provided, utilities are expected and regulated to be environmentally conscious and facilitate reduced consumption. As utilities are working with technology to better manage electricity load and to have more renewable sources on the power grid, they are also working with customers to reduce the demand and shift it away from peak times. This is turning out to be no small feat as electricity helps consumers to achieve the lifestyle they have come to expect in a first world society. Customers have come to understand electricity as a shared public good rather than a finite commodity that is bought and sold. As such, utilities must transform customers' sense of electricity and ascribe new meaning to what is acceptable use of this important resource.

NB Power provides a good case study of this evolving phenomenon. In 2012, this publically-owned utility launched a program called *Reduce and Shift Demand* that incorporates technology to create a "smart grid" to bring renewable energy on to the grid and look to community-based, small-scale, embedded generation and small power generation and storage solutions in homes to reduce the amount of large power plants required. In the first two years of the program, NB Power has demonstrated the value of investing in *Reduce and Shift Demand's* smart grid to its customers. It is also encouraging customers to do their part in using the technology available to them to reduce their electricity consumption through rebates and tips.

Drawing on sensemaking properties (Weick, 1979) the authors offer insights into how the utility makes sense of the change that *Reduce and Shift Demand* brings to its business, its customers and the environment. Thus, the purpose of this paper is two-fold. First, the authors will investigate how NB Power makes sense of its role in energy efficiency as represented in corporate text and discourse. And, secondly, the authors will look at how NB Power views its relationship with residential customers in terms of convincing these stakeholders to reduce and shift their demand for electricity.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The corporate structure of power utilities is influenced by reliance on the product itself. Of the 20 electric utility companies in Canada, 13 of them are owned by either a municipality or province (Canadian Electricity Association, 2015). Each province has its own electricity act that governs the safe and reliable distribution of electricity in that province. Because of the government involvement in electricity, and its integral nature to society, we often think of electricity as a necessity provided by society rather than a commodity to be bought and sold; that is, if we even think of electricity at all. As it is regulated, it can be even perceived as a public good, as indicated by Godbolt, Aune, Sørensen (2014) who noted that their focus groups performed "qualculations" (pg. 157) by assigning value according to moral and political considerations rather than market price. The theme of electricity being a public good that has value beyond personal consumption can be seen in articles that discuss publically owned utilities. Patterson (2013) cites that Congress viewed electricity generated by waterways as belonging to the public and "not to individuals or for-profit companies" due to it being a shared resource. Schulz et al (2008) also define the reliability of an electricity network as being a public good as it is a "shared commodity, like a street sign, such that use by one person does not reduce the enjoyment of another person." (pg. ii). This is similar to Godbolt, Aune and Sørensen's (2014) finding that consumers felt they had an "established right" (pg. 154) to electricity as it is plentiful and, therefore, not depriving others of consumption.

Energy use in North American and most of Western Europe is used for the infrastructure that supports daily life: home heating and cooling, hot water heaters, refrigeration of food, lighting and cooking and air conditioning (Abrahamse et al. 2005, Owens and Drifill, 2008). For the customer, unless there is a power outage or an issue with the bill, electricity is there with the flick of a light switch or turn of a dial. Shove (2003) describes the average customer's perception of electricity as "invisible… bound up with routine and habit" (pg. 395). Owens and Driffill (1998) describe our interactions with electricity as "established infrastructure of taken-for-granted hardware or technical systems" (pg. 4413). It is important to note that taken-for granted does not mean unused, but so part of our day-to-day lives and lifestyles. Godbolt, Aune, Sørensen and Ryghaugh (2014) agree, describing our interaction with electricity as "energy cultures consist[ing] of everyday life practices and actions, and also symbolic interpretation of energy and energy-related artifacts (pg. 168).

Current electrical grids in North America and Western Europe are constructed based on what utilities predict will be the demand based on historic use (Shaw et al. 2010). Monthly metering is used for billing as well as historic information to determine how much electricity will be required to run through the power grid to meet demand. The responsibility of ensuring the right amount of electricity is available and transmitted on the grid resides with the balancing authority or system operator, which has real-time information on the amount of power used, and can use weather and historical information to predict how much will be required (Fox-Penner, 2010).

Consumer demand for electricity is predicted to increase, mostly due to changes in lifestyle. With new appliances added to our everyday lives (e.g., microwave ovens in the 1980s, home computers in the 1990s,

tablets and phones in the 2000s), the demand for electricity increases. The increase on the electricity grid is also increasing, as Fox-Penner (2010) notes there is a political push in North America to have more energy security and to be less reliant on imported oil. As well, Shove (2003) argues that newer buildings and homes have shifted our expectations of indoor climate control, both cooling and heating, from a creature comfort to a way of life, which increases demands on the grid. The increased demands require an increased electrical infrastructure on top of maintaining the current grid. This means building more plants, constructing more transmission towers and stringing more electricity lines to meet increasing peaks (Lopes et al. 2012).

While electricity demand increases, so does the imperative to address climate change. As of 2007, 21% of greenhouse gas emission in the US and 15% in the UK were attributed to household use (Abrahamse et al. 2007). The increased megawatts of electricity will mean a greater reliability on coal and fossil-fuel burning power plants, as the renewable resources are "commercially unproven, expensive, and difficult to tap" (Fox-Penner, 2010, 204). In short, electrical utilities are expected to do more with less. They are mandated by provincial legislation to provide safe, reliable electricity. They are expected by their customers to meet their growing demand for electricity with the same or better level of service (Stephenson et al. 2010). They are also expected to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and to explore new sources of renewable generation and technologies to minimize impact on the environment. To achieve this, utilities look to two key strategies, one is technology to manage electricity load; the other strategy is to encourage customers to change their electricity consumption habits, mostly through reducing use (Shaw et al. 2010).

**Reducing and Shifting Demand: the Why and the Who**

Electric utilities have influence over the source of electricity and innovations they want to invest in. What is beyond their control is the how much demand customers have for electricity and at what time the electricity is required. Many programs have been established by utilities to promote behavior change by their customers, mostly through education on websites (Gyberg and Palm, 2009). The targeted behaviors to change fall into two categories: efficiency, which is to one-shot investments like adding insulation or switching heating and cooling sources, and curtailment, which are the repetitive behaviors that, over time, can make a large contribution to energy efficiency (Abrahamse et al. 2005).

These campaigns to reduce or change electricity use rely on three overarching incentives for customers; financial savings, positive impacts to the environment, and an appeal to the customers' overall goodwill. Utilities will often provide a chart on customers' bills to show how much electricity was consumed in the past year as an incentive to reduce their future bills. They will also calculate the electricity saved in terms of dollars saved (Godbolt, 2014, Gyberg & Palm, 2009). Gyberg and Palm (2008) recount an experiment in a Chicago apartment building where tenants were charged real-time prices for their electricity. When peak electricity demand caused the rate to increase, customers were charged that amount; conversely, customers paid less for electricity during non-peak times. By using a financial driver to reduce and shift electricity, the tenants not only reduced consumption during the experiment, but the participants continued to change their consumption habits three years after the experiment.

In focus groups conducted in Norway on electricity consumption, Godbolt (2014) found that participants reported that economics was a concern, but the interviewees would frame energy conservation in terms of moral consideration (Godbolt, 2014, 188). Participants stated that their parents raised them not to waste, which, although could be framed as "wasting money", it stems from the spirit of being a "decent person" (pg. 177). What is interesting is that Godbolt's participants' perception of morality is two-fold, not only do they have a morality to not waste, but they expressed frustration over the lack of morality of external responsibility (pg. 207) when government does not facilitate change. De Young (1996) (in Barr and Gilg 2006) also argues that people participate in environmental behaviours to gain an inner sense of well-being and a feeling that they are making a positive contribution to society. Gyberg and Palm (2014) reinforce the

need for knowledge to help customers make a "correct choice" and to "take responsibility for his/her own choices" (pg. 207), implying that there is a right and wrong for energy consumption. This positive contribution is typically framed as a contribution to preserving our environment. In all of the studies examined for this thesis, the appeal for money saving, contributing to the environment, and being a good neighbor were used as incentives to the *Reduce and Shift Demand* program.

The existing research maintains that the success of any electricity efficiency program requires a form of rhetoric to convince consumers of the value of changing their behaviour. Godbolt Sørensen and Aune (2014) identified the need to understand the mental barriers and drivers for change to get customers to change how they use electricity. Aune (2007) goes a step further and states that the motivation, needs and tastes must be tailored to the customer. Chang (2012) and Green and Cappell (2008) and Claudy, Peterson and O'Driscoll (2013) hold the position that people who are already environmentally conscious will participate in energy efficiency programs anyway. What remains are those who are not motivated by environmental factors. However, a study by Levin (1993), cited in Godbolt Sørensen and Aune (2014) showed that relying on environmental concern too much can lead to a sense of helplessness, which does not help energy efficiency adoption. Englis & Phillips (2013) also cite a risk that the environmental movement could become "less trendy" (pg. 13), which could impact motivation based on the environment. Since customers will already be motivated by environmental factors, and it could be a very small window of influence, researchers have tried to understand other motivations for utilities to use to convince customers.

**Knowledge, Economics and Culture: Guiding Energy Efficiency Decisions**

Researchers have found almost as many reasons why consumers are not adopting energy-efficient behaviours as there are reasons to become more efficient. Most of the research (Claudy et al. 2013; Godbolt, Sørensen and Aune, 2014; Abrahamse et al. 2005) reminds us that as there are multiple ways of approaching electricity use and efficiency, there are multiples influences on consumer behavior. Thorne-Holst et al. (2008) identified six categories of barriers for changing energy consumer behavior. Of the six barriers, the most relevant were cultural, economic and information. Some research suggests energy efficiency programs that would increase cleanliness; convenience and comfort (Shove, 2003) would be more appealing. Whilhite et al (1996) in Aune (2007) argues that consumers' make home-improvement decisions, of which energy efficiency improvements would be included, based on improved comfort and coziness, coined as "nest-building". Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez (2011) echo this sentiment, saying that customers respond to utilitarian environmental benefits when making green purchase decisions. Gyberg and Palm (2009) noted that online efficiency programs that presented energy saving alternatives as choice that would not impact people's standard of living were more receptive.

None of these findings should be a surprise to any consumer. Human beings do not go out of their way to be inconvenienced, especially in their home life. Godbolt, Aune, Sørensen and Ryghaugh (2014) presented the following excerpt from their focus groups as a typical response to consumers' willingness to adopt energy efficiency changes:

> "[I can do little things. Things that do not take too much time [sic]. Everyday life is so busy, and if it becomes a large project, then it's probably not so many that are willing to make the effort. If small actions may contribute, then one can take part in it" (Tanja, 3) (Godbolt, pg 178)

When considering the cultural barriers for electricity consumption, researchers pointed to macro-level influence of culture and society, that is, the influence of others on individual consumers. Chang (2012) suggested that avoiding guilt becomes the driving factor for individuals when making green choices, rather than the environmental and economic benefits themselves. Budinsky and Bryant (2013) argue that focusing

on the individual rather than the collective good discourages long-term thinking when thinking energy efficiency.

As well, Goldbot, Aune and Sørensen (2014) and Barr and Gilg (2006) argue that individuals rarely think in a vacuum when it comes to making lifestyle choices. We measure our levels of comfort, convenience and cleanliness in relation to our neighbors, family and friends. Stephenson et al. (2010) cite the Actor-Network Theory (Latour, 1993; Law and Hansard, 1999) that our material world is created by a network of dynamic interactions, with both individuals and objects, that drive stability and change. In sum, we as consumers will consider how we "keep up with the Joneses" when making any change to our lifestyle, including changes related to energy-efficiency.

Societal influence, which includes maintaining the societal standard for cleanliness, convenience and comfort, becomes especially import if we want to influence consumers who would not otherwise be driven by environmental concerns. Barr, Gilg and Ford (2005) found that the group who labeled themselves as non-environmentalists rarely looked for energy-efficient products and only performed energy efficient activities that required the least effort. These non-environmentalists would also be turned off by any appeals to the conscience. Chang (2012) notes that there is a U-shaped relationship to guilt. If pushed to feel guilty about their contribution to the environment, the non-environmentalists could feel irritation and anger.

## CASE STUDY BACKGROUND:
## NB POWER AND THE CANADIAN ELECTRICITY INDUSTRY

NB Power is a publicly-owned utility that is fully integrated, meaning that it owns the end-to-end service of generating, transmitting and serving the customer. It has 13 generating facilities that include hydro, thermal and nuclear generation. It serves 397,000 direct and indirect customers and buys and sells electricity from New England, Québec, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island to meet customer demand (NB Power, 2015). It is the largest utility in Atlantic Canada with a net capacity of over 3,500 megawatts (MW). Over the past 15 years, NB Power has refurbished major infrastructure, including the conversion of Coleson Cove Generating Station to burn Orimulsion coal in 2004 and refurbishing its nuclear facility, Point Lepreau Generating Station, in 2012. This refurbishment was done to extend the life of these generating stations and to upgrade their facilities to be more efficient.

NB Power is investigating options for the future of its largest hydro generating station, Mactaquac, which is estimated to cost between $3 billion and $5 billion (CBC, 2014) depending on the option chosen. If the company can reduce customer demand, it may be able to reduce the number of power plants that require refurbishment and, therefore, avoid future costs (NB Power, 2014). Separate from the financial benefits, NB Power has been directed by its sole shareholder, the Province of New Brunswick, to implement Smart Grid technology, which can "maximize energy efficiency and reduce consumption" (Department of Energy, 2011) and to develop an electricity efficiency plan as part of the New Brunswick Energy Blueprint Action Plan. This plan also sets an objective for NB Power to have 40 % of its in-province sales come from renewable energy resources by 2020. NB Power is also required to meet the objectives of reducing its debt by $1 billion to achieve an 80/20 debt to equity ratio by 2021 (NB Power). For these reasons, it is imperative for NB Power to achieve success in its *Reduce and Shift Demand* program as it projects less electricity to be consumed and a cost avoidance of $927 million (NB Power, 2015).
The business impacts felt by NB Power, the growing cost of aging infrastructure replacement or refurbishment, along with the direction to run like a business and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the Province of New Brunswick, are representative of what is happening in the Canadian electrical industry. In a report from the Conference Board of Canada on behalf of the Canadian Electricity Association (CEA), it is estimated that electricity infrastructure in Canada, which saw its boom post-World War II and is aging,

will require $347.5 billion in investments between 2011 and 2030. In an effort to meet energy demands with minimal impact to the environment, there is a significant investment in energy research, development and design. In 2010-11, public spending in Canada totaled more than $1 billion, with just over half of that coming from the federal government (Natural Resources Canada, 2013). The CEA has developed a sustainable development and corporate responsibility policy with a goal to "integrate and embed sustainability within company operations and business models" (CEA, 2015). This is due to a changing electricity landscape that is seeing a growing demand for energy, attributed to the Asia-Pacific region (Natural Resources Canada, 2013).

The *Reduce and Shift Demand* program comes at a time when many utilities are engaged in energy-efficiency programs. An analysis of the CEA membership shows that of the 20 utilities that deliver electricity to end-user customers, half of them participated in branded energy-efficiency programs, including NB Power's *Reduce and Shift Demand* program (CEA, 2015). As such, an investigation of NB Power's strategy to introduce an energy efficiency program such as *Reduce and Shift Demand* is an excellent case study for the changing electricity landscape in Canada.

## METHOD

As seen in the literature review, there are as many approaches to convince customers to be energy efficient as there are means of generating electricity. A utility's ability to convince customers to practice energy efficiency is a complex social phenomenon. As such, it is best analyzed by a case study, as per Yin's (2014) research criteria. Yin also identified that research questions of "how" and "why" are best for case studies, identifying how NB Power makes sense of electricity and energy efficiency and why there may be gaps, is best served through a case study. Yin also states a case study works "when the investigator has little control over events" (Yin, 2014, pg. 1), which again, is the case when providing an analysis of NB Power's public-facing information. Yin also states the case study is appropriate "when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (Yin, 2014, pg. 1). Given the number of energy-efficiency programs currently happening across Canada, the investigation of NB Power's energy-efficiency program provides a good context to understand how utilities and we, as customers, make sense of electricity.

As this research is interested in how a utility communicates with its stakeholders, in this case, residential customers, a qualitative analysis of text used to communicate with residential customers on their website was used. Fairclough (2005) argues that discourses are elements of the social interaction in an organization and an essential part of organization studies. By understanding linguistic cues that occur in text and how they engage in conversation with their publics, we can understand the organization's sense of self. For Fairclough (2005), discourse analysis provides a realist approach to understand the process and agency of the organization, which is separate from the intended process, and agency held by the organizational structure. In essence, no matter the structure or intended purpose of the organization, discourse analysis, which includes analysis of text, provides clearer insight into the organization's sense of self.

The authors used a structured, conventional content analysis approach (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Research from the literature review provided a structured method of analysis for the text. Structured codes for content analysis were chosen based on the sensemaking properties of Karl Weick (1979). For Weick, sensemaking can be used to analyze an organization where "the current state of the world is perceived to be different from the expected state of the world," (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005, 409). Sensemaking becomes a means of breaking down an organization's written and spoken text to understand how it is organizing itself and making sense of this new environment. This aptly describes the process NB Power is experiencing, as their current state is influenced and altered by a changing business model, moving from electricity provider to energy advisor with *Reduce and Shift Demand*.

Weick's sensemaking approach provides a means of analyzing and grouping an organization's interpretation of itself. The seven categories are as follows: **1. Identity Construction** – Sensemaking is the process of labeling, noticing and bracketing details to construct an identity. **2. Retrospective** – An organization understands its current situation by comparing it to what has happened in the past and seeing a pattern of events. As such, it is not possible for an organization to understand its current scenario in isolation from what is used to be. **3. Extraction of Cues** – The specific details highlighted or downplayed in text can provide insight into an organization's sense of self and how they perceive the change happening. This is the same process that is connected to the construction of identity in that we draw focus on what cues are labelled and categorized. **4. Plausibility** – For Weick, making sense is to "connect the abstract with the concrete" (Weick, Sutcliffe, Obstfeld, 2005, 412), meaning that much of the cues extracted and sense made is based on abstract ideas held by an organization that is based more on a postmodernist view rather than a normative, objective reality. As such, organizations base their sense of self on abstract, although not necessarily factual or accurate, facts. Weick went so far as to say: "Sensemaking is not about truth and getting it right. Instead, it is about continued redrafting of an emerging story so that it becomes more comprehensive, incorporates more of the observed data, and is more resilient in the face of criticism." (Weick, Sutcliffe, Obstfeld, 2005, 415). **5. Enactive of the Environment** – Weick's sensemaking properties are not an esoteric exercise of organizing cues and reflecting on previous experience. The second question of sensemaking, after "what's going on here?" is "what do I do next?" (Weick, Sutcliffe, Obstfeld, 2005, 412). Sensemaking and actions are cyclical, as an organization tests the hypothesis of their cue extraction and organization, and the organization then reflects on the actions. **6. Social Sensemaking** – Cues that are labelled and categorized to identify the self are often done through discussion, reflection and opinion gathering, which require a social element. Weick felt that the conversation and debate across a system converges on an instance and that communication was central to how an organization made sense of itself (Weick, Sutcliffe, Obstfeld, 2005). In the case of NB Power, the social sensemaking is evident in how it refers to its stakeholders, whether as partners or customers. **7. Ongoing** – Sensemaking is about continuous redrafting, with ideas being incorporated and tested over time (Weick, Sutcliffe, Obstfeld, 2005). For NB Power, evidence of the ongoing sensemaking will provide insight into how it will continue to re-examine its extracted cues, continues to derive meaning from social exchanges with their customers and reshape the narrative.

The scope of the textual analysis focused on NB Power's corporate website directed at residential customers, including documents that are linked to the pages on the site. The textual analysis examined text that is directed towards customers from July 2012, when the *Reduce and Shift Demand* program was announced to the public, to December 31, 2015 including the following:  public-facing products and services pages http://www.nbpower.com/en/productsservices; that outline the services offered to customers;  the Smart Habits program http://www.nbpower.com/en/smart-habits that outlines the case for change for energy efficiency and the promotional programs available;  the news and media centre http://www.nbpower.com/en/about-us/news-mediacentre; that identifies the stories NB Power wishes to have in the news media and ultimately read by customers.

All content used for the analysis was text available to the public from www.nbpower.com. To narrow the scope, the pages that were written for residential customers, pages specific to Smart Habits, the NB Power blog, the news releases portion of the site (as these are news articles that would eventually be viewed by customers) and the corresponding reports and strategies mentioned in news releases, were analyzed. All parts of the website that were not part of communications to residential customers were excluded.

