ACADEMY OF MANAGERIAL COMMUNICATIONS JOURNAL

CONTENTS

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THE INFLUENCE OF POST-TRANSGRESSION BEHAVIOR: AN INTERPLAY BETWEEN ELABORATENESS OF APOLOGY AND THE MANAGERIAL DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Jonathan C. Lee, Fayetteville State University

ABSTRACT

Many practitioners and scholars alike have underwritten the theory that expression of an apology may lead to less punishment. The studies and arguments presented to support this view appear to be well grounded. However, a number of researchers have argued that there are instances in which the expression of apology does not lead to less punishment. Consequently, it remains unclear under what circumstances the expression of apology is effective in reducing punishment and under what circumstances it is not. Thus, systematic research testifying to both the effectiveness of an apology and ineffectiveness of an apology on the level of punishment has been scarce. This paper attempted to fill that void.

INTRODUCTION

In all human relationships, when a person transgresses against a rule, offending another, he or she is likely to apologize for doing so. The apology may serve to at least partially right the wrong. It may also lower the probability of an aggressive response on the part of the person offended. In the employment relationship, there are commonly a number of rules, and it is an offense, against both the abstract rule and the employer, for an employee to be guilty of a rule violation. In the typical American military-bureaucratic style work organization, the expected consequence of such misconduct is punishment. It is interesting to inquire whether, to what degree, and under what circumstances, an employee's apology for such misconduct affects the probability of punishment and its severity. This is the question that this paper examines.

Although both practitioners and scholars are reluctant to admit it, workplace discipline in the U.S. is enforced in part through punishment or threat of it. Therefore, employees, managers, and scholars have strong reason to understand its determinants. In addition to other determinants, it seems worthwhile to consider the common human response of apology in different degrees and under different circumstances as a possible influencer of punishment of employees for violating workplace rules.

The following section defines some terms and then introduce the questions to be studied. It will then review the literature in the area and subsequent sections will state the problem.

APOLOGY

Apology is the acknowledgment of blameworthiness and expression of regret for a transgression against a rule or a norm (Darby & Schlenker, 1989; Goffman, 1971; Schlenker, 1980). Such transgressions often result in injury to another. The apology may be made either to the person injured or to the person charged with enforcement of the rule that has been transgressed. The parties to the apology are the offender who makes the apology (sometimes called the perpetrator or violator) and the receiver of the apology (sometimes called the victim, discipliner, or punisher). In this thesis, the term "offender" will be used to denote the person who has committed the transgression. The term "offendee" will be used to denote the person injured or in charge of enforcing the rule that has been violated, to whom an apology might logically be directed under the circumstances. Where a workplace rule has been violated by an offender who is an employee, the person offended would usually be the employee's supervisor, although, depending on the rule violated, fellow employees might also be potential apology receivers. What is special about supervisors as persons offended is that they have the authority to impose punishment on the subordinate offender.

Apologies relate to violations of social norms. They may reflect a sense of obligation on the part of the offender to make amends for the transgression against these norms. According to scholars who have studied this phenomenon, apologies perform several different functions. These include acknowledging that rules have been violated, recognizing the value of the rules, and acknowledging the interpersonal obligations involved (see Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Darby & Schlenker, 1989; Schlenker, 1980; Schlenker & Darby, 1981). Apologies may have a number of meaningful effects on the offender and the offendee, such as: (a) when the offender publicly acknowledges his or her responsibility for the violation, it may have the effect of restoring the offendee's self-esteem and social identity; (b) when the offender offers help or asks for forgiveness, it may be interpreted as expressing respect for the offendee; (c) when the offender apologizes in terms of self-disapproval, it may be taken as acknowledgment that the offender does not agree with his or her own behavior and is trying to give the impression to others that he or she is really not a bad person; and (d) when the offender subjects himself/herself to public disgrace or expresses remorse, this can be taken as a form of self-punishment that restores social justice (Ohbuchi, Kameda, & Agarie, 1989).

Ohbuchi et al. (1989) further suggest that an apology made by an offender has three types of effects on the offendee. When the offender apologizes for his or her transgression, it influences the offendee at the cognitive level - the offendee has a more favorable impression of the offender when he or she apologizes. Second, at the emotional level - the offendee feels less unpleasant toward the offender when he or she apologizes. Third, at the behavioral level - the offendee engages in less intense aggression against the offender when he or she apologizes. The consequence of expressing apology may be a reduction in the discipline experienced by the offender.