**ANALYSIS**

The text on the web pages was reviewed and analyzed by coding for the seven properties identified by Weick's (2005) sensemaking famework. The coded text examples were then grouped by individual sensemaking properties, and reviewed for evidence of emerging themes. Each of the code categories was grouped by year and by code category. The coded text was read by category to determine if there were common concepts or themes by code. The initial list of themes were then tested by going back to the source text on the site to see if the ideas were highlighted compared to other key messages.

Expertise emerged as a key component in NB Power's description of its own identity. For example, there are statements to the effect of "we are the experts" and "we know the power of nature." The Integrated Resource Plan (IRP), which outlines the 30-year projections of electricity demand and options for supply is required, uses cited material from institutes and refer to best practice models used (NB Power, 2015). There is a sense that NB Power is positioning themselves as the source of knowledge for understanding energy efficiency. Any elements of identity construction that mention strategic direction also mention that the Province of New Brunswick mandates the direction. For example, the vision of what NB Power will be is outlined in the Energy Blueprint authored by the Department of Energy and Mines. Included in the Energy Blueprint are instructions for NB Power to develop a reduce and shift demand program for the province. The IRP is required as part of the 2013 Electricity Act. There are frequent mentions of reliability and rate commitments that NB Power must adhere to, which are mandated by both the 2013 Electricity Act and the 2011 Energy Blueprint. Along with the mandated direction set by government, there is an acknowledgement that the business is changing, particularly in government reports. To reflect the change, and to highlight the *Reduce and Shift Demand* initiatives, NB Power uses a play on words with the term "shift." For example, CEO and Chair messages use the phrase "I look forward to the shift," or "a shift is underway," used in the 2012/13 Annual Report (NB Power, 2013) and 2013 news release (NB Power, 2013). The word shift is also used in the name of the electronic vehicle demonstration, "Shift Your Ride" that occurred in 2013 (NB Power, 2013).

The need to reduce costs reflects retrospective sense making. Cost reduction has been the reason behind many of initiatives to transform NB Power over the past few years, including a transformation project to reduce workforce and expenses and the cost avoidance from retiring generating units that will be experienced when the *Reduce and Shift Demand* program achieves its targets. Although reliability is important, particularly during the lessons learned from outages during recent storms, cost reduction remains the fundamental purpose for reducing and shifting demand. Many of the lessons cited that contribute to NB Power's direction are lessons learned from outages, cost-cutting initiatives and projects.

The majority of the text coded for cue extraction had the theme of incorporating the use of energy in the language and using quantitative measures and facts, most of them cost-related, to demonstrate the need for *Reduce and Shift Demand*. One of the more interesting trends in code shifting when analyzing the cue extraction properties of sensemaking is NB Power's shift from using the word electricity to the broader term energy over the course of time analyzed. The more traditional term "electricity" was the description used in text from 2012, for example, the 2012/13 report described NB Power's vision of "a sustainable electricity system." (NB Power, 2013). The term energy is incorporated more into the descriptive language of NB Power's mandate, as seen in the 2013/14 Annual Report when the nuclear generating station is "ensuring 75 per cent of New Brunswick's electricity demand is met by non-emitting or renewable energy sources by 2020" (NB Power, 2014). Energy and Smart Grid are incorporated more into the description of NB Power's business. By 2015, the language shifts to "energy" in their quarterly reports and describing the newly appointed members of the board of director as having "a wealth of experience in the energy sector" (NB Power, 2015).

Cost savings emerge as a frequently used cue in the organizational text. In these examples, dollars are provided as a measurement of consumption, rather than referencing or measuring electricity itself. The tools provided to the customer are categorized by how much it will cost to implement (NB Power, 2015) and the

tool to measure and understand kilowatt hours is ultimately calculated into dollars. Specific measures were used to demonstrate what the energy saving programs have achieved so far. The news releases for each of the LED street light programs consistently mentioned the "positive business case" of $6 million in savings over 20 years that determined the approach was feasible (Note the value is in dollars as opposed to kilowatt hours or tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions). Later news releases for the rebate programs cited potential savings. For example, citations of the 2015 rebates on programmable thermostat and water-efficient showerheads (Note: not referred to as "low flow" as they are commonly termed) have included the potential savings, this time, in both dollars and kilowatt hours.

Plausible language contains more use of adjectives, sometimes to a hyperbolic state. Rates are "low and stable," programs are "ambitious;" NB Power describes itself as "proud" to be engaging with customers; debt repayment is "aggressive." The majority of statements that would be classified as plausible are found in the quotes in news releases or messages at the beginning of quarterly or annual reports. For example, this quote from President Gaëtan Thomas, featured in a 2013 news release on the annual report: "During the past year, NB Power made great strides toward achieving our vision of being a top performing utility in North America," said NB Power President and CEO, Gaëtan Thomas. "A shift is underway at NB Power; one that will positively impact New Brunswick's energy future and offer our customers low and stable rates, and more choice, comfort and convenience in the future." (NB Power, 2013)

Examples of plausibility in NB Power's sensemaking are emphasized in the assumptions made make about their customers behaviours. In the above quote, Thomas is assuming the change NB Power will make will have a positive impact on customers. Although that may be the goal, it is not necessarily a certainty. Another example can be found in the 2015 news release on the Smart Habits rebates:

> Since October 2013, NB Power customers have taken advantage of $2.3 Million in incentives and saved 19 Million kWh worth of energy or about $2 Million worth of electricity. (NB Power, 2015) This quote makes the assumption that the purchase of energy-efficient light bulbs and water-efficient (not low-flow) showerheads has translated into a reduction of energy (not electricity). However, there is no evidence presented other than the potential if all purchased devices were used and used properly.

**Key Themes**

Two dominant themes emerged through the analysis, identity construction (specifically of the NB Power customer) and the need for economic savings. When referring to the customer, NB Power uses language to indicate its customers are influential to the program. For example, the news release announcing *Reduce and Shift Demand* presented customers as being placed "at the centre of our electrical system" and "providing choices for customers" (NB Power, 2012). The sentiment of customers being central is also reflected in the 2012/13 Annual Report (NB Power, 2013). NB Power emphasizes customers as being central to every part of their business. Rebate programs are described in the 2014 third quarter report as "tools to control [customers'] monthly bills." (NB Power, 2014) The electric car demonstration was created "to ensure customers have access to the proper technology" (NB Power, 2013).

By highlighting the customer when explaining why a program is happening, NB Power is indicating the significance of their role. The text gives readers a sense of what the ideal customer is for NB Power, which is actively participating, making choices on the electricity consumption that align with NB Power's vision, and being capable. *The Reduce and Shift Demand* program is framed as providing choice to customers. In annual reports, news releases and on the description of the Smart Habits page on the website, the program is described as using technology to provide better or more choices for the customer. The customer is viewed as being empowered to make choices and NB Power is the facilitator to provide those choices. The customer is ultimately in control of the situation as they possess the choice to participate in *Reduce and Shift Demand*.

Customers are encouraged to share their energy-saving tips with others and are empowered to share their knowledge as part of the first Beat the Peak community challenge (NB Power, 2015). NB Power also indicates their relationship with the customer in the construction identity properties exhibited, in that they are the experts and source of information to share with c customers and help them learn. The customer's identity, through NB Power's lens, is a smart customer.

The main characteristic of NB Power's ideal "smart" customer is a customer who is driven by cost savings. Cost savings is the dominant argument presented to customers by NB Power to participate in *Reduce and Shift Demand*. The Tips page found in the Smart Habits section of NB Power's website begins with talk of making small changes that "can make a big difference in your electricity bill" (NB Power, 2016). Saving energy is directly linked to reducing a customer's cost. The tips themselves are organized in categories of no-cost, easy, low-cost, mid-range, and investment, with a number of dollar signs associated with the level of cost. In this case, the definition of an easy tip is the decision to avoid spending money rather than skill, knowledge or effort. Another example of *Reduce and Shift Demand* leading with the cost savings narrative is the number of energy efficiency rebates offered as programs. All programs offered by NB Power involve cost, which is the dominant incentive for savings. The driver for the customer to participation in the heat-pump rebate programs is to "stay warm and save" (NB Power, 2016). Staying warm, a social benefit, is not considered incentive enough.

## FINDINGS

The social and enactive properties of sensemaking demonstrated the importance of customers in the *Reduce and Shift Demand* initiative. Almost all of the examples of NB Power in the environment were customer engagement activities. As well, the social cues identified the importance of customers as the "centre" of the electrical grid and integral to the program. As such, one can infer that NB Power's purpose is to serve the customer, as well as placing a more powerful position on the utility-customer relationship. In previous iterations of NB Power, customers were dependent upon the utility to receive power, but had minimal agency beyond paying their bill on time, as there is no other means of getting electricity. In this current era of *Reduce and Shift Demand*, the level of dependency lies more with the customer as they are asked to use their influence, which is their consumption habits, to manage demand. As they are asked to invest in technology to become more energy efficient, partially offset by rebates, customers have the ability to say no to adopting Smart Habits, leaving NB Power with the possibility of the program failing. If *Reduce and Shift Demand* does not reach its objectives, NB Power may have to invest in refurbishing power plants in the long-term future, and lose the investment made in *Reduce and Shift Demand*. NB Power may have to make potential amends if customers feel dissatisfied with current or past service, as that will influence customers' trust and willingness to participate. NB Power is showing evidence of understanding this change in the relationship, as they published a lessons learned document in 2014 after their service was impacted by two major storms, causing days-long outages for customers.

NB Power has, thus far, focused the conversation with their customers on cost savings. As such, the organization assumes that customers will only be interested in the changes to their electricity bill from a bottom-line perspective. The more the focus is on the monthly bill, the more NB Power will have to demonstrate evidence of savings on the monthly bill. This can be a risk as other factors besides obvious consumption changes may impact customers' bills. If customers look to their bill to determine whether *Reduce and Shift Demand* pays off, they may mistake other factors for an increase in their bill, such as a change in climate from one winter to the next, a rate increase, or an increase in electrical appliances in a home.

As demonstrated by the framing of rebates as tools for NB Power's ideal customer and the dominant appeal of cost savings to the customer in the benefits analysis, NB Power assumes the appeal to save money will work the best to convince the customer to reduce and shift their demand. Although the financial incentives offered are available to all New Brunswickers, the *Reduce and Shift Demand* program privileges those customers who can afford to invest in the program. The rebates offered do not cover the full price of investing in the technology. Rebates on appliances are up to $50, which can be less than 10% of the value of investing in the appliance. The largest investment, a heat pump installation, warrants a $500 rebate to encourage customers to invest in a heat pump that will work during winter months. The electric vehicle program offers charging stations to customers who can afford an electric vehicle, which are traditionally more expensive than gas or diesel-powered vehicles. The limited resources offered for low income customers may isolate the group of customers who are in the lower middle class

and generate its own class system for how it treats customers. Outside of the one program for low-income customers, the majority of the "tools" for smart customers are aimed at customers who have either the time to research the requirements or hire a contractor or specialist to work with them. The language used on the rebate sites uses technical terms like "HSPF" (NB Power, 2105), which is a heating season performance factor, and CEE tier II efficiency level heat pumps. The language can be construed as isolating and assumes a certain level of education with their smart customers, which is the opposite of providing a means of two-way communication.

Although there is no question that NB Power's leadership is enthusiastic about the future with the *Reduce and Shift Demand* program, using terms like "transformation" and "shift," the language used does not align with the customers' involvement with the program. A shift or transformation implies a significant change in behaviour or environment. For customers, their participation in *Reduce and Shift Demand* has been limited to rebates on buying a different kind of appliance of product to perform the same function of lighting, heating or cooking their homes. This could potentially cause disconnect in attitude between customers and utility, which is supposed to be more partnered in their approach to energy efficiency. The misalignment in the language to the

actions asked of customers demonstrates how different the perspectives are between NB Power and their customers of what *Reduce and Shift Demand* means, and can risk any sense of collaboration of two-way communication.

## DISCUSSION

The language used by NB Power to describe their customers' role in *Reduce and Shift Demand* is more of a reflection of how they are making sense of the change and their identity construction properties of sensemaking rather than an accurate depiction of the customers. The persona of the ideal customer built by NB Power's narrative, that of a smart customer who uses electricity prudently and will automatically align with the utility's direction, assumes that customers are primarily interested in cost reduction and will use the tools provided by NB Power to practice smart habits. This could be because the main driver for NB Power is to avoid costs in the future by reducing the amount of infrastructure they need to build and maintain.

However, the inferred statement "all intelligent customers are customers who seek to reduce costs" is not a truism. Customers can practice the most energy-efficient practice by chance, given that they may live in an energy-efficient home, as Hille et. al (2011) reminds us in Godbolt (2014) that energy-efficient homes themselves contribute significantly to energy savings beyond customer intent. At the same time, the literature review tells us that customers, regardless of intelligence or capability, associate other meaning to electricity beyond cost. NB Power's narrative of *Reduce and Shift Demand* customer being focused on cost ignores the symbolic importance of electricity on our lifestyles and culture (Owens and Driffill,2008; Shove

2003). Shove's (2003) work in particular points to society's conventions of comfort, cleanliness and convenience are reflected in resource consumption.

Fisk's original work in 1973 cited cost savings for the customer as one of the methods utilities could use to convince customers to be more energy efficient. This aligns with NB Power's approach. It is one of the most commonly mentioned motivators in the literature, which points to a successful outcome for *Reduce and Shift Demand*. In the real-time electricity rates project in a Chicago apartment building recounted by Gyberg and Palm (2009), customers who were driven to save on their electricity bill maintained their efficiency habits, which affirms customers' positive response to cost savings. However, basing the energy efficiency discussion solely on financial savings and upfront costs may be isolating, as found by Fromm in Budinsky and Brant (2013). Customers in a lower socio-economic bracket may be sensitive to sharing whether they have the free cash available to participate in the rebate programs. Press and Arould (2009) also indicated that the people most likely able to invest in energy-efficiency programs are those who have disposable income to do so. The discussion on cost, combined with the requirement for customers to invest their own money to benefit from the rebates and programs, may limit the number of customers who have the ability to participate in *Reduce and Shift Demand*, let alone the desire. What is ironic is that those who would benefit the most from the cost savings, those in the lower socio-economic bracket, may be unable to participate.

One risk to *Reduce and Shift Demand* is the low emphasis on the moral and political "qualculations" made by customers in Godbolt's (2014) focus groups on energy efficiency. Many of the studies found that people who participate in environmentally friendly programs like *Reduce and Shift Demand* do so out of a moral consideration  (Godbolt, 2014) or from an inner sense of pride in their contribution to society (Barr and Gilg, 2006). As electricity is framed as a necessity, the driver for reducing costs isn't as high, as discovered when electricity consumption remained the same, even when a drought spiked hydroelectricity rates (Aune, 2004). Both Godbolt (2014) and Chang's (2012) research pointed to the idea that customers will bend to electricity efficiency, but only to a point where it's convenient and they no longer feel guilty. As literature shows, there is a myriad of drivers for customers to change behaviour; this means NB Power must look into other narratives that will appeal to customers. By missing opportunities to appeal to the consumers' desire to contribute to a societal good and to preserving the environment, NB Power may miss appealing to a portion of their customers. Even if Englis and Phillips's (2013) "30:3 Rule," where if the 30% of consumers who say they want to make environmentally friendly purchases, only 3% actually follow through, then there is a missed opportunity of consumers willing to make the investment. As well, this is not a zero-sum game where utilities can only choose one driver to focus on. Although there has been some progress demonstrated by NB Power as they placed some emphasis on environmental and social benefits as the program progressed, there is still room to grow.

## CONCLUSION

As we have seen in the literature, a consumer's relationship with electricity is complex. (Gyberg and Palm, 2009; Lopes et. Al 2012, Godbult, Aune, Sørensen and Ryghbaugh, 2014; Abrahamse et al. 2007; Shove, 2003). Customers view electricity as "bound up in our routine and habit" (Shove, 2003, pg 395). It is the foundation of a lifestyle that is taken for granted (Owens and Driffill, 1998), and yet is an unspoken symbol of the definition of society (Godbolt, Sørensen and Aune, 2014) in that a sense of security. There is a dichotomy of electricity being so vital, so important, yet not top of mind. For governments, electricity is seen as a commodity (Godbolt, 2014) that contributes to the economy and requires investment. The utility is a business that has a profit/loss statement and the government is its sole shareholder. The literature and the case of NB Power have demonstrated where a utility can be seen as an economic foundation in terms of creating jobs and fostering growth in industries. In New Brunswick's case, a utility is relied on to foster the growth of technology and innovation. For the electricity industry itself, the relationship with electricity

is both as a commodity, in that the emphasis is on cost and cost savings; yet Schulz et al (2008) and the Canadian Electricity Association (CEA, 2015) still believe the importance of the utility's role as fulfilling a public good. Government-owned utilities were established when it was not considered a profitable endeavour to provide electricity to smaller populated communities (CEA, 2015). As such, there is still a sense of obligation felt that utilities must do what is best for the customers they serve.

Each stakeholder has a different perception of electricity, yet they all have the same goal for different reasons, that is, to reduce the amount of electricity consumed. However, this goal has potential side effects. For customers, they are asked to invest upfront costs and possibly impact comfort, convenience and cleanliness (Shove, 2003). For NB Power, they are investing in a program that relies on outside parties that affect whether or not there is a pay-off. As NB Power is close to entering the half-way point of *Reduce and Shift Demand*, it is time to learn from the case studies of other utilities in the literature and evolve their communications approach to one that is more open and collaborative.

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**STORYTELLING AND SENSEMAKING:
A TEACHING ASSISTANT EXPERIENCE**

This paper recounts the experiences of a teaching assistant, within a Canadian business school, using an autoethnographic voice to tell a story. The main contribution is the introduction of Weick's version of sensemaking as both a theory and framework appropriate to, and applicable in, management education literature.

## INTRODUCTION

The objective of this paper is to recount the story of my experience in fulfilling the role of a teaching assistant in two undergraduate organizational behaviour courses within a Canadian business school during the fall of 2015. For clarity sake, I will reflect on my experience assisting in the online version of the business course. As a graduate student, I often found myself consciously engaged in trying to make sense of, and reconcile, the immersed experiences of scholarly work and a career interest in academia. In providing a personal narrative, told through an autoethnographic voice, I endeavour to explore my story and analyze the account from a retrospective, representational sensemaking narrative perspective. I attempt to use this autoenthnography to surface the varied experiences of what it means to be a teaching assistant, an uninvestigated opportunity, to hopefully encourage similar work in the management education field.

In the sections that follow, I will review the extant literature outlining the teaching assistantship in both situation and experience, raise autoethnography as my research method, and proceed to tell and 'make sense' of my story. The narrative I share forms the analysis of this paper that conceptualizes four key themes of my experience: 'being' a teaching assistant; the blended learning environment that spanned both online and traditional lecture-like formats; the budding relationship and subsequent socialization process shared with my supervising colleague, and; the ongoing sense of my own identity. Finally, I draw brief conclusions and reflect on the paper's storytelling process.

## REVIEWING THE EXTANT TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP LITERATURE

With an unstable economic recovery, government expenditure concerns, and the decline in full-time professorships (Smart, 1990), the rise in teaching assistantships in institutions of higher education have afforded a rare opportunity for pedagogically curious students to engage in a rich immersion of experience within a classroom learning environment. In some academic contexts, as research and service demands at large research universities present challenging time constraints for faculty in their undergraduate teaching responsibilities (Boyer, 1991a, 1991b; Katz, 1973; Serow, 2000), the role of a teaching assistant has become more pronounced in the classroom learning environment.

From some practices in the North American classroom, teaching assistantships symbolize their own institutionalized status and hierarchy. Teaching assistants are students themselves, usually a senior undergraduate or enrolled in a graduate program, and are often selected at the request of a faculty member responsible for teaching introductory course offerings. Graduate teaching assistants are often employed on a limited, part-time basis in traditional roles of laboratory coordinators, tutorial and seminar group leaders (Goodlad, 1997). The work and experience of a teaching assistant varies depending on how faculty wishes to utilize the individual. This chaos of meaning is especially pronounced given the preparation, or lack thereof, a teaching assistant receives. Staton and Darling (1989) posit that early socialization, as being both a discovered and learned experience, is vitally important as the skills, behaviour, and attitudes developed often informs future development as an academic.

While the role of a teaching assistant varies from institution to institution, it is reasonable to expect the assistant to engage in several key educational tasks related to the course. These responsibilities could include, but are not limited to: conducting lectures; moderate seminars, forums, and/or panels; host course review sessions; grade student assessments; proctor examinations; meet and advise students; and provide technical support as needed (Jacobs, 2002; Nyquist, Abbott, & Wulff, 1989; Peterson, 1990). As the increasing trend of students entering undergraduate programs continues, constrained resources undoubtedly contribute to mounting challenges faculty are forced to work with in their respective department. As a partial resolution to this crunch, and perhaps seen as an incentive to temporarily pacify faculty concerns, graduate students are often called upon as a resource to aid faculty and/or the program department in course delivery and administration (Park, 2004).

## REFLECTING IN AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC VOICE

Autoethnography is positioned in literature as an insightful and innovative qualitative method (Wall, 2008) that situates the researcher as the topic of interest. Autoenthnographers vary in their writing style and emphasis on auto- (self), -ethno (the sociocultural link), and -graphy (the application of the research process) (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Reed-Danahay, 1997). With the dawn of what has been proclaimed by some as the post-modern research era (Cooper & White, 2012), this emergent paradigm has precipitated a more sympathetic space for critical theories to emerge and occupy academic inquiry. In this space, many ways of 'knowing' vibrantly exist: "It [postmodernism] distrusts abstract explanation and holds that research can never do more than describe, with all descriptions equally valid . . . [Any] researcher can do no more than describe his or her personal experiences" (Neuman, 1994, p. 74). The autoethnography method "make[s] the researcher's own experience a topic of investigation in its own right" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 733) by offering a reflexive account that shares personal insight and experience of a particular inquiry. As a result of this introspective work, discourse is naturally written in the first-person perspective while combining a "careful description of the qualitative research with the subjective experience of the writer" (van Buskirk & London, 2008, p. 295).

Autoenthographies feature personal accounts pointing toward an end that seeks to understand the individualized voice of experience within a context of legitimate inquiry. These accounts begin as a story that invites personal connection rather than sterile analysis often characterized in the dominant mainstream realm.  While some have associated the authoethnographical voice as a personal narrative (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), this method also involves the act of telling a story with emphasis on "critical reflexivity and co-construction" (Woods, 2011, p. 156). It is, however, the notion of 'autobiographical ethnography' that the issues highlighted in this paper are situated; the celebrated form of "self-narrative that places the self within a social context... It is both a method and a text..." (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p. 9).

Stories recounted from the field are apt to be dispersive as the 'emergent present' continuously changes (Boje, 2008). Those listening to the story interject their own contexts, relative experiences, and imagination in a process of co-construction:

> The emergent present keeps changing, but since we cannot be in every room at once, we interact with others taking different pathways to make sense of it all. The act of storying usually leaves the explication to the listener's imagination, in acts of co-construction, in an emergent assemblage sensemaking, across several (dialectic or dialogical) contexts. (Boje, 2008, p. 7).

Throughout this paper, I retell my account as a teaching assistant, weave elements of reflexivity, and blend elements of sensemaking to provide a frame for others to make sense of the experience retold in a 'continuous' story. In a sense, therefore, this story is an emergent present that assembles the multiple contexts and experiences of the researcher.

The power of offering a personal story, told through the text of what Saldana (2003, pp. 224-225) deemed "a solo narrative... reveal[ing] a discovery and retell[ing] an epiphany in a character's life," provides me a unique opportunity to raise ideas and my personal reflection as I endeavour to find an appropriate forum for this autoethnographic contribution in the management education field.

Autoenthnography challenges the pseudo-reflexivity that is often featured as a proverbial asterisk or note in an otherwise objective-seeking manuscript by considering the personalized perspective of the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Wall, 2006). In this paper that seeks to delineate personal experience, the issue of voice matters. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) raise voice in research as a mechanism to mingle the experience of the researcher with the experience of those (things) studied; the result being a rich and informed text. "Taking the question of voice and representation a step further, we could argue that an individual is best situated to describe his or her own experience more accurately than anyone else" (Wall, 2006, p. 148).

## THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF SENSEMAKING

Through the gained experience in aiding a faculty member with the delivery and administration of two undergraduate organizational behaviour courses in the University's School of Business, I contend that the work of a teaching assistant is one wrought with elements of collaboration, confusion, and change. From my perspective, a teaching assistant attempts to achieve a harmonious order to this role and new environment that can be recounted through select sensemaking 'properties.'

Organizational literature provides ample examples of individuals who vie to understand the happenings of an environment that affect guided action (see Kayes, 2004; Mullen, Vladi, & Mills, 2006; Schwartz, 1987; Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007; Weick 1988, 1993; Weick & Roberts, 1993). Sensemaking, as described by Weick (1993, p. 635), "[is] the basic idea... that reality is an ongoing accomplishment that emerges from efforts to create order and make retrospective sense of what occurs."

The process of sensemaking "begins with a sensemaker" (Weick, 1995, p. 18) engaged in self-reflection that introspectively inquires of his/her environment and surroundings following a new, confusing, or complex experience. My story includes four sensemaking properties raised to analyze the ongoing narrative: retrospection, social, enactment (of sensible environments), and identity construction.

Retrospective processes in sensemaking allow individuals to interpret and make sense of events. Meanings are then interpreted through a lens of past experiences and understandings that form the present. In this case, as we will learn, my story is primarily set in the fall of 2015 yet features several earlier points in time that informs my experience. Enactment, a process in which individuals continually recollect past events and synthesize often nuanced meanings, creates an organizational reality that can be examined. Indeed,

such a reality was realized in my own personal experience that conjured mixed feelings about being involved in an online course environment given a mired background in independent coursework. As Helms Mills (2003, p. 55) pointed out: "[Identity construction] is at the root of sensemaking and influences how other aspects, or properties, of the sensemaking process are understood." Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005, p. 416) emphasize this relationship between sensemaking and identity in the 'enactment' of meaning by explaining: "when people face an unsettling difference, that difference often translates into questions such as who are we, what are we doing, what matters, and why does it matter? These are not trivial questions." Later I will discuss my 'evolved' identity as first a misfit graduate student to a colleague with newly discovered scholarly aspirations.

Now that I have reviewed the extant literature of teaching assistantships, introduced autoethnography as a method, and raised the sensemaking process as a framework to inform the analysis of this paper, I now offer and examine my own autoethnograpy – sharing the story and experiences of being a teaching assistant.

## THE RETROSPECTIVE SENSE OF BEING A TEACHING ASSISTANT

My story begins in early May 2015. I had survived my first semester as a graduate student within the university's accelerated Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree program. I had existed in this time and space before: the lull between academic terms creating an intrapersonal 'tension' that views intersession as wasted time. Since beginning the program in January, I had leveraged the professional graduate degree to an end: garnering a necessary breadth and depth of management knowledge in preparation for potential doctoral work. The MBA program at the university, at least at the time of this story, emphasized flexibility in completing the degree. This could be accomplished vis-à-vis a variety of avenues: directed studies, internships, and visiting student coursework, to name a few. I sought to 'go rogue' by taking advantage of my own academic path in seeking a directed study course in pedagogy – a perfect opportunity to best position a future in the teaching circuit.

Traditionally offered as an elective course within this business school's doctoral program, Unbeknownst to me, a directed study in pedagogy under the auspices of the MBA program was uncommon if not ever done before at the business school. Nevertheless, naïve and ambitious, I contacted the faculty member through the initial assistance of a mutual friend. The faculty member also taught within the doctoral program and regularly offered this type of directed study opportunity to doctoral students. She graciously agreed to supervise me in an MBA directed study course. Normally, as part of the doctoral course requirements, the student is expected to attend classes and subsequently deliver 1-3 lectures; assist, with supervision, in the marking of assignments and examinations, and; shadow the faculty member, over the term, to get a 'real time' sense of student administration and delivery in a compulsory undergraduate organizational behaviour course. This experience culminates in a paper on some aspect of pedagogy, mutually agreed upon by the supervising faculty and student. In my unique case, adjustments were made to allow for scheduling (i.e. her class time coincided with a course of my own) and for my limited experience in producing a quality research manuscript. Also, as the supervising professor was scheduled to teach an online version of the same course, she was able to offer me a teaching assistantship for that course offering, which was organized through the university's continuing education program. This enabled me to observe the different methods of course delivery and student responses to the same material. What I had agreed to was a semester's experience of fulfilling the teaching assistant role, however, what I ultimately received was a wealth of practical teaching advice, a mentor, and insight into the local academy.

Thus far, I have provided a contextual account of how I had initially 'became' a teaching assistant in two undergraduate management courses. What has been shared thus far is typical of the retrospective property of sensemaking insomuch as I have detailed my own experience as being meaningful in a number of areas:

intended future work, the expediency of a degree program requirements, and personal interest. This cascade of project work entailed multiple meanings and, had impeded decision making. Weick's (1979) concept of 'future perfect thinking' is reconciled here as my personal sensemaking journey extended beyond the present (MBA degree program) and into the future (possible work as an academic). To that end, Weick (1995, p. 29) suggests "present decision can be made meaningful in a larger context than they usually are and more of the past and future can be brought to bear to inform them."

## MIXED FEELINGS ABOUT THE MEDIUM: THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

The online course was the first mediated course I had ever been involved in as a student in a formal postsecondary context. This was also a new experience for my colleague as well since the online course was her first opportunity to teach from outside the traditional face-to-face lecture style using this university's learning management software.

Prior to attending my first class as an undergraduate student several years ago, I had taken an introductory financial course required for licensure within the Canadian securities industry. The professional development institute delivered the course through an independent study program. Students receive course materials (consisting of two textbooks) and work through the theory and activities independently at their own pace. Upon the conclusion of each textbook, student learning is assessed by a two-hour multiple-choice examination hosted in multiple approved exam centres across the country. It was the summer of 2010 and my success was assumed. Perhaps this was an immature approach to independent learning. Nevertheless, I was determined to attain this lofty goal. As the summer progressed, my success became mired in failed exam attempts. This experience was new to me and often presented a cloud of uncertainty that became difficult to make sense of. How could I, a former honours student, not achieve success in an introductory course? Could it be the delivery style of the course? What does this mean for a future application to an undergraduate business degree program? Unfortunately, failure informed my worldview for several years as I categorically denounced independent learning styles and mediated delivery strategies in higher education. I fell victim to hindsight and creeping determinism, constructing an internal bias against unconventional pedagogical methods (i.e. anything other than the traditional face-to-face lecture).

Returning to the emergent present of the story, I now move to the early days of September 2015. It is the first week of classes and I am slowly adjusting to my new role as a teaching assistant. I recall feeling reluctant to subject myself to a (feared) repeat experience of failure in online learning. How could I engage with students registered in an online business course delivered asynchronously when I, myself, experienced failure in the past? Here, once again, we see elements of Weick's (1995) 'retrospective' sensemaking property in my own lived experience of failure. Further, could I navigate the university's dauntingly complex learning management system as a teaching assistant? This dynamic would be much different than my past experience. After all, I would be a facilitator of a virtual learning environment whereas in the past, I was the student behind the computer. A few studies have found student familiarity and comfort with the use of online technology to increase throughout the duration of a course (Allan, 2007; Dineen, 2005; Eveleth & Baker-Eveleth, 2003; Silbergh & Lennon, 2006; Yoo, Kanawattanachai, & Citurs, 2002). I found this to be true for myself, not as a student but now teaching assistant, as I quickly grew comfortable with the learning technology with each passing week.

Fortunately, at this university, the business school is partnered with a university-managed support department whose mandate it is to manage professional and continuing education. This meant that my experience would include a rich support of knowledgeable specialists whose job is to aid in the technical delivery of courses. The affirming support I had received from the department became an invaluable resource to me personally, as well as my faculty colleague on many occasions throughout the semester. For example, in preparing for each weekly learning module, we previewed student case discussions and

assignments. Near the end of the semester, a case assignment became unexpectedly unavailable for students to view. Both my colleague and I held a limited technical skillset in the university's learning management software. Instead of panicking, we reached out to our colleagues at continuing education and because of our rapport, they were able to quickly resolve the issue, diverting a potentially embarrassing and stressful predicament.

The course was organized according to learning modules prior to the start of the semester. Each week featured a different topic/theme corresponding to the course text. My responsibility, as mutually agreed to, was to monitor the weekly discussion forum by assisting students in crafting their responses to be more reflective, and grade evaluations while maintaining a gradebook spreadsheet of each student's progress. I found myself becoming more comfortable and confident in the online medium as the semester progressed yet it was not without intentional practice. As an active participant within this process, the aid of the continuing education program and the mutual learning experience shared between myself and my faculty colleague challenged my personal reservations about online learning strategies. Without questioning this inherent bias, I would simply replicate what research has confirmed: an attitude in academia to marginalize the unfamiliarity of online learning (Allen & Seaman, 2009; Kim & Bonk, 2006; Puzziferro & Shelton, 2009). Here I note the importance of 'enactment' in that I produced, through both my initial reservation and deliberate practice, part of the environment that I faced (see Pondy & Mitroff, 1979), eventually coming to terms with my previous experience in mediated learning contexts.

Reflecting on the use of technology, given the asynchronous nature of the course's virtual delivery, I felt it had contributed to an lack of immediacy between myself and students. It has long been recognized that immediacy behaviours contribute to successful collaborative learning (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997). In this case, immediacy is the degree to which psychological closeness exists (Wiener & Mehrabian, 1968) as exhibited through such face-to-face behaviours as smiling, the use of accentuating gesture, and eye contact. I felt that the online medium lacked a certain degree of richness in developing a familiar relationship often shared between the supervising faculty and teaching assistant, and students. Drawing from Blumer (1969, p. 8) and his work in symbolic interaction:

> Human beings in interacting with one another have to take account of what each other is doing or is about to do; they are forced to direct their own conduct or handle their situation in terms of what they take into account. Thus, the activities of others enter as positive factors in the formation of their own conduct; in the face of the actions of others one may abandon an intention or purpose, revisit it, check or suspend it, intensify it, or replace it.

This shared relationship between faculty and student, from my experience as a student, is formed quickly in the traditional lecture-based learning environment yet lacks in the mediated context. From the 'social' property of sensemaking, I note that my experience was contingent on others: my faculty supervising colleague and students. The social property is realized insomuch as it arises from the shared interaction between both 'audiences' and, in this particular case, exhibits what Weick (1995: 40) posited: "social influences on sensemaking do not arise solely from physical present."

## A BUDDING MENTORING RELATIONSHIP THROUGH SOCIALIZATION

From our first meeting, my faculty colleague had naturally embodied the role of a mentor. This was initially exhibited in not only agreeing to the terms of a directed study but also through her generous teaching assistantship offer. My desire was to work alongside an accomplished management scholar and seasoned professor in pedagogical practices. To be offered an opportunity to advance in the academy through her association and expertise was indicative of my colleague's interest in developing aspiring (junior) scholars.

Her unwavering support went so far as to sponsor me as a new teaching faculty for part-time appointment, a process prescribed by the university's management department. My colleague provided an unwavering reference in support of teaching opportunity applications as well as freely share her wealth of course materials (i.e. PowerPoints, lecture notes, and student assessments). Throughout the semester, I endeavoured to be a listening ear and sought to subject myself to any teachable moment. As a result, my supervising colleague could provide invaluable insight into personal successes and challenges in the university classroom, departmental politics, and encouraged other faculty friendships.

When formal training is a norm, it is typically provided by the academic department or university. Such departmental programming often favours policy and procedures rather than effective teaching strategies and techniques (Gray & Buerkel-Rothfuss, 1991). In terms of organized training programs, new teaching assistants can learn core, generic teaching skills (Abbott, Wulff, & Szego, 1989). Often, training is less formal. In this sense, training is an ongoing 'program' through on-the-job teaching experience. While I can only speculate, I believe this would be true at this business school given its size and national prominence. From my experience, this was certainly not the case. Given the nature of our directed study, the course being exclusively offered as an elective typically within the business school's doctoral program, my colleague had several years' experience working with and guiding teaching assistants through pedagogy coursework. Training could be conceptualized as being organic; shaped through an ongoing dialogue throughout the semester.

We had agreed to meet on a weekly basis to review the previous week's progress (e.g. student contributions, assignment feedback, and course sequencing plans). Often our discussions would entail stories of previous course offerings, namely student success and failures. For instance, I had learned that the course had been intentionally structured to entail a significant element of collaboration. This was to purposefully encourage students to work with those whom they would not ordinarily have an opportunity to form such relationships. In this course, a sizeable portion of those enrolled were international students whose native language was not English. By organizing the course in such a way that emphasized group work, I was able to observe from an instructor's perspective, the rewarding yet challenging dynamic of group work in a multicultural classroom. We had also remained in close contact, exchanging hundreds of emails during the twelve-week semester, often discussing issues relevant to the week's learning module. Our correspondence often interjected bits of shared advice and lessons from experience. In this sense, the ongoing dialogue resembled more of an apprenticeship than a formal training program.

## AN EVOLVING IDENTITY

Beginning with the first class of my MBA degree program, and continuing throughout much of the program, I felt as though I did not belong. Undoubtedly, this was precipitated by the unique story of my admission into the university's MBA program. The business school offered two cohort-style entries into their suite of MBA programs: September, when most students begin an academic program, and January, traditionally a cohort reserved for part-time, mature, and/or students receiving advanced standing in prerequisite coursework. I had hastened my undergraduate degree work to begin this MBA program in January. My journey was unique; I was the lone fulltime student joining classes with those whom I would be disrupting an established and cohesive cohort-like dynamic. Recalling my first day of class, mixed emotions of an imposter-like syndrome surfaced. This was a new environment with students whom I believed knew more than I did. My identity shifted from a confident undergraduate to a timid, graduate student left to my own sensemaking environment to reconcile this new-found identity. In a sense, Weick's (2005) enactment of 'sensible environments' is at play here. I had enacted an environment that constrained my action through the belief of inferiority. Little did I know at the time that by the end of the semester, I would have gained a wealth of introductory management 'knowledge' and several friendships to carry me through the degree program.

Desiring to take an active role in directing my graduate student experience, I was fortunate to become acquainted with my faculty colleague who, through a series of emails and meetings, graciously offered me an opportunity that had ultimately challenged my personal sense of identity. Reflecting on the experience I can identify a gradual formation of two clashing identities: my identity in the new-found role as a teaching assistant is anchored in the selfless personal investment of my supervising colleague, and; my identity as reprising my institutional role as a graduate student within the MBA program.

Among the seven characteristics that serve as a guide for inquiry in sensemaking is that of identity construction (Weick, 1995). Gililand and Day (2000) argue the construction of identity to be a key aspect that differentiates sensemaking from the basics of the cognitive psychology discipline. It is within this sense that identity construction "is at the root of sensemaking and influences how other aspects, or properties of the sensemaking process are understood" (Helms Mills, 2003, p. 55). In fulfilling my responsibilities as a teaching assistant, feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt would surface early in the semester. What could I possibly contribute in a classroom of students who are my peers? Want and Kleitman (2006) problematize this sense of inadequacy and doubt by finding that those who fall victim to this often-debilitating feeling are intent on perfectionism – typical of an hypercompetitive academic culture. Not only did I embody this tendency, unknowingly at the time but can appreciate in hindsight, I actively engaged in perfectionism to prove my worth as a teaching assistant, and especially with students whom I wrongfully assumed to be my peers. It had become an accepted identity I grappled with throughout much of the semester. However, similarly to my discomfort with the virtual learning environment, I felt as though my sense of identity through this new experience had also changed (for the better) as the semester unfolded. I was no longer a teaching assistant grappling with conceptions of inadequacy, rather, this experience provided a needful exercise in humility. While discussed in terms of organizational change, Gioia, Schultz, and Corley (2000) forward the idea of identity as being fluid, not nearly as enduring as earlier work in the field previously suggests. Observing this notion of identity's malleable properties through the lens of my personal experience, I feel this to be a fair and appropriate representation. Upon the conclusion of the semester's work, I once again returned to a fluid sense of my social identity as a graduate student, albeit at the conclusion of the degree program.

## CONCLUSION

From the beginning of my MBA experience, I had wished to forge my own path. I was not sure of what that would ultimately resemble, but I was adamant about intentionally blending elements of independence and self-study to a renown program. This, of course, was also motivated by my aspirations to an imagined future involved in scholarly work. My story is likely similar to those who have had the fortunate experience of establishing a working relationship with a faculty colleague that unexpectedly morphs into rewarding academic opportunities. It begins with tales of hardship (i.e. feelings of inadequacy), continues in a fashion of uncertainty (i.e. the uneasiness of delivering a course online), but concludes with a resolution that far outweighs the plot's anguish: the repertoire of learned experiences enjoyed between a teaching assistant and his/her faculty colleague. By taking a social risk in reaching out to a colleague with whom I had no prior relationship with, I was able to not only submit myself to an outstanding colleague whose experience is revered within the academy, but also gain a mentor's advice and guidance in my continued academic life. Resulting from this experience, I have gained an appreciation for and understanding of what it means to serve the often-loathed role as educator within the academy. Contributions permeate the prestige of publications; they entail the transfer of knowledge and engagement in classes, fostering close relationships with students and protégés, and serving the institution for purposes beyond oneself.