Strategies by which both child and adult offenders attempt to exert control over how the offendee and others perceive the offender have been noted by other researchers (see Goffman, 1971; Harrell, 1979; Schlenker, 1980; Schlenker & Darby, 1981; Scott & Lyman, 1968; Walster, Berscheid

& Walster, 1973). In addition, it has been known for some time that children exert considerable control over adult actions (Savitsky, Czyzewski, Duboard, & Kaminsky, 1975). Studies dealing with animal behavior find that an offspring's conduct may have an impact on its parents' behavior (Harper, 1971). A review of the literature dealing with both human and animal offspring strongly suggests that an offspring's behavior acts as a stimulus that may influence parental acts, including their punitive reactions (Savitsky, et al., 1975). For humans, a part of the socialization process is to learn when to apologize and how to express remorse following a transgression (Aronfreed, 1968; Burton, Maccoby & Allismith, 1961). Langer (1978) notes that apologies and remorse may evoke an automatic, scripted reaction as result of the socialization. Langer (1978) argues that, as socialized individuals, the apology-forgiveness sequence is so ingrained in us that the tendency to respond positively to an apology may be strong and subsequently beneficial to the user. Another way of explaining the forgiveness response is that it is based upon an innate inhibition against harming an individual who engages in self-abasement (see Wheeler, 1985). Whether the tendencies to apologize or to respond to self-abasement such as apology with leniency are learned or inherent, or both, they do appear to be commonly present in human behavior in social organizations.

The influence of apology and a show of remorse upon an offendee's behavior may be subtle, and according to Nisbett and Wilson (1977), an offendee who is the target of such influence may not necessarily be aware of what is affecting his or her behavior. Apologies and remorse are indeed part of a learned avoidance response (Aronfreed, 1968) and can be potentially powerful determinants of perceptions and sanctioning reactions (Dedrick, 1978). Similarly, Wood and Mitchell (1981) argue that apologies are important determinants of disciplinary actions, perhaps even more than the actual behavior of the subordinate.

It is evident from past studies that the expression of apology may lead to less punishment. The arguments presented to support this basic finding appear to be well grounded. However, according to a number of researchers such as Goffman (1971), Jones and Wortman (1973), O'Malley and Greenberg (1983), and Schlenker (1980), there have been instances in which the expression of apology did not lead to less punishment. Unfortunately, the explanations of the inconsistent and even anomalous results of these studies that have been attempted by Goffman (1971), Jones and Wortman (1973), O'Malley and Greenberg (1983), and by Schlenker (1980) are not theoretically based and lack the empirical support needed to make their arguments compelling. Consequently, it remains unclear under what circumstances the expression of apology is effective in reducing punishment and under what circumstances it is not.

The failure of past studies to deal convincingly with the above questions stems from an apparent lack of awareness of a fundamental limitation of these studies. This limitation is that the conditions studied have been restricted to the bipolar alternatives of "no apology" and "apology," without considering varying degrees of apology. It seems clear that one should not assume that all apologies are the same in their intensity and effects. Varying degrees of apology exist. The possibility of different degrees of apology having different effects on discipline requires examination. To be sure, the idea that an apology can be expressed in varying degrees is not new (see Schlenker & Darby, 1981). However, no one has yet examined the possible effects of varying degrees of apology (Schlenker & Darby refer to this as "elaborateness of apology") on discipline. By examining the effects of elaborateness of apology on discipline, we can begin to examine more specifically under

what circumstances the expression of apology is effective in reducing punishment and under what circumstances the expression of apology is not.

Two moderators that have been suggested as influencing the relationship between apology and discipline are: (1) severity of outcome of the violations committed by the offender (see Darby & Schlenker, 1982; O'Malley & Greenberg, 1983; Rosen &,Jerdee, 1974; Schlenker & Darby, 1981; Schwartz, Kane, Joseph & Tedeschi, 1978); and, (2) favorableness of reputation of the offender as perceived by the offendee (see Darby & Schlenker, 1989; Goffman, 1971; Jones & Wortman, 1973; O'Malley & Greenberg, 1983; Schlenker, 1980). Severity of outcome refers to the seriousness of the violations committed by the offender. Favorableness of reputation refers to the extent that the employee has been successful in fulfilling the role expectations associated with the position that the individual occupies in the organization, including whether those role expectations have been fulfilled through honesty and integrity. If the employee has fulfilled his or her role expectations through dishonorable acts, then the employee would not be viewed favorably by the coworkers.