In beginning the account of my autoethnographic story, I had situated my experience to frame the basis of the interwoven analysis and discussion that constitutes this paper. Particularly, my interest in organizational sensemaking, considering its emphasis on identity and meaning, had drawn me to Weick's (1995)

framework to 'fit together' the puzzle pieces of my teaching assistantship experience. In my use of sensemaking as both a theory and framework, I introduce the teaching assistant experience as a context worthy of empirical work in the interpretive paradigm. From this, I identify at least four sensemaking properties from my own experience that extends the theory into yet another realm. When we examine the sparse work that delves into the teaching assistant experience from a management education perspective, sensemaking is appropriate as we consider the "modest amount of empirical work on sensemaking... accumulated so far... [A]almost any kind of work is likely to enhance our understanding" (Weick et al., 2005, p. 417). Novel as it may be, the contribution of a piece that features autoethnography as a method, and sensemaking as a theory and framework, is itself a unique feat.

In writing this piece, I have endeavoured to be as candid as possible. The challenges of a teaching assistant are often discussed in the literature yet personal experience seems to be a silent topic void of an autoethnographic voice.  In this reflection, it is my hope that by offering insight into this semester-long tale of reprising a teaching assistant role, I can build on and encourage the work of others who embark on this path of collaborative learning.

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**EXAMINING HR INTERVENTIONS FOR
SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE:
A QUASI-SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH EVIDENCE**

**ABSTRACT**

Sexual harassment is a prevalent issue in the work context, and it is critical for Human Resource professionals to understand the impact sexual harassment has on both individuals and organizations (Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007). This paper uses a quasi-systematic approach to gather sources of evidence on how organizations have treated sexual harassment and the effects of sexual harassment in the workplace. The evidence identifies multiple interventions implemented by organizations in order to decrease the incidence of sexual harassment in the workplace. These interventions include promoting an organizational climate that is intolerant of sexual harassment, proactive policy measures, sexual harassment training, and bystander intervention. The interventions were assessed for their effectiveness. While the findings provide an understanding of what conditions may diminish the likelihood of sexual harassment occurring, there is limited evidence as to what works. That is, the evidence does not point to a particular strategy that provides the solution to ending workplace sexual harassment. Practitioners should use these findings to become aware of what is currently being done in organizations in response to sexual harassment and what considerations need to be made when implementing strategies.

**INTRODUCTION**

Despite the prevalence of occurrences of sexual harassment in the workplace and discussion in both academic and popular press literature, the concept is still not specifically defined and differing definitions have emerged (McDonald, 2012). Overall, there seems to be a lack of consensus regarding the definition of sexual harassment, specifically when considering the behaviours and circumstances in which it occurs (Hunt, Davidson, Fielden, & Hoel, 2010). The Canada Labour Code (2013) defines sexual harassment as: "any conduct, comment, gesture, or contact of a sexual nature likely to cause offence or humiliation or that might, on reasonable grounds, be perceived as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment or on any opportunity for training or promotion" (para. 2-3). Consensus on a definition is important because it helps to shape the ways in which we reactively and proactively develop interventions and to reduce the incidences and improve the processes to help employees deal with these incidents in the workplace.

While the literature indicates that sexual harassment can have damaging effects on both the organization and individual level, there seems to still be more that needs to be done. In a 2014 survey, 75 percent of employees said that their company needs to pay more attention to sexual harassment. The dearth of attention might be attributed to a lack of organizational understanding from employees – for example, 34 percent of men thought commenting that a female's outfit was "sexy" was appropriate compared to 21 percent of females (Hemmadi, 2014). The Canadian Broadcast Corporation, a broadcasting organization that reports on the news of sexual harassment diligently, was found to have failed to create a work environment that

condoned sexual harassment in an inquiry following the incidence of Jian Ghomeshi (CBC News, 2015, 2016). This case illuminates the "knowing-doing gap" where organizations recognize the presence of sexual harassment in the workplace, but appear to remain ineffective in addressing it.

This research uses a systematic review approach to examine the research involving sexual harassment in the work context by asking the question: are there effective HR interventions to reduce the incidence of sexual harassment in the workplace? By examining this question, our systematic review seeks to establish if there are effective interventions HR can implement within organizations to address the issue of sexual harassment in a work context. We hope to provide insights and information to HR professionals regarding ways they can address sexual harassment in their workplaces.

## LITERATURE

Sexual harassment is a common occurrence in the workplace, affecting 40 to 75 percent of women and 13 to 31 percent of men (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2012). Approaches and interventions aimed at reducing and supporting targets of sexual harassment are critical for Human Resource (HR) professionals to understand for a variety of reasons. For example, sexual harassment can have negative mental, physical, and psychological effects on individuals from any socioeconomic group, and across cultures and countries. Sexual harassment can also have numerous negative effects on an organization including legal fees from litigation, unwanted publicity, lower productivity, increased absenteeism, and increased sick leave costs (Willness et al., 2007). Sexual harassment is increasingly seen as a management and leadership problem (Hunt et al., 2010). Furthermore, organizational and climate factors have been found to play a role in sexual harassment incidents, and research has called for the determination of effective strategies and initiatives to address sexual harassment prevention and elimination (Willness et al., 2007).

In a recent survey, 25 percent of those who reported sexual harassment felt that management was "unresponsive and dismissive" and 48 percent of those who felt sexually harassed reported after experiencing two to five instances of sexual harassment (Hemmadi, 2015). Seventy-five percent of the people taking the survey believe more attention needs to be given to sexual harassment (Hemmadi, 2015). In one recent case, a federal judge pressured an individual on whether she did enough to prevent being sexually assaulted (Harris, 2015). This indicates that a significant proportion of people who experience sexual harassment do not find management sympathetic or helpful to their plight and nearly half the time it takes a repeated offence in order to compel an individual to report.

Although reporting should theoretically lead to positive outcomes for both the complainant and the organization, by resolving the harassing situation, initiating recovery from the psychological damage that occurred, reducing exposure to liability and rectifying productivity losses known to be associated with harassment, evidence suggests that there is little difference in the outcomes between reporting and not reporting (Bergman, Langhout, Palmieri, Cortina, & Fitzgerald, 2002, p. 230). Negative outcomes are associated with either course of action for the individual, including low job satisfaction, psychological distress, anxiety and depression, job loss, career interruption, increased turnover and absenteeism (Raver & Gelfand, 2005, p. 387). Thus, only a fraction of the people experiencing harassment actually report it, and "fewer than 1 percent subsequently participate in legal proceeding" (McDonald, 2012, p. 9).

Evidence suggests that in addition to the negative outcomes for individuals, there are many negative outcomes for an organization when sexual harassment is prevalent. Incidents of sexual harassment in a group often create a generally stressful environment, and lead to relationship and task conflict, poorer team cohesion and team financial performance (Raver & Gelfand, 2005, p. 395). As Raver & Gelfand conclude, eliminating sexual harassment not only makes good moral and legal sense, but also makes good business sense (p. 395).

Cases continue to emerge from many organizations from universities to private industry – all seemingly highly flawed in the ways in which they have been handled by organizational leaders and HR professionals. This leads us to ask about the state of the current evaluated research evidence on sexual harassment interventions.

**Defining Sexual Harassment and Reporting**

A review of the literature by MacDonald (2012) suggests the definition of sexual harassment may be ambiguous. A better understanding of how sexual harassment is defined and its relation to unwanted sex-related behaviours appears necessary to help clarify sexual harassment to the general public (Magley, Hulin, Fitzgerald & DeNardo, 1999). This is critical because respondents in studies have been found to have difficulty understanding what actions were forms of sexual harassment

Mentioned throughout many articles is that study results indicate only a fraction of the people experiencing sexual harassment actually report it, and "fewer than 1 percent subsequently participate in legal proceeding" (McDonald, 2012, p. 9). One quantitative study focused specifically on the reasoning behind this stating, "data suggests that even relatively mild experiences with sexual harassment lead to negative outcomes" (Magley et al., 1999, p. 400). Many employees also don't report sexual harassment because they do not believe anything will be done to resolve the situation (Miceli, Near, & Dworkin, 2009). The research suggests that even though those who experience sexual harassment tend not to report, the negative psychological outcomes tend to be prevalent regardless (McDonald, 2012).

One study examined the consequences of reporting specifically, and found reporting sexual harassment often triggers retaliation, litigation, and negative health outcomes (Bergman, Langhout, Palmieri, Cortina, & Fitzgerald, 2002). The study also found those who report sexual harassment can suffer from lowered job satisfaction and greater psychological distress (Bergman et al., 2002). This evidence suggests, in certain work environments, the reasonable action for a person to take is to avoid reporting completely. To combat this, organizations must create a climate which is intolerant of sexual harassment because organizational climate affects both individuals and the way organizations handle sexual harassment reports. Specifically, organizational climate has been found to influence reporting and its outcomes through frequency of sexual harassment, organizational minimization of reporting, retaliation, and satisfaction with the procedure (Bergman et al., 2002).

**Causes of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace**

Six of the articles reviewed discussed the determinants/antecedents of sexual harassment. The meta-analysis performed by Willness et al. (2007) provides a comprehensive statistical synthesis of the empirical evidence regarding the antecedents and consequences of workplace sexual harassment (Willness et al., 2007). The authors found the antecedents of sexual harassment experiences could be categorized under two headings: organizational context and job-gender context (indicated in Appendix B). The article defines organizational context as the perceived risk to targets for complaining, a lack of sanctions against offenders, and the perception that one's complaints will not be taken seriously. Job-gender context refers to the gender nature of the job which includes measures such as the male-female ratio, the gender of the supervisor or whether the jobs are traditionally "masculine" occupations (Willness et al., 2007). The study by Chamberlain et al. supports this when they found the physicality of work encouraged both verbal and predatory sexual harassment (Chamberlain, Crowely, Tope & Hodson, 2008).

Another article separated the antecedents in a different manner by examining persona (harasser related) antecedents and situational antecedents (O'Leary-Kelly, Bowes-Sperry, Bates & Lean, 2009). Here, the

latter antecedent included characteristics of the target and that of the organizational climate. Ultimately, the evidence supported the earlier findings of Willness et al. (2007) in that the  role of the organization was of large significance as an antecedent to sexual harassment in the workplace (O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2009). Lastly, higher levels of team autonomy are found to be positively correlated with higher levels of workplace sexual harassment (Arthur, 2011). This finding implies that management oversight (or lack thereof) of employee behaviour impacts the occurrences of sexual harassment.

**Consequences of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace**

The consequences of sexual harassment in the workplace affect both the individual and the organization. Apart from any negative legal fallout at an organizational level, research shows targets often respond with work withdrawal versus job withdrawal (Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly, 2005; Willness et al., 2007). Work withdrawal refers to employee absenteeism, lateness/tardiness and task avoidance; whereas job withdrawal occurs when an employee leaves a position and looks elsewhere for job opportunities (Willness et al., 2007). This is reported as the most common response to sexual harassment experiences, and demonstrates that the negative outcomes of sexual harassment do not affect the target alone and have far-reaching consequences for the organization (Popovich & Warren, 2010). Occurrences of sexual harassment are also negatively correlated with all facets of job satisfaction (Willness et al., 2007). Interestingly, there appears to be a similar effect on organizational commitment, which could result in the targets blaming the organization for what they have suffered (Willness et al., 2007).

More sexual harassment occurrences indicated less civility in the workplace (O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2009). It has also been found that employees (of both genders) who work in environments permeated with negative attitudes and behaviours toward women experience negative effects on their psychological well-being and job-satisfaction. Furthermore, findings indicated multiple consequences for organizations such as a significant negative correlation with workgroup productivity, suggesting sexual harassment has disruptive effects on workers' abilities to work effectively as a team (O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2009).

## METHOD

We used techniques of systematic review to conduct the identification and inclusion of research papers for this study (Transfield et al., 2003). Although a full systematic review is optimal, this review is limited in scope and scale based on access to materials via a specific university library database license. Thus, we refer to it as a "quasi" systematic review to signal the limitations based on the databases available to the researchers at the time of conducting the study.

Search criteria used in this evidence assessment include multiple keywords: sexual harassment, human resources, HR, interventions, strategies, tactics, sexual harassment policies, and sexual harassment training. All searches included key words in the title and abstract of the articles (within text was not included), and Boolean searching was used. All searches were limited to full text and scholarly, peer-reviewed journals. The databases used to perform these searches were EBSCO Business Source Premier, Google Scholar, and ABI/Inform.

Academic journals are the only source of evidence included in this review with the end result evaluated by external evidence which addresses the effectiveness of HR interventions on reducing the incidence of sexual harassment in a work context. Articles included in this analysis are from tier one, two, and three journals (Harzing, 2015), are peer-reviewed, and relate directly to the question posed in this research. Both empirical and theoretical articles were included in this analysis.

Although more than 22 articles were found in the search, exclusion criteria were established to ensure the final review only included high quality, peer-reviewed research. Articles in journals rated below tier three, and popular press articles were excluded from this paper. Although some articles rated tier 4 (and lower) included information relating to the question posed in this paper, they did not provide high quality, reliable research which addressed the effectiveness of HR interventions on reducing the incidence of sexual harassment in a work context. This analysis also excluded articles which did not relate directly to the question posed in the research.

**Findings**

A total of 22 articles were included in this analysis, published between 1996 and 2013. Of the 22 articles, six were in tier one journals, eight were in tier two, and eight were in tier three. The impact of these articles range from being cited nine times to being cited 237 times. The quality and impact of these sources should be carefully considered when interpreting this review, as the evidence presented in tier three journals may not be as rigorous as the evidence presented in tier one journals. The paper includes levels of evidence theoretical articles, survey-based studies, experimental studies, and a meta-analysis (See Table 1). These levels of evidence all have varying ability to determine causal relationships, but each provide information and results useful in examining the question posed in this paper.
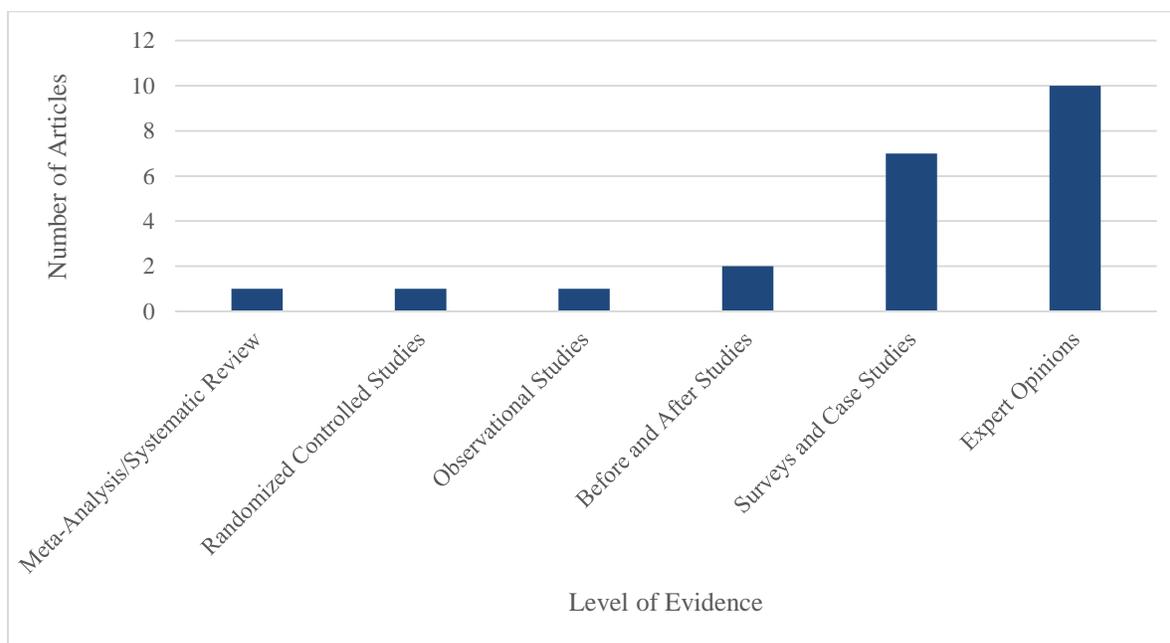
TABLE 1: ARTICLES BY LEVEL OF EVIDENCE



Table 2 summarizes the conclusions and findings of the 22 articles in a matrix format divided into two sections (See Appendix A for a listing of the articles). The upper section represents the research characteristics and level of evidence of the article under review. This high level analysis was performed to emphasize important research characteristics identified in the bibliography. The lower section identifies

common themes that emerged from the articles that met the inclusion criteria.  The connecting blocks are colour coded to indicate whether or not the article provided information on a given discussion point or resulted in inconclusive data.  With the exception of one meta-analysis and randomized controlled study, the articles were predominantly a mixture of case studies and expert opinion.  Most articles included some form of literature review, some even referencing other articles included in this analysis.  The result was the articles were in general agreement as to their specifics about HR interventions and conclusions.  The articles were published over a period of 17 years, suggesting that this issue is one of considerable and continued importance to the HR management community.

## TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE AND THEMES

Appendix A – Conclusions of the Evidence

| Articles / Areas of Review | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Research Characteristics** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Meta-Analysis/Systematic Review | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ |
| Randomized Controlled Studies | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | |
| Non-randomized Controlled Studies | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Observational Studies | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Before and After Studies | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | |
| Surveys and Case Studies | | ■ | ■ | | | ■ | ■ | | ■ | | | | | | | | ■ | | | ■ | | |
| Expert Opinions | | | | | ■ | | | ■ | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | ■ | | ■ | | | | |
| **Discussion Points** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Defining SH and Reporting | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| Causes of SH in the Workplace | ■ | ■ | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| Consequences of Sexual Harassment | ■ | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | ■ | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | |
| Addressing SH in the Workplace | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | ■ | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | ■ | ■ | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| SH training | ■ | | | ■ | ■ | | | ■ | ■ | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | |
| Bystander intervention | | | | ■ | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | ■ | |

| | |
|---|---|
| ■ | Article Discussion point |
| | Not Covered |

The following sections provide a synthesis of the research evidence for each of the themes identified in Table 2. Specifically, these interventions include those in the areas of the organizational environment, proactive interventions, sexual harassment training, and bystander intervention. Each of these broader areas includes specific examples of interventions that have worked, as well as a discussion of ineffective strategies and where more research is needed.

**Addressing Sexual Harassment in the Workplace**

*Organizational environment* - Organizational climate has been a focal point for many articles included in this study. An organization's culture and its context is a key determinant of sexual harassment and proper

understanding of how it impacts workplace behaviours is essential for finding and implementing effective solutions (Chamberlain, et al., 2008; Popovich & Warren, 2010). In fact, the sexual harassment climate of an organization has been the best single predictor of the incidents of sexual harassment in the workplace (Willness et al., 2007). This supports the earlier discussion of the organizational climate's importance as an antecedent of sexual harassment.

For example, organizations with larger power gaps tend to experience more sexual harassment issues, as well as in military settings (McDonald, 2012). Popovich & Warren (2010) proposed a model of sexual harassment as a function of power. The authors found that sexual harassment and other counterproductive work behaviours are symptoms of a culture of power issues within the organization (Popovich & Warren, 2010). By recognizing the influence of power in an organization, training programs designed to prevent sexual harassment may become more effective. Moreover, the culture of power can be used to directly reduce sexual harassment through the establishment of boundaries that are recognized and supported by the organization (Popovich & Warren, 2010).

Women tend to experience sexual harassment far more frequently and the more the workplace is gender balanced, the less sexual harassment is experienced (McDonald, 2012). Research indicates having fewer women in the immediate work environment increases the risk of sexual harassment incidents (Willness et al., 2007). Lastly, the existence of a social climate that is permissive of sexual harassment may be a necessary condition for sexual harassment to occur (Willness et al., 2007). This social climate also includes organizations, where through bystander non-intervention, may actually create an environment that is not only permissive, but encourages sexual harassment (Bowes-Sperry et al, 2005).

*Proactive interventions* - Creating an environment that works toward eliminating sexual harassment in the workplace not only makes good moral and legal sense, it makes good business sense (Raver & Gelfand, 2005). Good proactive policies and procedures for dealing with workplace sexual harassment are found to have significant impact on reducing the number of sexual harassment incidents (Bland & Stalcup, 2001; Willness et al., 2007). Consequently, these policies and procedures also support an organizational climate intolerant of the type of deviant behavior that is permissive of sexual harassment. In identifying the organizational policies and procedures that are most critical with respect to the prevention of sexual harassment, the occurrences of sexual harassment decreased (Willness et al., 2007).

Overall, the trend towards examining sexual harassment in the context of an organizational climate (O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2009) has led to the premise that the organization itself can be an inhibitor or contributor. Several articles recommend investigating the climate at an individual level but managers are encouraged to broaden their perspective to include the team or group level. Organizational policy can be proactive and effective in its approach to protecting people (Chamberlain, et al., 2008). Examples of specific proactive measures that organizations can implement are; (1) establish a written anti-harassment policy, (2) post the policy in plain view, (3) investigate sexual harassment complaints promptly, (4) take prompt remedial action, (5) monitor the parties after the incident, (6) consider multiple dispute-resolution options, (7) provide continuous training, (8) establish procedures for upper management review prior to any proposed adverse employment actions, (9) include a sexual harassment statement in applications for employment, (10) encourage management to maintain a regular presence with the workforce (Bland & Stalcup, 2001).

Furthermore, employers should consider that new social media technologies have created situations where "some employees complain that other employees have created a hostile work environment outside the office - through Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter - that affects their behaviour inside the office" (Mainiero & Jones, 2013, p. 190). Thus, employers should implement "clear social media policies that intersect with anti-

harassment policies already in place" in order to ensure that employees understand the rules around appropriate conduct (Mainiero & Jones, 2013, p. 199).

Management executives as well as team supervisors need to make it clear to all employees that sexual harassment behaviours are forbidden (zero tolerance) and will be dealt with swiftly and severely (Raver & Gelfand, 2005). When sexual harassment goes unpunished, employees may perceive that 'milder' forms of sexual harassment are permitted or even supported (Raver & Gelfand, 2005). Employers are also encouraged to stop emphasizing what employees should not do, but instead stress what employees should do - that is, treat co-workers with respect and civility (Deadrick, McAfee & Champagne, 1996). Again, the critical element is that through organizational change, management can focus on culture as the primary mechanism for preventing sexual harassment.

In Appendix C, an intervention model proposed by Hunt et al. (2010), is recommended for use by organizations to combat sexual harassment in the workplace. The model has three levels of intervention - primary, secondary and tertiary interventions. Primary intervention refers to the requirement for good policies and procedures and secondary intervention recommends that organizations design and monitor an effective complaints procedure, perhaps by utilizing a network of trained advisors to handle staff complaints (Hunt et al., 2010). Finally, the tertiary intervention level, also referred to as the rehabilitation stage, directs organizations to consider how employees are treated if sexual harassment occurs (Hunt et al., 2010). Management executives should regard this model as representative of a proactive (as opposed to reactive) strategy to sexual harassment issues.

*Sexual harassment training* - Sexual harassment training in the workplace has increased significantly and studies show that some form of training occurs in as much as 90 percent of the businesses across the United States (Perry, Kulik, Bustamante, & Golom, 2010). The effectiveness of this training, however, has mixed results. The types of sexual harassment training also varies dramatically within organizations, and could be individual or group taught and include videos, role-playing, interactive discussions, case studies, and computer based, and there is little evidence on which type is most effective (Perry et al., 2010).

Research before the year 2000 provides little information on the value sexual harassment training brings to an organization and whether incidences are reduced as a result of it. For example, although there have been a large increase in the number of training initiatives within organizations, little evidence points to how successful/unsuccessful this implementation is (Dobbin & Kelly, 2007; Perry, Kulik, & Schmidtke, 1998).

Following the 2000s, more research was available that investigated the effectiveness of sexual harassment training. For example, one study concludes that many training practices are useful for increasing sexual harassment knowledge, but not necessarily changing attitudes towards sexual harassment or lowering incidences (Bingham & Scherer, 2001; Perry, Kulik, & Field, 2009). Evidence also suggests that training results in dramatic increases in men's perceptions of what sexual harassment is (Antecol & Cobb-Clark, 2003), but the behaviour of men likely to sexually harass in the first place are not shown to decrease even after training (Perry et al., 2009).

Organizational climate has been shown to also play a large role influencing whether sexual harassment is prevalent in an organization as well as to the success of sexual harassment training. Implementing a blanket approach such as 'best practices' does not appear to have favourable results in reducing sexual harassment; however, implementing post-training sessions have shown a positive reduction in sexual harassment across the board (Perry et al., 2010). Post-training practices could include: refreshing training, reinforcing appropriate behaviours following training, and supervisors supporting the practice of what has been learned. Specifically, these behaviours have been found to reduce the frequency of sexual harassment complaints and also increase perceptions of the success of sexual harassment training (Perry et al., 2010). Organizations

that implement a wide range of post-training activities can ensure that what is learned in training is transferred back to an individual's job. One article recommends conducting a "transfer of training audit" to determine which training activities are in place before, during, and after training (Perry et al., 2010, p. 200). This allows companies to determine accurately where their training efforts are focused to re-allocate their resources if necessary to ensure post-training activities are addressed (Perry et al., 2010).

Results indicate the most important factor pertaining to the success of sexual harassment training programs in an organization depends solely on the context of the training – meaning the more support from the organization the more positive the results (Perry et al., 2010). When organizations follow a strategic approach in implementing sexual harassment training, instead of concentrating on the legal implications, much more positive results arise. This strategic approach could include: more pre-training and post-training activities; a thorough needs-assessment to identify training needs; and a subsequent identification of appropriate training content and methods. These organizations tend to have a positive environment surrounding the training processes as well as focus on long-term results; therefore, creating a more productive environment for sexual harassment training to succeed (Perry et al., 2010). Discussions around how to report sexual harassment, how it should be addressed, and the impact it will have on the individuals should also be addressed during training for more positive results in the workplace (Miceli et al., 2009).

Finally, organizations should be aware, as discussed in Bingham and Scherer (2001), that there are "inherent dangers in cutting corners when developing sexual harassment programs" as the typical assumption that some kind of action is better than no action at all is "wrong and potentially dangerous" (p. 145). Ineffective "sexual harassment programs may be particularly harmful because they can meet an institution's burden of doing something about the problem without actually affecting the problem in a positive way" (p. 145).

*Bystander intervention* **-** As mentioned, employees who have suffered from sexual harassment often avoid reporting the incident, often responding passively by denying the incident occurred and/or avoiding the harasser (Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly, 2005). As a result, it is critical to explore other ways to prevent or control the incidence of sexual harassment, such as observer intervention. Observers can intervene by reporting cases of witnessed harassment, stopping an unfolding event, or providing negative feedback to the harasser regarding their inappropriate behaviour. This gives observers the power to change a situation and have influence over the incidence of sexual harassment (Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly, 2005).

Despite this potential influence, the effects of intervention, non-intervention and the relative influence of bystanders with respect to sexual harassment have not been widely researched (Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly, 2005). Observer non-intervention often represents the status quo in many organizations and over time, and this non-action may actually create an environment that encourages sexual harassment (Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly, 2005). Future research is needed to examine the effects observers can have when intervening in sexual harassment situations (Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly, 2005).

## DISCUSSION

The findings provide an understanding of what conditions may diminish the likelihood of sexual harassment occurring. Identifying environmental factors that may contribute to the prevention of sexual harassment can assist HR practitioners in the formulation of programs and policies. Furthermore, the findings suggest that swift and decisive action must be taken in the event sexual harassment does arise. While human resource managers may be able to use these findings to better direct their efforts and create suitable action plans, the findings help only in indicating what has been done with limited evidence as to what works.

**Academic Contributions of the Study**

The majority of the findings do not appear to be consistent with what is done in practice. As the findings suggest, written policies seem to exist in practice; however, such policies do not follow the prescribed action of the literature (i.e. they do not clearly define sexual harassment or contain sufficient procedures to act on sexual harassment complaints). The University of British Columbia and Brock University have recently been criticized for perceived institutional indifference towards incidences of sexual harassment. For example, despite multiple complaints against a graduate student who was sexually harassing female students, the University of British Columbia failed to act promptly and displayed little support to the female students. The women felt "abandoned" during the investigation process and allegedly were told to "keep quiet" about their complaints (Mayor, 2015b). In practice, the manner in which complaints are handled seems to fail in providing support to those who report harassment and does not encourage decisive action.

Articles found in popular press depict a slow and indifferent handling of sexual harassment complaints. A possible underlying reason could be that policies are poorly constructed. Organizations may be able to follow a clearer course of action if policies are written to compel prioritized and swift action. The province of Ontario has recently proposed new legislation to combat this issue. The legislature is designed to reduce the threat of workplace sexual harassment and lend additional support to survivors. Organizations would be required to create policies that give more clarity to the definition of sexual harassment, have heightened responsibility in prevention and investigation, and be obliged to hire a third-party investigator at the request of an inspector (Pennington, 2015). The popular press shows that organizations in general seem willing to amend their sexual harassment policies if seen to be ineffective.

**Practitioner Implications**

Although taking appropriate action is important for fielding complaints, this relies on incidences being reported. HR managers should ensure that those who have experienced sexual harassment should be comfortable reporting their claims. While policies can be revised in order to mandate a more coherent process, management should carefully consider the approach that they take when managing the emotions of the reporting party and alleged harasser.

Organizations should create conditions in which individuals feel comfortable with reporting after the first offence and have confidence that there will be sufficient support from management. According to popular press, reporting sexual harassment can result in unwanted treatment and ineffective resolution. If the person accused of sexual harassment is not removed from their position, the reporting party can still have regular contact with the accused. This has been seen in popular press where one reporter was assigned to work under a different supervisor but still had consistent interaction with the person who sexually harassed her (Bustle, 2014). There have been instances of people who have reported sexual harassment and have been alienated or "forced out" of their job (Lublin, 2012). Organizations should monitor the treatment of those who report sexual harassment and develop clear expectations from other employees.

HR practitioners should be mindful of programs that can be implemented in order to prevent sexual harassment from occurring in the first place. As mentioned, environmental factors can play a key role in creating a culture that has a reduced risk of sexual harassment. The findings indicate a need for strong commitment from leadership in reducing harassment rather than concentrating solely on reducing liability. In popular press, leaders will release statements condemning sexual harassment; however, this is typically after an incident has been publicly reported and often appears to be an obligatory statement, rather than a commitment to change. Making it known that leadership does not tolerate sexual harassment within the organization is a proactive measure that could raise awareness and mindfulness of behaviour that might be harmful to others. HR practitioners should work with senior management in order to communicate this

sentiment on an organizational level. Although conveying intolerance towards sexual harassment is important, encouraging positive behaviours such as civility and respect are seen to be just as useful. This could be in the form of more comprehensive training and consistent follow up testing. Rewarding, praising, or positively reinforcing desired behaviours can help develop a culture where sexual harassment is not just inhibited, but also eliminated from thought. Educating and inducing respectful actions can help shape a safe workplace.

Evidence suggests that organizations should implement sexual harassment training in the workplace followed by post-training sessions. Consistently implementing post-training will ensure that not only short-term behaviours are addressed, but also imbed attitudes and beliefs in hopes to reduce occurrences in the long-term. Constructing a cohesive strategy that accounts for changing workplace variables (environment, climate, and culture) can be problematic due to the difficulty in recognizing these changes and implementing suitable policies. Leadership also needs to be cognizant of the impact they have on the rest of the organization. Leaders should clearly express their support when seeking organization-wide buy-in on reducing sexual harassment. This approach can positively affect sexual harassment occurrences in the workplace.

Encouraging citizenship behaviour in addition to self-monitoring for sexual harassment can be useful to the organization. Training employees on how to identify sexual harassment and how to appropriately intervene can aid in detection, prevention, and reaction. Creating a collective responsibility of maintaining a respectful work environment can help remove the full burden of responsibility from the harassed to report while also inspiring co-worker support.

Organizations should be aware of the composition of their workforce. The findings indicate that gender disparity might contribute to the prevalence of sexual harassment, and recent popular press articles corroborate this claim. In the firefighter profession, three percent of the workforce is female and in a recent survey, 33 percent of firefighters reported being aware of sexual harassment and did not act in any way to stop it. The article suggested that the paramilitaristic model of the firefighters makes it difficult to report or act because of the chain of command. Oftentimes the harasser might be the one who the person harassed would report to (Mayor, 2015a). HR practitioners should be aware of the demographic nature of the workplace as well as the organizational structure in which employees operate. Special consideration may need to be given to specific characteristics of the organization and a configurational strategic HR management approach may need to be adopted.

**Limitations**

This study provides a comprehensive review of the academic research available via the databases available to the researchers. We acknowledge that other articles may exist and would be helpful in the complete development of this work. However, the 22 articles included in this study are of high quality and represent historical and current research in this area.

**Future Research**

Research indicates an overwhelming consensus that organizations condemn sexual harassment; however, research regarding the implementation of effective policies and programs is severely lacking. In addition, the findings indicate limited evidence on what actually works in reducing sexual harassment incidents in the workplace and more research is suggested. While the findings suggest several methods in which sexual harassment could potentially be reduced, how these suggestions are to be implemented is not addressed.

Future research should evaluate the fashion in which these measures are integrated into the organization and the overall effectiveness in decreasing sexual harassment. As use of social media grows, it may be useful for future research to obtain an understanding on what effects this may have on HR policies and if training on the appropriate use of social media is required.

More research on effective sexual harassment interventions is certainly required. For a topic that gains an abundance of traction in the media, there is not as much substance when it comes to recommending solutions. Because of the sensitive nature of these incidences, careful assessment of evidence should be completed before generating interventions in the workplace, rather than relying only on popular press.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, HR managers have several considerations when developing a plan to counter sexual harassment. Organizations should establish an environment of respect and civility that does not condone sexual harassment. Leadership must clearly convey an intolerant stance on sexual harassment and intake complaints with care, responsiveness, and empathy. Sexual harassment should be clearly defined in policy and a coherent procedure should be put in place to ensure timely, decisive, and just action, on harassing behaviours that occur within the office or over social media. This permits identification of sexual harassment and instils employee confidence in organizational support. Organizational members should also be empowered to self-monitor their behaviour and take collective ownership in creating a respectful work environment. The climate, culture, and structure of an organization should be considered in order to customize policies for specific organizational needs. Lastly, change management measures should be taken in order to gain buy-in and understanding from employees when any intervention is implemented.

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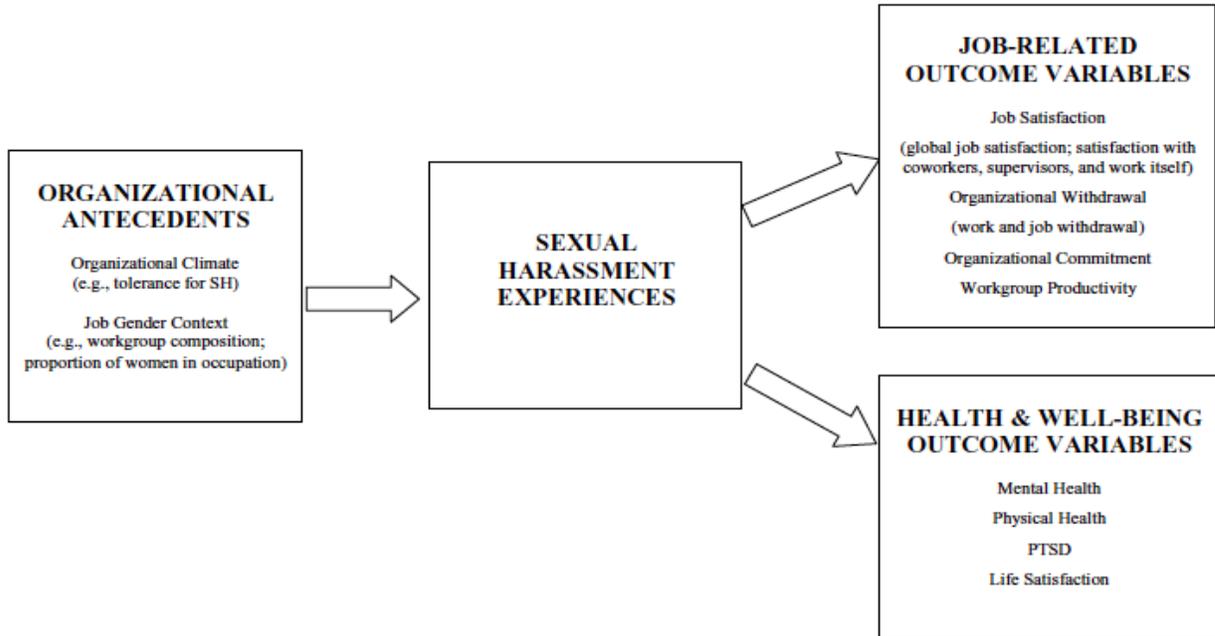
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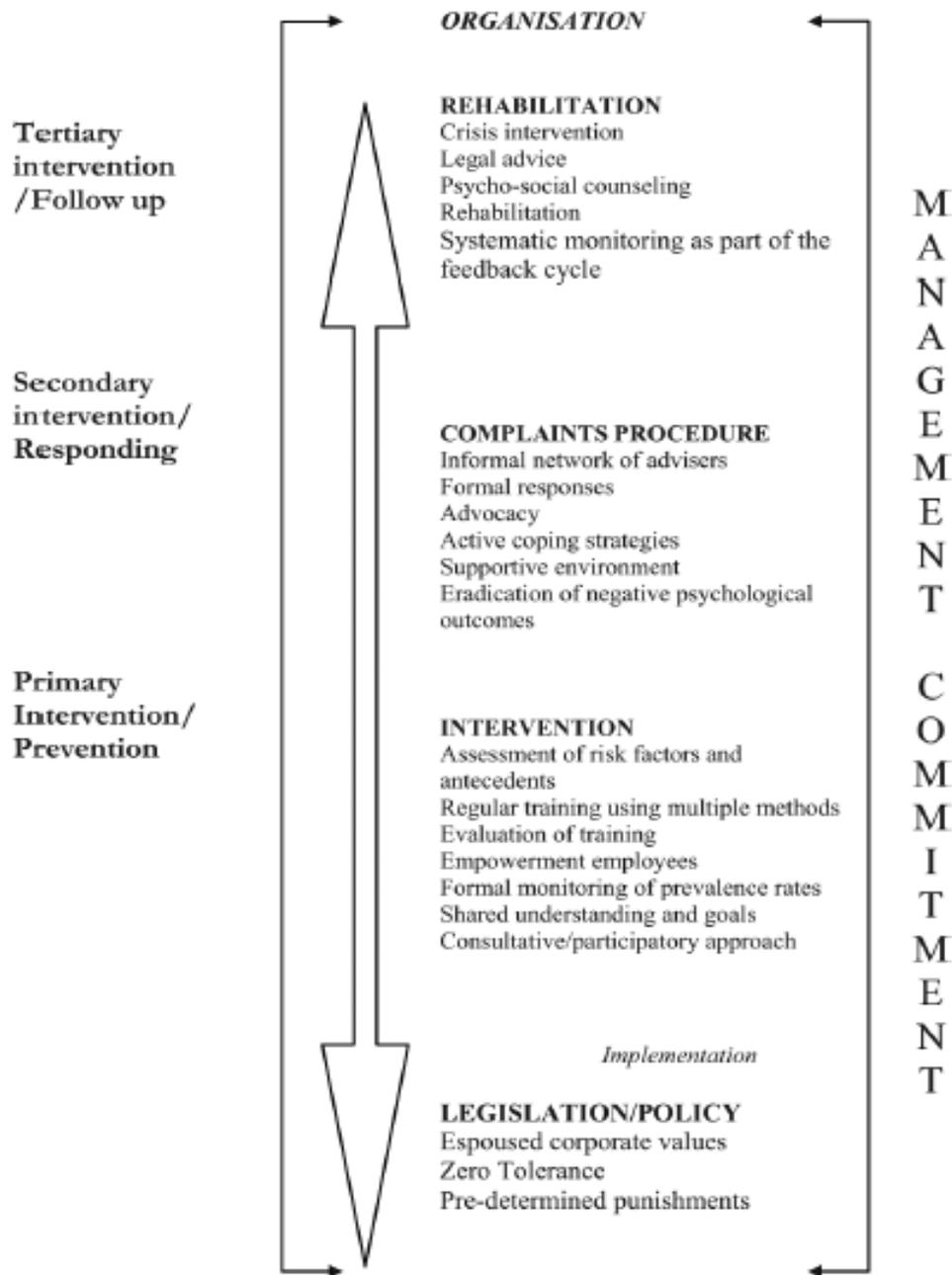
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**Appendix B: Visual Representation of Meta-Analyzed Antecedent and Outcome Variables in Relation to Sexual Harassment Experiences**

(Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007)

**Appendix C: Sexual Harassment Intervention Model**

**ORGANISATION**

**Tertiary intervention /Follow up**

**REHABILITATION**
Crisis intervention
Legal advice
Psycho-social counseling
Rehabilitation
Systematic monitoring as part of the feedback cycle

**Secondary intervention/ Responding**

**COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**
Informal network of advisers
Formal responses
Advocacy
Active coping strategies
Supportive environment
Eradication of negative psychological outcomes

**Primary Intervention/ Prevention**

**INTERVENTION**
Assessment of risk factors and antecedents
Regular training using multiple methods
Evaluation of training
Empowerment employees
Formal monitoring of prevalence rates
Shared understanding and goals
Consultative/participatory approach

*Implementation*

**LEGISLATION/POLICY**
Espoused corporate values
Zero Tolerance
Pre-determined punishments

**MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT**

(Hunt, Davidson, Fielden & Hoel, 2010)

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**REPLICATING SYMONS' STUDY OF
WOMEN'S REPRESENTATIONS IN BUSINESS SCHOOL CASES:
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF AN EMBA PROGRAM'S CASE STUDIES**

Symons' (2016) conducted a study examining Harvard Business School's top cases and found that women were represented as the protagonist in less than 11% of the cases. This study replicates Symons' work in a local context to examine representation of women in cases used to teach Executive MBA students. The findings and a discussion about academic and practical implications are presented in this paper.