EFFECTS OF APOLOGY ON DISCIPLINE

As noted above, several studies have shown that expression of apology may lead to more lenient discipline and punishment (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Darby & Schlenker, 1989; Dedrick, 1978; Harrell, 1979; Harrell, 1980; O'Malley & Greenberg, 1983; Ohbuchi, Kameda, & Agarie, 1989; Rosen & Adams, 1974; Rumsey, 1976; Savitsky, Czyzewski, Dunbord & Kaminsky, 1975; Schwartz, Kane, Joseph & Tedeschi, 1978; Wood & Mitchell, 1981). The Rosen and Adams (1974) study dealing with a subordinate information gatekeeper found that when the offender expressed remorse, the discipline recommended was significantly less severe than it was when the subordinates did not express remorse (Rosen & Adams, 1974). Wood and Mitchell (1981) found that apologies were significantly related to disciplinary actions taken by the supervisors. Their results confirmed that when subordinates apologized, supervisors were more lenient and less punitive (Wood & Mitchell, 1981). Ohbuchi, Kameda, and Agarie (1989) conducted a study in order to examine the effects of apologies on aggression. They found that when the offender apologized, the offendee rated the offender as more sincere, more responsible, more careful, and less unpleasant than an offender who did not apologize. Further, they found that expressions of apology led to significantly less aggression by the offendee toward the offender. Likewise, a study conducted by Harrell (1980) found that offenders who were remorseful were seen as more sorrowful and wanting more strongly to make reparation than those who were nonremorseful; further, less aggression was shown against the remorseful offenders than the nonremorseful offenders. Rosen and Adams (1974) found that when the offender expressed remorse, he or she was perceived as less likely to repeat the violation. In addition, the discipline received by the offender was closely correlated with the perceived probability of the offender repeating the violation; if the offendee perceived that there was a lower likelihood of a future violation, the offender received less punishment than an offender who was perceived as more likely to repeat the violation.

In a study involving sentencing judgments, it was found that there were significantly lower sentences imposed under a remorseful condition than under a nonremorseful condition (Rumsey, 1976). Similarly, it has been shown that police, when dealing with juvenile offenders, were influenced

by the degree of remorse shown by the offender when deciding whether to arrest the offender or to let him/her go with just a verbal warning (Piliavin & Brian, 1964).

In a series of studies dealing with children it was found that, like adults, they were sensitive to apologies (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Darby & Schlenker, 1989; Dedrick, 1978; Schwartz, Kane, Joseph & Tedeschi, 1978). Darby and Schlenker (1989) note that offenders who were seen to suffer remorse were more likely to be seen as persons who are able to police themselves and as more dependable and cooperative social participants. Accordingly, they found children who apologized were perceived as more sorry, more likable, and ultimately needing less punishment. It has been suggested that perhaps children as young as three are able to make a distinction between offenders who are apologetic and those who are not apologetic (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Darby & Schlenker, 1989). In a study involving children, Darby and Schlenker (1982) found that a boy who expressed remorse was perceived as less aggressive, less purposeful, less likely to repeat the action, and less deserving of punishment than a nonremorseful boy. In addition, Darby and Schlenker (1982) found that the effects of apology and remorse were more pronounced for older children, thus suggesting that as children become older they experience greater socialization and become more sensitive to effects of apologies and expressions of remorse.

The argument that expression of an apology results in less punishment appears to be well supported and widely acknowledged. The reasons why this occurs can be understood by examining two complementary explanations. The first explanation is based on a clear distinction that can be made between a weak motivation on the part of an offender and a strong motivation - as determined by the expression of apology or lack of apology (Schwartz, Kane, Joseph & Tedechi, 1978). Schwartz et al. (1978) suggest that an offender who expresses remorse is really demonstrating that, "he is dissatisfied with his own behavior and its effects, that the motive behind the act was transient or weak, and hence that the actor is less likely to repeat the action" (p. 293). An expression of apology and remorse is a behavioral indication not only that the offender's motive behind the action is weak or transient, but also that the offender does not like his/her own action. This makes it unlikely that the behavior will be repeated in the future. Hence, the expression of apology and remorse serves to mitigate blame and punishment. Rosen and Adams (1974) found support for this argument: an offender who did not express apology was perceived as someone who was more likely to commit the offense again. In their study, a subordinate who was caught withholding and distorting information was perceived as someone who would be less likely to repeat the infraction when he or she expressed remorse. Consequently, the recommended discipline for remorseful subordinates was significantly less than for those who were not remorseful (Rosen & Adams, 1974). Similarly, Darby and Schlenker (1982) found that a boy who expressed remorse was perceived as less likely to repeat the violation and less deserving of punishment than a nonremorseful boy. On the other hand, Sykes and Matza (1957) and Gusfield (1967) have shown that a dispassionate or unrepentant rule breaker is viewed as someone who may be more likely to repeat a crime than the offender who expresses remorse. Thus, Schwartz et al.'s (1978) concern with the future behavior of the offender appears to be well supported; if an expression of apology or remorse indicates a weak or transient motive, then there is a lower probability that a similar violation will occur in the future, and there is no need to carry out the fullest degree of punishment.