## INTRODUCTION

In a recent article by Symons (2016), she reveals that only 11% of the top business school case studies have a female protagonist. Symons suggests that this lack of female representation in higher education materials contributes to the perpetuation of "think manager, think male", coined by Schein (1973) in her research which revealed that men portrayed the characteristics of a successful manager more often than women. Although there are many other factors that contribute to a lack of women in leadership roles, it is reasonable to consider the effect of embedded stereotypes in business school curriculum as a systemic process contributing to this outcome.

While Symons' research took into account the top business school case studies, she did not review case studies in a variety of business school curricula – omissions that opened an opportunity for this study to be conducted. Thus, the purpose of our study is to replicate Symons research in a local context to see if the findings are similar.

The aim of this study is to determine if the business school case studies from an Executive MBA (EMBA) program first year courses focus on business examples in which the leader is male; represent women in stereotypical industries; and/or represent women in negative situations. Through a content analysis of the first-year textbooks and other cases used in courses, the curriculum materials are examined using an adapted method from Symons' study.

This paper provides a brief overview of the literature, a description of the method, a presentation of the findings, and a discussion about the implications and future considerations for the use of case studies in business schools.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

We briefly review the literature in the areas of representation of women in leadership, the role of business school curriculum, and the Symons test and then provide an overview of the research context and the gap we intend to fill with this study.

**Representations of Women**

A key to successful business performance is linked to diversity within the workforce (Vagianos, 2013). For example, it has been found that diversity in the workplace brings different perspectives, experiences, and strengths that help companies to create stronger leadership within the organization (Medland, 2012). However, women are still significantly underrepresented in leadership roles, with only 20 % of women at the executive level (Scott, 2016). This gender gap is still evident in many organizations, where the majority of senior leadership roles and executive board seats are held by men. According to a 2016 Catalyst report of women in Standard and Poor's (S&P) 500 companies, 4% of CEO positions are held by women, 19% of board sets are women, 25% of executive/senior management roles are occupied by women, 37% of first/mid-level management are women, and the overall percentage of females in the workforce is 45%.

The lack of women in leadership roles is an issue for women who are looking to continue to grow in their career and for organizations seeking to change the ways by which they achieve results. This issue has a direct impact on business performance and on the bottom line. According to a recent article, "companies that want to boost their bottom line should promote more women to the executive suite" (Flavelle, 2016). This article asserts that a business reaches higher corporate success when there is diversity in the workplace with women represented in the C-Suite. The CEO of Catalyst agrees with these findings and indicates that "successful business performance is linked to diverse leadership" (Vagianos, 2013). Even with evidence that women bring great value to organizations, women are still underrepresented in leadership.

Although there has been a great deal of attention directed towards the number of women in senior levels of leadership within organizations, less effort has been invested to examine the underlying processes inside and outside an organization that perpetuates this phenomenon. Practitioners, such as Sandberg, COO of Facebook, claim that women systematically underestimate their abilities, where males tend to overestimate; women do not negotiate for themselves; and women are inclined to attribute their success to others (Sandberg, 2010). Sandberg also highlights the fact that woman tend to be the main child caregiver and to do a greater percentage of the household chores than men, which has an impact on their ability to achieve a work life balance. In addition to these reasons, it has been posited that women more often choose careers that are stereotypically female such as food, family, furniture, fashion, health (Symons, 2016). Due to these factors, it is thought that men have more opportunities within the workforce than women (Rotterdam School of Management, 2016).

Despite the variety of studies that offer insights about the barriers and challenges, few offer practical and actionable approaches to start to impact change at a more systematic level. In order to observe change for women in leadership, there needs to be action taken and an effort on both men and women to make this change a priority.

**Business School Curriculums**

From studies such as Symons', it appears that there is a gap in how business school curriculum portrays women as leaders. This issue is identified in another recent article, which states that business schools often speak about Bill Gates, or Steve Jobs, but fail to also discuss Sheryl Sandberg, or Christine Lagarde (Elmes, 2016), even though these women are admirable examples of strong leaders as well. The article speaks to the fact that as business schools continue to speak primarily about men in leadership, they continue to reinforce the notion of primarily male leadership (Elmes, 2016). This article speaks to the findings from Symons' study in which it is identified that men are more often the protagonist in cases studies that are being taught in business school. If business students are continuously taught using male leadership as examples, then it is reasonable to expect that when asked to describe a strong leader, they will describe male leaders.

Symons asserts that there needs to be awareness brought to the fact that women often do not appear in business school case studies and that instructors need to begin to promote women and to indicate to the students that women can be as successful in business as men.

**The Symons Test**

Symons conducted a review of 74 award winning case studies during the time period of 2009 to 2015 to determine how many of these case studies involved a male protagonist versus female protagonist.   The findings from the study showed that men were the protagonist in 62 of the 74 cases, while women were the protagonist in only eight of the cases; four cases did not have a protagonist identified (Symons, 2016).
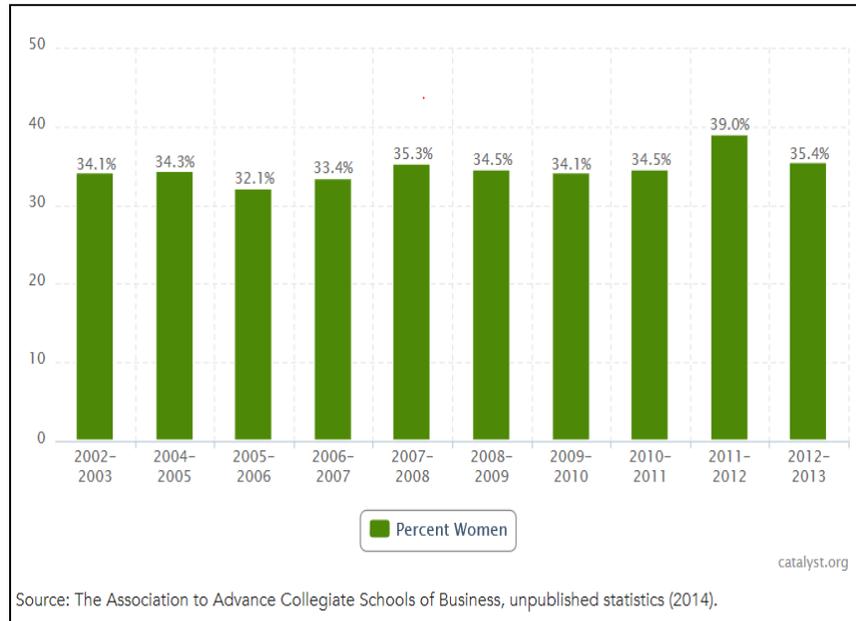
The "Symons Test" reviewed and analyzed case studies to determine how many of the cases are represented with a male protagonist and how many are represented with a female protagonist. Symons' also examined the number of cases in which a female was present in the case study and whether -- if a female was present – she spoke to another female about business. In order to systematically examine the cases from the EMBA program in this study, each case was reviewed and analyzed for particular variables and used a rigorous framework that was modeled after the Symons Test (See Table 1).

As a result of her findings of the underrepresentation of women in business school cases studies, Symons made several suggestions around what needs to be done to change these statistics.  Symons suggests that this underrepresentation is a systemic issue and that all parties, including, the case clearing houses, business schools, and organizations need to take action to promote change. She identifies ways in which action can take place to improve this percentage and promote female leadership in business schools. She asserts that there needs to be awareness brought to the fact that women often do not appear in business school case studies and that instructors need to begin to promote women and to indicate to the students that women can be as successful in business as men.

**Research Context**

The EMBA program selected is well established, having operated for over 20 years, and has consistent enrolment over this period of time. This program enrols approximately 30% women, which mirrors the broader trend of EMBA and MBA   enrolment (Schweitzer, 2016). According to Catalyst (2014) the percentage of women who hold an MBA is 35% in Canada. Figure 1 depicts the trend of the percentage of women who have earned an MBA in Canada between 2002 -2013.  Women continue to be underrepresented in most MBA programs and this has become a growing concern for women and for organizations (Schulte, 2015).

*Figure 1. Women's share of MBAs earned in Canada*

50
40
30
20
10
0

| 2002–2003 | 2004–2005 | 2005–2006 | 2006–2007 | 2007–2008 | 2008–2009 | 2009–2010 | 2010–2011 | 2011–2012 | 2012–2013 |

34.1%  34.3%  32.1%  33.4%  35.3%  34.5%  34.1%  34.5%  39.0%  35.4%

Percent Women

catalyst.org

Source: The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, unpublished statistics (2014).

## Research Gap

Symons' conducted this study in which business school case studies are reviewed to determine if a male or female is the protagonist in the case. Symons' research cannot be generalized since it only takes into account 74 of the top business school case studies and does not do a review of business school curriculum case studies. This study provides local context evidence to examine whether the phenomena exists within a specific program curriculum.

## METHOD

A content analysis methodology was used to guide this research project (Weber, 1990). The use of this method allows for a systematic and objective review of content into a manageable output that reveals an unprejudiced evaluation of the data. The outputs that are generated from the content analysis are used to examine and contribute toward answering this question: are business schools perpetuating the stereotype of successful leaders as male in the modeling of leaders in case studies?

### Document Selection Criteria

The documents that were examined are from an EMBA program and were accepted for inclusion if they met the following criteria:

1. Mandatory teaching materials from an EMBA program. This excludes any materials that were deemed to be optional by the faculty.
2. "Teaching materials" are defined as textbooks and case studies provided by the EMBA faculty members teaching courses in the first-year curriculum.
3. The time frame includes materials from the first-year courses of a cohort taught in the 2014-2015 academic year. This includes materials received between August 2014 and May 2015. The courses

"Leadership" and "Economics" were excluded from this study as the Leadership course is being reviewed in another study and Economics is no longer offered in the first-year curriculum.

4. The cases that were reviewed are from the first-year curriculum. These courses were chosen to provide a complete sample of a full year's case studies available to students in a business school.

**Documentation Analysis Framework**

In order to systematically examine the cases from the EMBA program in this study, each case was reviewed and analyzed for particular variables and used a rigorous framework that was modeled after the Symons Test (See Table 1). In addition to the aspects of the Symons test, we also gathered descriptive data about the authors of text books and case studies, title of the book and number of editions in print, year of publication, and country of publication.

*Table 1. Case study analysis framework*

| Descriptive items | Gendered analysis |
|---|---|
| Textbook title | Key characters in case |
| Textbook author(s) | Real or hypothetical |
| Textbook author's gender | Year of the case |
| Textbook author's university affiliation and country | Industry |
| Textbook year of publication | Country setting |
| Textbook previous editions | Success or failure |
| Textbook publisher | Roles of the other characters in the case |
| Textbook country publication | Main characteristics of the leader in the case |
| Title of the case | Other |
| *All of these fields for the case if the author differs from the textbook | |

Each textbook is reviewed for case studies, and each case study is then reviewed and analyzed using the established framework. An excel spreadsheet containing the above information is used for identifying the cases and capturing the data. Once all of the data is gathered, it is analyzed to determine the trends that emerged from the review of the selected materials.

**FINDINGS**

The courses determined to meet the criteria of delivery in the first year of the EMBA program included - Accounting; Corporate Finance; Human Resources; Operations Management; Organizational Behaviour; and Strategic Marketing (See Appendix A for Text Titles and Authors). Appendix A provides a list of the textbooks and authors that were used in these first-year courses. From these texts and course materials, 200 case studies met the inclusion criteria. In addition to these textbook cases, there were 43 other cases assigned and distributed by the instructors.

From the review of the first year EMBA course curriculum, the gender of the authors of the textbooks and case studies, as well as the instructors of the courses, were captured and are summarized below. Of the six courses, only one was taught by a female instructor.

The gender of the authors of the six textbooks that were used in the courses is shown in Figure 2. Of the six textbooks, three of the textbooks had both male and female authors, two textbooks had only male authors and one textbook had only a female author.

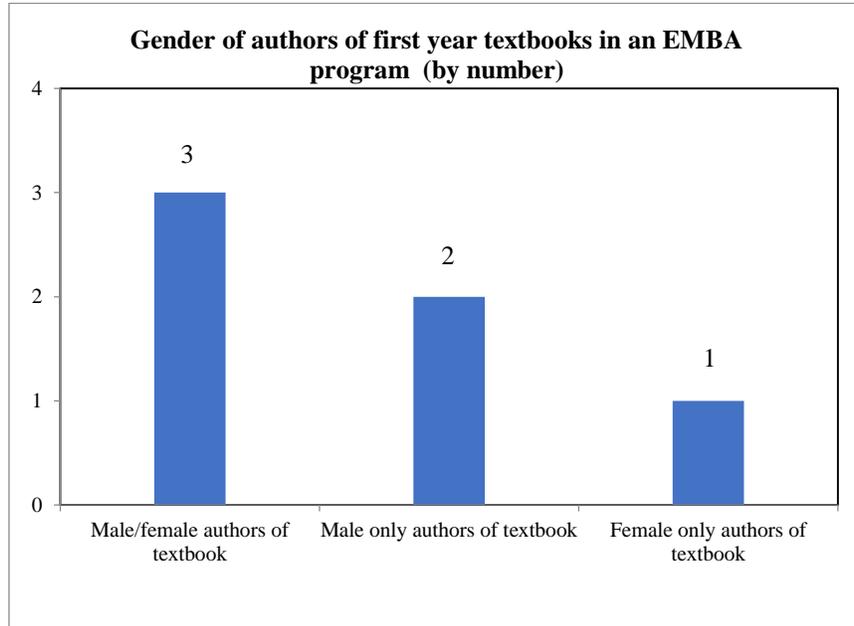*Figure 2. Gender of authors of first year textbooks in an EMBA program (by number)*



Figure 3 shows the breakdown of the authors of the 43 cases that were reviewed that were not a part of the course textbooks. Of these cases, 13 cases had only male authors, 4 cases had only female authors, 3 cases had both male and female authors, and 23 of the cases had authors where the gender was unidentified.

*Figure 3. Gender of case study authors in the first year of an EMBA program*
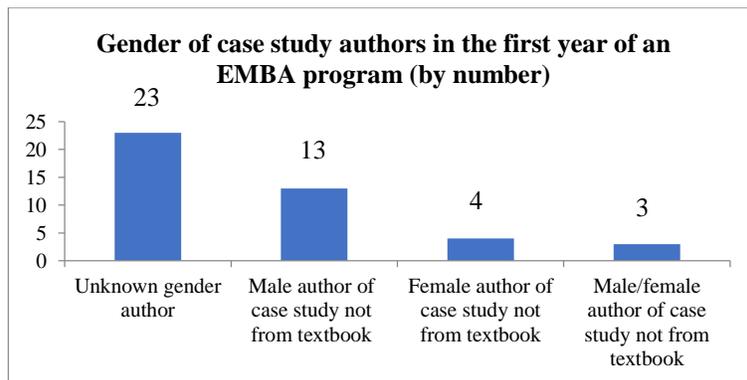


The gender of the senior leader in each of the case studies was analyzed and an overall summary of this is shown below in Figure 4 and Figure 5. Of the 200 cases that were reviewed, 55% of the cases had a man as the senior leader. 26% of the cases either did not have a senior leader in the case or were technical

application cases in which there were no characters identified. There were 16% of cases where a woman was the senior leader. In 4% of cases the gender of the senior leader was not identified. In Figure 6 the cases where there were no leaders identified or where the gender of the leader was unidentified have been removed. By removing these cases, we are able to clearly see the gap between the percentage of women as senior leaders and men as senior leaders in the case studies that were reviewed.

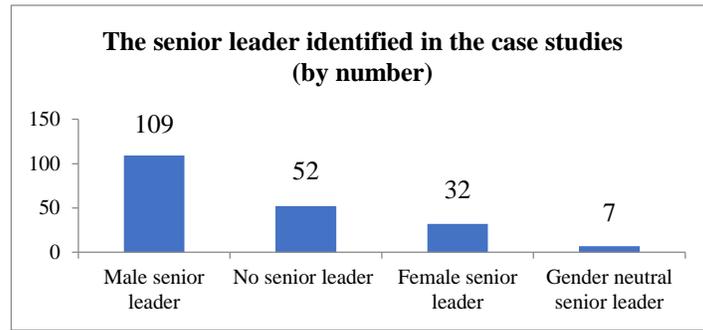*Figure 4. The senior leader identified in the case studies (by number)*



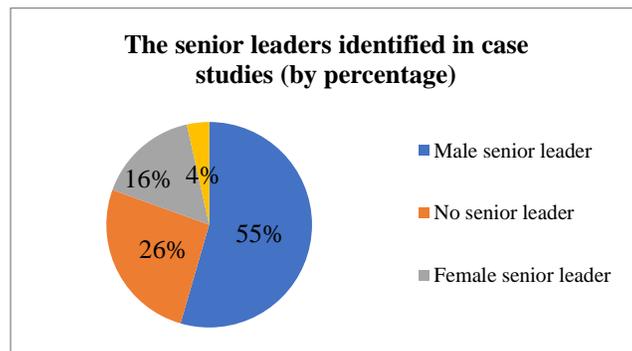*Figure 5. The senior leaders identified in case studies (by percentage)*
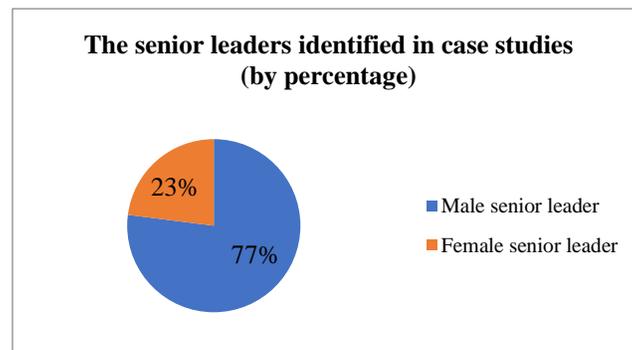


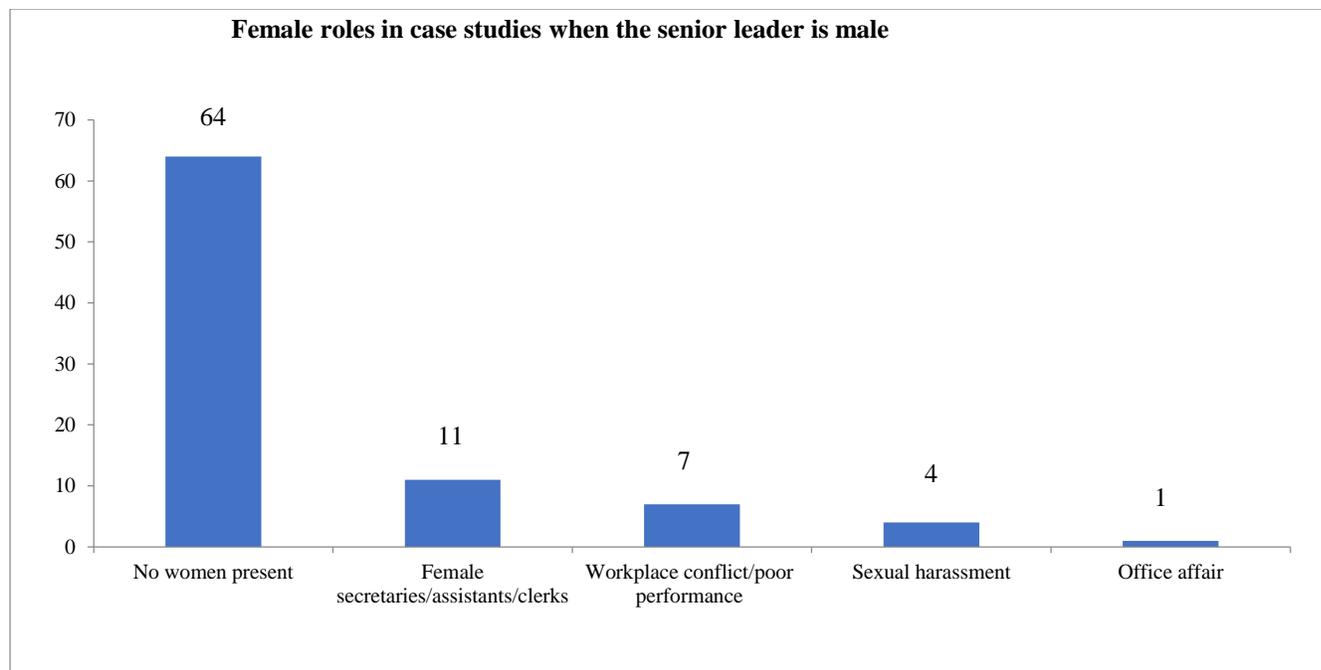*Figure 6. The senior leaders identified in case studies (by percentage)*

Through the analysis of the cases studied in this research, there is evidence that women do not hold as senior a position as men within the case study format. Figure 7 provides a breakdown of the top 5 roles in senior leadership for men when the man is the senior leader in the case and for women when a woman is the senior leader in the case study. In Figure 8, we can clearly see the difference in the number of men versus women in each of the top 5 senior leadership roles. Of the 109 cases in which a man is the senior leader, there are 25 cases where the male senior leader is the owner and 23 cases in which the male senior leader is the CEO. Of the 32 cases in which a woman is the senior leader, there are 6 cases where the she is the owner, and zero cases in which she is identified as being the CEO.

*Figure 7. Top 5 senior leader roles in case studies reviewed (by number)*
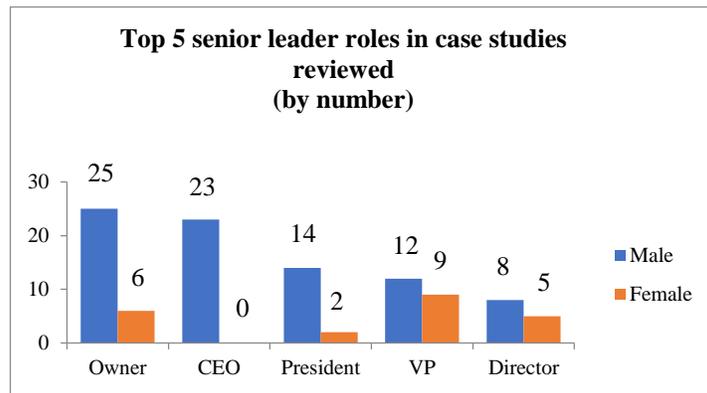


Also reviewed in this study was the role that women played in the case studies. Figure 8 shows the different situations in which a woman is present in these cases. Of the 109 men as senior leader cases, 64 had no women present. Of the remaining cases that did have women present, 11 cases identified the women as secretaries, clerks, or assistants; 7 of the cases indicated that the issue was due to the woman being in conflict or being a poor performer; 4 cases involved sexual harassment; and 1 case involved an office affair between the man and woman. The other remaining cases were either technical application cases, in which a storyline did not exist, or the woman was involved in a situation where she changed jobs due to her husband being relocated or through downsizing.

*Figure 8. Female roles in case studies when the senior leader is male*

**Female roles in case studies when the senior leader is male**



## DISCUSSION

In this study, the following trends were identified in reviewing case studies from the first year curriculum of an EMBA program: 1. there is a significant underrepresentation of women as senior leaders in the case studies in this EMBA curriculum; 2. the cases clearly represent men as leaders and encourage the "think manager, think male" phenomenon; 3. there is a lack of diversification in business examples that are being taught in this EMBA program; 4. there is a gendered gap in the curriculum when it comes to modeling leadership in this program. Thus, this EMBA program fails to provide women as role models for female students and perpetuates the stereotype of leader as male.

In the 200 case studies that were reviewed from the first-year curriculum of the EMBA program there were no female CEOs. This is an alarming observation and identifies a significant gap that exists in the curriculum of this program. This absence of a woman as CEO indicates to business school students that women who become the CEO of a company are rare, and suggests that it is difficult to achieve. Given the fact that diversity plays an important role in everyday business and -- as previously identified -- is one of the main drivers for a successful business, there needs to be a more significant female presence in business school case studies and more women depicted as senior leaders. The message that is currently being taught in this program is one that lacks diversification and encourages the "think manager, think male" phenomenon – not an encouraging message for a diverse cohort of aspiring business leaders.

On a positive note, from this research, it was found that in the case studies when a woman was the senior leader she was portrayed in a wide variety of industries. Historically, it was common that women were only identified in industries that are considered to be "pink topics" such as, fashion, family, food, furniture, and women's health (Symons, 2016). While some of the industries in the case studies did include these "pink topics", there were also women who were senior leaders in traditionally-male industries such as forestry, automotive, and manufacturing.

This finding is in line with the research findings from Symons (2016) in which 74 award winning case studies were reviewed and analyzed using a similar format to this study. Symons discovered that while the number of case studies with women protagonists was strongly outweighed by the case studies with male protagonists, the industries that women were present in also included the traditional male industries. While this diversity of occupation does signal a decrease in gender bias, the measurable lack of female representation in leadership roles in the case studies continues to perpetuate a negative gender bias.

The Rotterdam School of Management asserts: "Business schools claim they are shaping management attitudes and practice. If this is the case, we must first acknowledge that business courses are not gender neutral and are perpetuating gender bias" (2016). The results of this study illustrate this assertion. The results also support and extend the findings from Symons' study and further demonstrate the gendered gap that exists in business school curricula and that continues to reinforce the traditional message that the successful business leader is a man.

**Limitations and Future Research**

The limitations of this study are that this is only a representation of one EMBA program and cannot be generalized as findings for all business schools. While the results from this study do suggest that this business school curriculum is perpetuating male stereotypes of leadership, we cannot conclude that all business schools are also perpetuating these stereotypes. In order to generalize that this trend is occurring in all business schools there would need to be further research done on the curriculum of other programs.

<div align="center">

**CONCLUSION**

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The review of these case studies strongly indicates that the majority of the case studies in this EMBA program represent strong leadership as male. These business examples that portray male leadership and male characteristics of what it takes to be a leader are being taught to business leaders in this EMBA program. In this, this EMBA program curriculum is similar to the 74 award winning case studies that were reviewed by Symons. Given these results, Symons' call for action surrounding this issue appears to be relevant in this EMBA program as well. Business schools must play a significant role in promoting women in leadership. Since school curriculum is a powerful method of transmitting norms and expectations, a gendered gap here demands further review and revision in order to ensure that female leadership and women's success in business are represented, are taught, and are normalized as part of the student experience in business school programs. As Dianne Bevelander, professor at Rotterdam School of Business, has cautioned, "How do we teach our leadership courses? Do we talk about Sheryl Sandberg, Angela Merkel, sisters Anne Wojcicki and Susan Wojcicki, what about Susan Barra – or are we still talking about the Jack Welchs and the Henry Fords? If leadership education does not make diversity a priority, change will be slow" (Rotterdam School of Management, 2016).

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*Appendix A:  List of textbooks reviewed*

| Title of textbook | Authors of textbook |
|---|---|
| Complete Book Title: Survey of Accounting<br>Edition: 4th<br>Year of publication: 2015<br>Publishing company: McGraw-Hill Education<br>ISBN number: 978-0-07-786237-4 | Thomas P. Edmonds<br>Christopher T. Edmonds<br>Philip R. Olds<br>Frances M. McNair<br>Bor-Yi Tsay |
| Complete Book Title: Corporate Finance<br>Edition: 6th Canadian<br>Year of publication: 2011<br>Publishing company: McGraw Hill Irwin<br>ISBN number: 978-0-07-109135-0 | Stephen Ross<br>Randolph Westerfield<br>Jeffrey Jaffe<br>Gordon Roberts |
| Complete Book Title: Canadian Human Resource Management, A Strategic Approach<br>Edition: 10th<br>Year of publication: 2013<br>Publishing company: McGraw-Hill Ryerson<br>ISBN number: 978-0-07-105155-2 | Hermann Schwind<br>Hari Das<br>Terry Wagar<br>Neil Fassina<br>Julie Bulmash |
| Complete Book Title: MM4<br>Edition: Student<br>Year of publication:2013<br>Publishing company: South-Western, Cengage Learning<br>ISBN number: 978-1-133-37240-0 | Dawn Iacobucci |
| Complete Book Title: Principles of Operations Management, Sustainability and Supply Chain Management<br>Edition: 9th<br>Year of publication: 2012<br>Publishing company: Pearson Education<br>ISBN number: 978-0-13-296836-2 | Jay Heizer<br>Barry Render |
| Complete Book Title: Canadian Organizational Behaviour<br>Edition: 8th<br>Year of publication: 2012<br>Publishing company: McGraw-Hill Ryerson<br>ISBN number: 978-0-07-040187-7 | Steven McShane<br>Sandra Steen |

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## LICKETY SPLIT ICE CREAM SHOP:
## THREE CASE STUDIES EXAMINING BASIC BUSINESS
## CONCEPTS AT THE INTRODUCTORY LEVEL

The following case studies, Lickety Split Ice Cream Shop (A): Investigating Forms of Business Ownership, Lickety Split Ice Cream Shop (B): Exploring the Break-Even Analysis, and Lickety Split Ice Cream Shop (C): Introducing the Management of Human Resources, were developed for application in an introductory business class at the undergraduate level. In addition to providing students with a context within which to practice rudimentary case analysis, each case also (a) permits the application of theory in a real, integrated situation, (b) provides a relatively simple context for exploration suitable to education level, and (c) creates opportunity for critical thinking and decision making.

Each narrative is field researched and decision-based, placing the student in entrepreneurial, small business situations. The problem in each case is clearly identified, and multiple criteria are provided to assist with decision making. The case studies are intended to be used sequentially, with each building upon the events and decisions of the previous. Each case is preceded by an abstract providing a brief summary of the narrative and outlining student learning objectives.

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## LICKETY SPLIT ICE CREAM SHOP (A):
## INVESTIGATING FORMS OF BUSINESS OWNERSHIP

Would be entrepreneur Alan Mackenzie is considering the establishment of an ice cream shop in his neighbourhood, but is unsure how he should proceed. While most of the start-up costs appear relatively straight-forward, the MBA graduate admittedly doesn't know much about ice cream – plus he's unsure as to which form of business organization is best suited to the operation.

Designed as the first in a series of critical thinking cases exploring basic business concepts, the narrative is intended for use in undergraduate Introduction to Business courses, and provides opportunity to discuss entrepreneurial motivation and forms of business ownership. Specific student learning objectives include the assessment of a small business opportunity and the comparison of three forms of business ownership (i.e. sole-proprietorship, partnership, and corporation).

**Lickety Split Ice Cream Shop (A)**

Alan MacKenzie let out a long sigh as he looked over the papers scattered across his kitchen table. The clock hands were approaching midnight, and he was still no closer to a decision about how to launch his new business endeavour.

"It's a bit of money to walk away from if I blow it," he thought. "But on the other hand, why wouldn't it be successful?"

He reached across table and pulled a pad of paper toward him. "Maybe if I sketch it out one more time it will be clearer."

## Alan MacKenzie

Alan MacKenzie was the 28-year-old owner of MacKenzie Business Consulting (MBC), a small business that specialized in planning and analysis for small and medium sized enterprises. He was quite proud of the business, which he had started when he was studying for his MBA at Dalhousie University. He had found MBC the perfect venue for applying the skills he had developed during his studies, and the business had grown to the point that it easily supported him as its only employee.

Alan continued to live in Old Mill Lake, NS, the community in which he had grown up. He appreciated the semi-rural pace of life, and the fact that he knew most of his neighbours. He also enjoyed the fact that his morning commute involved only a short trip from his kitchen table to his basement office. Alan met with most of his consulting clients at their places of business, although he did occasionally entertain clients in his home.

## Lickety Split Ice Cream Shop

Alan had first noticed the "For Rent" sign in the front window of the Lickety Split Ice Cream Shop as he had been driving by one day in March. He was familiar with the business, having stopped in now and then for an ice cream over the last couple of summers. He had always liked the location – the shop was a stand-alone building with a barn-style roof that formed the western end of "Earl's Mini-Mall," a collection of small businesses located overlooking a quiet cove on Old Mill Lake. The prospect was beautiful in the summer time – customers would enter the shop over a wooden foot bridge and approach the counter which stood in the front of the building. After making their purchases patrons could then have a seat in the back of the shop (which housed five tables), or make their way outside and stroll along the shore of the lake.

Alan had been surprised to see that the shop was for rent. As far as he could tell it had always seemed pretty busy and he imagined that it must turn a reasonable profit. When he returned home that day he found his mind straying to the ice cream shop. "It might make a nice little side business" he thought. "Consulting keeps me busy, but it's not a 'traditional' product based business. This would be the 'real deal'... a good opportunity to put my training to work at a fairly basic level. Plus, it might make a few dollars as well."

The next day Alan called the number from the rental sign and arranged a meeting with Earl Newcombe, the elderly owner of "Earl's Mini-Mall."

## The Business of Ice Cream

Earl turned out to be a feisty retired plumber who had sunk some of his retirement funds into the development of the "mini-mall" that bore his name. He had built a main structure that housed a craft shop, a computer repair business, and an air-conditioning company. He had chosen to build the smaller Lickety

Split building because of a long-standing desire to run an ice cream shop – which he had done for four years until he had grown tired of it. Last year he had rented the shop to a local woman who ran it through the summer, but she had expressed no desire to come back – so it was for rent again.

Alan experienced a slight feeling of unease as Earl described the history of the shop. After all, if it was a money-maker, wouldn't Earl have kept running it, even if he didn't work the shop himself? And why wasn't the woman who ran it last year returning? Had she lost money on the venture? Alan probed as best he could, but all Earl would say was that the shop was "a gold mine" and would be a "great little investment."

What Earl had been clear on was what the opportunity would cost. He was firm on a four month (May – August) lease at $400 per month. Included in the lease would be:

- 1 large deep freeze
- 1 commercial ice cream freezer
- 1 2-door pop fridge
- 1 4 burner household stove
- 1 standard household refrigerator
- 1 commercial coffee maker
- 1 commercial drink mixer (for making milkshakes)
- Sundry utensils (ice cream scoops, spoons, etc.)
- 5 2'x2' tables
- 15 metal chairs

Electricity would not be included in the lease, which Earl estimated would run at about $50 per month. "You'll also need to have a Provincial Board of Health inspection done – that will cost you about $100," he said. "I found that most days you can run the shop with only one person here – except for evenings, and afternoons on Saturday and Sunday. If the weather's hot, the place will be packed. And most weeknights during July and August you can count on all the little league ball players coming by for a treat after the game."

Alan had felt a bit better as Earl continued to describe how the business had run. Old Mill Lake was a growing community with many young families buying and building in the area. Young families meant kids, and kids meant ice cream.

Earl also provided contact information for Scotsburn Dairy ("Their ice cream is the best," he said) as well as for soda pop and concession companies. "You'll want to stock more than just ice cream… I always found that candy, pop, and chips sold really well."

**Building An Ice Cream Shop**

Alan had come out of his meeting with Earl brimming with ideas about how the shop could run. "I think there's something here that could turn a dollar," he thought to himself. When he got home he took out some paper and sketched what he thought would be the rough costs of starting up the business.

**Lickety Split Ice Cream Shop**
**Projected Start-Up Costs**

| | |
|---|---|
| Rent Deposit (2 months) | 800.00 |
| Ice Cream Inventory | 720.00 |
| Concessions | 250.00 |
| Supplies | 50.00 |
| Electricity | 50.00 |
| Health Inspection | 100.00 |
| Miscellaneous | 50.00 |
| | |
| Total | $ 2,020.00 |

Alan had thought hard about the start-up costs – most, he felt, were pretty straight-forward, although he had to admit that ice cream was a bit of an unknown. Scotsburn sold an 11 litre tub for $30, and he felt that offering 12 flavours would be a good start. "I'll keep one tub of each on hand and the other I'll keep in reserve inventory," he mused. His allowance for concessions was admittedly a guess, but he felt fairly confident about his other numbers. "Of course, this doesn't address operational costs, but at this point I just want to know what it's going to cost me to set it up. I've got about $10,000 in my savings account, so as long as things don't go crazy I should have more than enough to float the business."

One thing that he was unsure of, however, was how to register the business. Alan had always operated MBC as a sole-proprietorship and that structure had, he thought, served him very well. "I suppose I could just run the shop under the larger MBC umbrella, but it might make more sense to keep it distinct."

Alan had taken the time to download three documents (Appendices 1-3) from the Nova Scotia Registry of Joint Stock Companies, the arm of the provincial government that handled business registration. The first dealt with sole-proprietorships and partnerships, the second with incorporation, and the third with how to decide between them. After reading the articles, however, he was still unsure as to which direction to take.

**Which Way To Go?**

Alan had finished his list of pros and cons regarding the various forms of business registration and begun doodling in the margins as he stared absently at the paper. "On the one hand I don't want to spend more money than I have to," he thought. "And simplicity is always nice. But what about protection? It's one thing to have a simple structure for MBC – I'm the only employee. What happens when I've got three or four employees working for me that I can't supervise directly? It's not like I'm going to be there with them all the time."

Alan dropped his pencil and pushed back from the table as the clock chimed. "12:30am," he thought. "Maybe I'm overthinking this. I mean, it's an ice cream shop, right? It's not like I'm going to be splitting the atom."

He rose and walked over to the kitchen light switch, clicking it off as he passed.  "Maybe things will be clearer in the morning," he said with a yawn.

**Appendix 1: Information Sheet**
**Nova Scotia Registry of Joint Stock Companies**
**Business Name, Sole Proprietorship or Partnership: Registration**

**Who Needs This Registration?**
Anyone who wants to carry on business in Nova Scotia, either on their own or with partners, and who wants: 1) to operate without legally incorporating the business; and 2) to use a business name that is different from their personal name(s). (For example, Alice Doe wants to operate a business and call it "Alice's Catering Service" or " Hantsport Caterers".)

Note: A "sole proprietor" is anyone who is carrying on a business which is not incorporated and who is doing so without any legal partners, that is, carrying on business by oneself. In Nova Scotia, a sole proprietorship is actually registered as a "partnership" -- but with only one partner listed, in other words, it is a partnership of one.

Note: It is legal to carry on business in Nova Scotia without getting this Registration provided that you use only your own personal name in your business dealings. (For example, Alice does catering but uses only her own personal name -- Alice Doe -- on all business cards, documents, forms, cheques, ads, etc. and does not use a name like "Alice's Catering Service" or "Hantsport Caterers".)

The applicant begins by reserving a business name. (See Business Name: Search and Reservation.)

Once a business name has been reserved, the applicant must then file an application for registration of the business name.

Heads up! The application forms use the term "partnership" -- but they CAN be used for registering sole proprietorships (and business names) because, legally, a sole proprietorship is actually a "partnership of one."

Once completed, the forms can be submitted by mail, or in person at the Registry office or any Access Nova Scotia centre, along with the applicable fee (see Price below). Fax is not accepted.

If all requirements are met and the application is approved, the Certificate of Registration will be sent to the applicant by mail. OR... If you prefer, you may go in person to the Registry or an Access Nova Scotia centre, and the Certificate of Registration can be issued while you wait, provided the name has already been reserved and all conditions (if any) are met.

**Waiting Period**
5-10 business days, provided that all the items that must accompany the application have been received (Please allow several extra days for mail delivery).

**Expiry & Renewal**
This registration is valid for 1 year. It can be renewed, and the renewal time is 11 months from the date it was first issued. The Registry will send a renewal form to the firm before the registration expires. Renewals cannot be submitted by fax.

**Price:  (No tax is charged)**
Initial Application: $62.89; Annual Renewal:   $62.89

Note: Fee must accompany application.

**Related Requirements**
Some or all of the following may be required:

If the business will be retailing taxable goods or services, they will need an HST (Harmonized Sales Tax) Registration with Canada Revenue Agency.

Most businesses operating in Nova Scotia must pay Business Occupancy Tax to the municipality where they are located.

Within one week of opening, a business must notify the Regional Director of Assessment, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

If the business hires any employees, it is responsible for deducting and remitting personal income tax, unemployment insurance premiums and Canada Pension Plan deductions to Canada Revenue Agency - Taxation.

**Additional Information**
It is legal to carry on business in Nova Scotia without a Registered Business Name provided that you use only your own personal name. (For example, Alice operates a catering service but uses only her own personal name -- Alice Doe -- on all business ads, documents, forms, cheques, letters, etc.) In Nova Scotia, you do not need a Registered Business Name to get an HST (Harmonized Sales Tax) registration. It can be issued in an individual name.

**Appendix 2: Information Sheet**
**Registry of Joint Stock Companies**
**Business Incorporation and Registration**

**Who Needs This Incorporation?**
Anyone who wants to incorporate a business in Nova Scotia.

Issuing Department / Agency: Nova Scotia Registry of Joint Stock Companies

Before actually applying for incorporation, each applicant must have their business name approved for use in this province. (See Business Name: Search and Reservation.)

Note: Numbered names (e.g. 1234567 Nova Scotia Limited) are available without a name search if incorporation is required quickly. The name can be changed later or a business name registration made by the company (Change of Name fees are applicable).

After Name approval, the applicant must then file an application for incorporation of the company. Incorporation forms are difficult to get, except from a lawyer; however, there are some private-sector firms which sell precedent documents (model forms).

If all requirements are met and the application is approved, the incorporation Certificate (which includes the Business Number) will be sent to the applicant by mail.

**Waiting Period**
5-10 business days provided that all the items that must accompany the application have been received (Please allow several extra days for mail delivery).

**Expiry & Renewal**
The Certificate of Incorporation itself does not expire. Corporate existence is perpetual unless a surrender application is submitted, or strike-off procedure is initiated. However, the related Certificate of Registration (required under the Corporations Registration Act) must be renewed annually. (See Business Registration: Corporations.)

**Price: (No tax is charged)**
Initial Application: $308.71 plus $108.62 (registration fee); Annual Renewal: $108.62

Note: Fee must accompany application.

**Related Requirements**
Some or all of the following may be required:

If the business will be retailing taxable goods or services, they will need an HST (Harmonized Sales Tax) Registration with Canada Revenue Agency.

Most businesses operating in Nova Scotia must pay Business Occupancy Tax to the municipality where they are located.

Within one week of opening, a business must notify the Regional Director of Assessment, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

If the business hires any employees, it is responsible for deducting and remitting personal income tax, unemployment insurance premiums and Canada Pension Plan deductions to Canada Revenue Agency - Taxation.

**Additional Information**

Legal advice is recommended for preparation of incorporation documents.

When businesses are incorporated in Nova Scotia, they are automatically registered under the Corporations Registration Act (See Business Registration: Corporations).

**Appendix 3: Information Sheet**
**Corporation, Partnership, or Sole Proprietorship?[1]**

Now that you have decided to start your own business, you will have to determine what business structure or form of organization suits your needs. The structure of your business will depend on whether you want to run your business yourself or with a partner or associates. There are four types of business structures: sole proprietorships, partnerships, corporations and cooperatives.

**Sole proprietorship**
With this type of business organization, you would be fully responsible for all debts and obligations related to your business and all profits would be yours alone to keep. As a sole owner of the business, a creditor can make a claim against your personal or business assets to pay off any debt.

*Advantages:*

- Easy and inexpensive to form a sole proprietorship (you will only need to register your business name provincially, except in Newfoundland and Labrador)
- Relatively low cost to start your business
- Lowest amount of regulatory burden
- Direct control of decision making
- Minimal working capital required to start-up
- Tax advantages if your business is not doing well, for example, deducting your losses from your personal income, lower tax bracket when profits are low, and so on
- All profits will go to you directly

*Disadvantages:*

- Unlimited liability (if you have business debts, personal assets would be used to pay off the debt)
- Income would be taxable at your personal rate and, if your business is profitable, this may put you in a higher tax bracket
- Lack of continuity for your business, if you need to be absent
- Difficulty raising capital on your own

**Partnerships**
A partnership is a good business structure if you want to carry on a business with a partner and you do not wish to incorporate your business. With a partnership, you would combine your financial resources with your partner into the business. You can establish the terms of your business with your partner and protect yourself in case of a disagreement or dissolution by drawing up a specific business agreement. As a partner, you would share in the profits of your business according to the terms of your agreement.

You may also be interested in a limited liability partnership in the business. This means that you would not take part in the control or management of the business, but would be liable for debts to a specified extent only.

When establishing a partnership, you should have a partnership agreement drawn up with the assistance of a lawyer, to ensure that: you are protecting your interests; that you have clearly established the terms of the

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[1] http://www.canadabusiness.ca/eng/page/2853

partnership with regards to issues like profit sharing, dissolving the partnership, and more; and that you meet the legal requirements for a limited partnership (if applicable).

*Advantages:*

- Easy to start-up a partnership
- Start-up costs would be shared equally with you and your partner
- Equal share in the management, profits and assets
- Tax advantage, if income from the partnership is low or loses money (you and your partner include your share of the partnership in your individual tax return)

*Disadvantages:*

- Similar to sole proprietorship, as there is no legal difference between you and your business
- Unlimited liability (if you have business debts, personal assets would be used to pay off the debt)
- Hard to find a suitable partner
- Possible development of conflict between you and your partner
- You are held financially responsible for business decisions made by your partner (for example, contracts that are broken)

**Corporations**

Another type of business structure is incorporation. This can be done at the federal or provincial level. When you incorporate your business, it is considered to be a legal entity that is separate from the owners and shareholders. As a shareholder of a corporation, you will not be personally liable for the debts, obligations or acts of the corporation. When making such decisions, it is always wise to seek legal advice before incorporating.

*Advantages:*

- Limited liability
- Ownership is transferable
- Continuous existence
- Separate legal entity
- Easier to raise capital
- Possible tax advantage as taxes may be lower for an incorporated business

*Disadvantages:*

- A corporation is closely regulated
- More expensive to incorporate than a partnership or sole proprietorship
- Extensive corporate records required, including shareholder and director meetings, and documentation filed annually with the government
- Possible conflict between shareholders and directors
- Possible problem with residency of directors

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**LICKETY SPLIT ICE CREAM SHOP (B):**
**EXPLORING THE BREAK-EVEN ANALYSIS**

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Having made the decision to own and operate an ice cream shop, entrepreneur Alan Mackenzie is trying to get a handle on the costs associated with the enterprise, as well as the revenue he might expect at various product price points.  How many ice cream cones would he need to sell to keep from losing his shirt?

The second in a series of critical thinking cases exploring basic business concepts, the case is intended for use in undergraduate Introduction to Business courses.  The narrative serves as a forum for the consideration of fixed and variable costs, as well as the impact of price on revenue generation.  The execution of break-even analysis is the specific learning objective.

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**Lickety Split Ice Cream Shop (B)**

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Alan MacKenzie let his eyes wander as he steered his car up the exit ramp toward the Old Mill Lake Road.  He normally looked forward to the view at the crest of the hill – Old Mill Lake opened up in all of its splendor, from the Sandy Point beach down the narrows toward the second bridge.  Today, however, he was distracted – in particular, he was thinking about ice cream.

A week before Alan had decided to take the plunge and sign the lease for the Lickety Split Ice Cream Shop.  He felt that he had given the business sufficient thought, working through the pros and cons of the deal and considering the costs involved in starting the operation.  He had ultimately concluded that – given the small size of the operation – registering the business as a sole-proprietorship was the way to go.  Today he had picked up his certificate of registration.  "I guess it's for real now," he thought as he edged the care up to the stop sign at the end of the ramp.  "My gut feeling is that this is a good opportunity, but I wonder if I've done enough homework?"

### Ice Cream Costs – The Cold Reality

Alan had spent some time trying to get a handle on what the costs of the business would be.  After his meeting with the landlord – Earl Newcombe – he had quickly determined that with his $400 per month, four month (May-August) lease he would have the use of the shop and all of the assets within, which included:

- 1 large deep freeze
- 1 commercial ice cream freezer
- 1 2-door pop fridge
- 1 4 burner household stove
- 1 standard household refrigerator

- 1 commercial coffee maker
- 1 commercial drink mixer (for making milkshakes)
- Sundry utensils (ice cream scoops, spoons, etc.)
- 5 2'x2' tables
- 15 metal chairs

His conversation with Earl had also revealed that electricity would not be included in the lease, which Earl estimated would run at about $50 per month. Earl had also revealed that an inspection by the provincial Department of Health would have to be done to license the shop for the season – that would cost about $100. Then there would be the cost to stock the shop with ice cream, candy, pop, chips, plus other supplies necessary to keep the shop running.

The big question that had kept nagging Alan was whether he could make any money on the operation. Off and on through the week he had tried to think of any and all expenses associated with the business, and how those expenses would fit into his plan for the shop. Whenever he came up with something new he would make note of it (Appendix 1).

"Let's start with the basics," he thought. "I plan to open on the Victoria Day weekend in May, and close on the Labour Day weekend in September... so for the sake of argument let's assume the shop will run seven days a week, 10:00am – 9:00pm, for 16 weeks give or take. That's 112 days of operation."

Alan's idea was to hire high school students from the Old Mill Lake community to work in the store. Following the advice he had received from Earl, he figured that he could operate the shop with one employee on site for most of the time, with the exception of evenings and weekend afternoons. Within his 112 days of operation, he determined that 32 of those days would be weekends. "So I'll factor for two employees on those days, at $10/hour, for 11 hours – that's $7,040. That's probably more than it will be of course... but it's a good guess for now."

Alan had employed similar guesswork to work out the rest of the wage expense, which he had determined would be about $9,200 for 80 days. "So $9,200 plus $7,040, that's $16,240. Wow – that doesn't even include payroll taxes, though I think I'm estimating a bit high, so I won't sweat it for now."

Then he had turned his attention to what kind of equipment might be needed. "The shop is equipped, but the reality is that there it doesn't have much space to keep reserve inventory. If I'm going to offer a good selection of flavours, I'm going to need more freezer space." A few phone calls confirmed that he could pick up a brand new deep freeze for use at the shop for about $500, and an old – but refurbished – freezer for use at his home for about $200.

**The Scoop on Scoops**

Alan had also taken the time to have a frank conversation with a sales representative from Scotsburn Dairy, from whom he intended to buy his ice cream. Sherry had been very helpful, and even sent him some information Scotsburn had prepared especially for ice cream shops. "The key," said Sherry, "is all in how you scoop. If your scoops are too big you're going to lose money. On the other hand, if they're too small, you're going to have customers complaining about how stingy you are. It's no accident that guys like Cows Ice Cream actually require their employees to weigh a scoop before they drop it onto a cone. What you want to aim for is at least 50 scoops per 11-litre tub of ice cream."

That hadn't sounded too complicated to Alan. "A tub costs $30," he thought. "At 50 scoops per tub that's $0.60 per scoop it will cost me. A box of 100 cones is $4.00, so that's $0.04 per cone. So I should be able to produce a basic, one scoop ice cream cone for $0.64."

That had made Alan think. "What should I charge for a cone?" He had been playing with single scoop price points between $1.00 and $2.00 per cone. "Forgetting about other products, how many cones would I need to sell over the summer to make money? What about two scoop cones?" Alan realized that there were many options available with ice cream – from sundaes to shakes – but he felt that the old fashioned ice cream cone was going to be the driving force in this business.

**How Many Guys Go Bankrupt In The Ice Cream Business?**

Alan completed the turn onto the Old Mill Lake Road and began to accelerate. "Almost home," he thought. "But no closer to knowing whether I can make any money on this thing. I just need to sit down and work out the options – I'm sure this is do-able."

The last two kilometres passed quickly as he tried to envision how many ice creams per day he would need to sell to keep from losing his shirt. He smiled grimly. "I wonder how many guys go bankrupt in the ice cream business?" He had no interest in finding out.

**Appendix 1: Information Sheet**
**Alan's Notes on Projected Expenses for Lickety Split Ice Cream Shop**

Ice Cream Shop - Possible Costs

| | |
|---|---|
| Rent for 4 months ($400/month) | $ 1,600 |
| Electricity ($50/month) | $ 200 |
| Health Inspection | $ 100 |
| Wages for the summer ($10/hour) | $ 16,240  BRUTAL!!! |
| New freezer from Sears | $ 500 |
| Used freezer | $ 200 |
| Ice Cream (per tub - 50 scoops???) | $ 30 |
| Cones (per box - 100 cones) | $ 4 |

How much to charge? Maybe single scoop from $1.00 to $2.00???

Double scoop $2.00 to $3.00???

How many cones per day?  IS THIS EVEN REALISTIC???

CAN I MAKE ANY MONEY????

## LICKETY SPLIT ICE CREAM SHOP (C): INTRODUCING THE MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Alan Mackenzie's ice cream shop has been operating profitably for two months, yet all is not well as one of his employees has become a problem, and another is on the verge of quitting as a result. How had things gotten so out of hand?

As the third in a series of critical thinking cases exploring basic business concepts, the narrative is intended for use in undergraduate Introduction to Business courses and is designed to stimulate discussion regarding employee relations. Under the broader arc of human resource management, specific student learning objectives include the execution of rudimentary performance appraisal, assessment of employee morale and motivation, and consideration of factors contributing to the retention and/or dismissal of employees.

## Lickety Split Ice Cream Shop (C)

The sun sparkled brightly on the surface of Old Mill Lake as Alan Mackenzie drove along Shore Road toward the Lickety Split Ice Cream Shop. "This is the perfect July Saturday," he thought. "It must be at least 28 degrees – perfect ice cream weather."

Alan had been operating Lickety Split for almost two months now, and was pleased with the results to date. The little store was generating a small profit and doing a brisk trade in candy, chips, baked goods, soda pop, and of course the shop's staple – ice cream. With the weather forecast calling for record temperatures over the next month and a half Alan felt that his profits were set to grow. "Heat equals ice cream," he thought. "The more the better."

A frown creased his lips however when he rounded the final turn and caught sight of the shop. The parking lot was full of cars – which was a good thing – but the line-up of customers was longer than he had ever seen it, stretching from inside the shop out into the parking lot and along the front of Earl's Mini-Mall. As he crossed the lot after parking his car, he was painfully aware of several young children crying and more than one adult complaining about the slow service and the blistering heat.

Alan entered through the back door and made his way through the packed seating area to the front of the shop where his employee Jenny Roberts was furiously scooping ice cream. The counter area was a bit of a mess – little pools of melted ice cream covered the counter and the floor, and someone had spilled what appeared to be cola just inside the front door. "Jenny, where's Cameron?" Alan asked as he stepped behind the counter and grabbed an apron to begin helping out, wondering what had become of his "second in command."

"Hi Mr. Mackenzie... I'm glad you're here!  Cameron left on his break about 45 minutes ago and I haven't seen him since," she said as she passed a monstrous triple scoop "Mango Tango" cone to a large man in a bright Hawaiian shirt.  "Be careful with that Mr. LeFort – it's melting fast today."

The shop was almost unbearably hot, and the presence of so many people in the seating area and in line weren't helping things.  Alan got right to work, and over the course of the next 20 minutes he and Jenny had brought the line under control.  "Jenny, why don't you take a break?  Get yourself a pop out of the fridge and get out of this oven for a bit.  I'll cover the counter."

Jenny gratefully complied and walked down to the little beach behind the shop, just as Alan caught sight of Cameron pedaling his bicycle toward Lickety Split from the direction of the Old Mill Lake Shopping Centre.  Alan caught himself grinding his teeth.  "I've got to do something about this," he thought.

**A Tale of Two Employees**

After Alan had signed the lease for Lickety Split in March, he quickly set to work recruiting workers.  He had realized quickly that his plan to open the shop on the Victoria Day weekend would mean that he would need someone for at least the first month that was not in school so as to cover weekday requirements.  Alan had posted a few print ads around Old Mill Lake in places like the community hall and the supermarket, but as April unfolded there had been little interest.

One day while picking up a few groceries he had run into one of his old high school buddies – Mike Lewis.  Mike appeared genuinely interested in Alan's plans.  "You remember my little brother Cameron?" he said.  "He just wrapping up his first year at college and doesn't have anything lined up as far as I know.  Why don't you give him a call and see if he'd like to scoop some ice cream for you?  He worked in the food court at Penhorn Mall all through high school, so he's good with the public."

**Cameron Lewis**

Alan had followed Mike's advice and arranged to have coffee with Cameron.  Cameron turned out to be tall and athletic, and seemed interested in taking on a role at the shop.  "I've done a lot of work in food service Al," he said.  "Don't get me wrong, but I like to think I'm pretty good with people.  I'm also pretty good at getting things done.  In fact Al – can I call you Al? - I'd like you to consider letting me manage the shop for you.  Mike has told me how busy you are, and for the right price, I can keep your cash cow in the hay!"

Alan had been taken a little bit off guard by Cameron's brash proposal, although it struck him as a possible opportunity to let him concentrate more fully on managing his own business and to adopt a more administrative role with respect to Lickety Split.  The right price turned out to be $13.50 / hour, and the Victoria Day weekend found Cameron at his post scooping ice cream and providing oversight to the high school students Alan had hired to work on weekends and to cover evening shifts.  Alan had been reasonably impressed with Cameron's performance – while his banter with the customers was a tad over-familiar for Alan's tastes, most seemed to appreciate his jocularity as he greeted them with a hearty "Hello Ma'am" or "Good day to you Sir" and left them with something along the lines of "It's a g-o-r-geous day!  Enjoy the warmth!"

**Jenny Roberts**

Alan had managed to hire four high school students from the community to cover various shifts as needed, with the intention of introducing them gradually on weekends and evenings during May and June, and then placing them in a full time rotation during the peak summer months.  He had been pleased with

the enthusiasm that each had demonstrated during their job interviews, though he had to admit that Jenny Roberts had impressed him the most. Jenny was completing her Grade 11 year and had been confident and well-spoken during their conversation. Alan was struck by her level of preparation for the interview as she had taken the time to memorize Scotsburn Dairy's entire ice cream flavour menu and to read their online guide about how to scoop ice cream efficiently.

The agreed upon rate of pay for the high school students was $10.00 / hour and Alan had drawn up a schedule to which they had all agreed. Jenny asked for as many hours as Alan could grant (and that her school responsibilities would allow) explaining that she was saving as much money as she could to help finance university study after high school. "I know college is expensive," she said. "That's why I'm trying to make all that I can now."

**A Study In Contrast**

As the season began to unfold Alan had many opportunities to observe his workers in action. He was particularly pleased by the way Jenny handled herself with customers. Her demeanor was friendly and respectful, and he had been amazed at how quickly she learned the names of several adult and child customers. In many instances Jenny could greet a customer by name and recall their favorite ice cream, much to the delight of many of the shop's patrons. Alan also appreciated her diligence in keeping the shop clean and tidy – which was not something at which Cameron always excelled. He knew that when he visited the shop each night at 9:00pm to close up he would have nothing to do but pack up the cash box - if Jenny had been working. Cameron on the other hand would typically not have swept the seating area or washed the counters. Jenny also kept a close eye on the ice cream inventory, making sure to report to Alan which flavors were getting low. Twice, however, Alan had received a frantic call from Cameron to report that the shop had run out of "Hoofprints," one of the more popular flavors.

All of this hadn't bothered Alan too much, but there were other behaviours that made him wonder whether he should intervene. On two occasions he had observed Cameron taking a "hard line" with the high school staff, directing them to leave cleaning duties to serve customers while he sat in the seating area with his feet up, reading the newspaper. There had also been three days when Cameron hadn't shown up on time to open the shop – Alan had received a phone call from the student scheduled to work that day explaining that the shop was locked (only Alan and Cameron had keys). Cameron hadn't seemed at all bothered by this. "We hardly ever see anyone in the first half hour anyway," he said.

**Ice Cream Unhappiness**

Cameron parked his bike by the back door and trotted into the shop. "Hey Al!" he said cheerily.

"Here," Alan said sharply as he threw his apron at him. "I'll be back in a minute."

Alan strode behind the shop and walked down the path to where Jenny was seated on a large rock beside the water. "Jenny, I'm sorry about all that – you shouldn't have been left on your own with that crush of customers."

Jenny looked pensive. "Mr. Mackenzie, do you mind if I say something?"

"No," said Alan, "Go right ahead."

"I don't want to cause any trouble," she said, "but I've been really struggling with my work here at the shop."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I just feel that Cameron isn't pulling his fair share of the weight. I know he's the manager of the shop, but what you saw in there today happens a lot."

"You mean a big line of customers?" asked Alan.

"No. I mean Cameron taking more break time than he's entitled. I remember when you hired us you explained that we all were to have two 15 minute breaks and a half hour for lunch every day. Cameron usually takes at about half an hour for break and at least 45 minutes for his lunch. That's making it hard to deal with the customers and stay ahead of the cleaning."

"I had no idea," said Alan. "What's he doing with his time?"

"I think most days he bikes up to the shopping center – I've heard him say that a bunch of his buddies hang out in their cars there most afternoons in the parking lot. It's just hard for me to see him get paid more than the rest of us and have such an easy time of it."

Jenny looked down at the water. "There's one other thing… Janice Moffat asked me yesterday if I would consider waiting tables at her restaurant. The pay is fifty cents an hour more and it's air conditioned. I told her I'd have to think about it – I really like this job, Mr. Mackenzie – sometimes it's really fun... and I love serving the little kids. But when I'm working with Cameron it's not fun at all."

Alan looked across the lake – two Sea Doos were racing toward the point. "Thanks for telling me this Jenny... bear with me and I'll make sure it's taken care of."

Jenny smiled. "Thanks Mr. Mackenzie. I'll head back inside and start cleaning up some of the mess."

"Thanks Jenny," said Alan. "I'll be up in a second."

As she made her way up the path Alan continued to watch the racers until they rounded the point and disappeared. "How did things get so out of hand?" he thought. "I've got to deal with this *now*." With a sigh he turned and began walking toward the shop.