The second explanation is that apology is an offender's payment for the cost incurred by the offendee. It argues that the act of violation has unjustifiably taken something away from the offendee - resulting in an inequitable situation. The offender has imposed a cost on the offendee and now owes him or her something. So the situation is one of inequity, and in order to make it equitable again the offender must pay the cost that has been suffered. The term "cost" is used here in the broadest sense and can include both social cost, such as esteem, or material cost, such as money. Further, the offender's payments may include any associated penalties imposed on the offender. The offender's payment may be voluntarily offered or demanded by the offendee and society. In this manner the offender can repair the relationship with the offendee and restore justice (Walster, Walster & Bercheid, 1978) either by making monetary reparation (O'Malley & Greenberg, 1983) or by emotional reparation such as apology and showing remorse. By apologizing and expressing remorse, an offender may be given credit for trying to restore justice between himself or herself and the offendee. Acting as a sincere, apologetic and remorseful person demonstrates that he or she is also suffering in some way as a result of the action. Therefore, this suffering may be perceived as a payment of costs inflicted and is transferable as credit toward righting the wrong (Austin, Walster & Utne, 1976).

This explanation is supported by findings in a study by Bramel, Taub, and Blum (1968). They found that an offender - an insulting experimenter - who was observed to be suffering was punished significantly less than an insulting experimenter who was not. These findings can be explained through equity theory; an insulting experimenter who is distressed is partially compensating the victim with his psychological discomfort and by so doing deserves less punishment. In another study, Upshaw and Romer (1976) concluded that drivers who suffered an injury in an automobile accident due to their own negligence were fined significantly less than those who did not suffer at all. Furthermore, Buss (1966) and Baron (1971) found that individuals who experienced pain and distress suffered fewer attacks by others. O'Malley and Greenberg (1983) use the terms "psychic cost" and "down payment" to describe an offender who is seen as suffering a great deal of guilt and remorse. This suffering appears to be used as a credit toward restoring justice to the offendee, and so the offender may be asked to compensate the offendee less than if he or she had not suffered (O'Malley & Greenberg, 1983). In fact, O'Malley and Greenberg (1983) found in their study that subjects agreed that offenders who had experienced remorse and guilt had suffered greater psychic cost than those who did not. Savitsky and Sim (1974) state that a remorseful offender who is behaving in a self-punitive manner may be perceived as someone who is engaging in self-imposed restitution for the offense. Such self-induced psychological distress may lead to a decrease in punishment because punishment has already occurred, removing the need to impose additional penalties from the outside. To impose additional punishment on a conscience-stricken offender might be seen as unjustified, inhumane, and cruel (Savitsky & Sim, 1974).

If the apologies and remorse are perceived to be sincere, an offendee may be obligated by social norms to conclude that the offender's suffering merits relief from sanctions. As noted above, within the framework of equity theory, this sequence of apology-forgiveness can be viewed as one way in which an offender can restore equity (Walster, Bercheid & Walster, 1973). This equity restoring process involves an offender showing remorse and grief over what has happened to the person offended, and in exchange the offendee acknowledges the offender's suffering by partially or

completely forgiving him or her (Harrell, 1979). The offender's psychological discomfort is a payment that establishes equity. As Rosen and Adams (1974) state, the expression of remorse may lead to a restoration of trust between the offender and the offendee, whereas if the offender fails to express remorse, this lack of remorse may be seen as a failure on the part of the offender to understand the seriousness of the violation. Thus, a person who fails to demonstrate self-punishment and blame may be seen as needing to be "taught a lesson" through the administration of additional punishment (Harrell, 1979).

Contrary to the effects of apology and remorsefulness, an offender who expresses pleasure in his or her offense may be subject to an increase in aggression (Savitsky, Izard, Kotsch & Christy, 1974). Savitsky and Sim (1974) found that those adolescent offenders who displayed emotions of happiness or anger subsequent to their offenses were faced with increased levels of punishment. By expressing joy, the offender may be viewed as someone who has taken advantage of the situation. By expressing anger, he or she may be viewed as someone who is making further demands in an already inequitable situation (Savitsky & Sim, 1974). The situation remains inequitable since an expression of joyfulness violates norms for reaction to an inequitable situation. Given the situation, the offendee may feel strongly compelled to punish the offender both for the original act of transgression and also for his or her failure to acknowledge the seriousness of the actions (Savitsky, Czyzewski, Dubord & Kaminsky, 1975). Therefore, an increase in punishment may appear to be appropriate to establish an equitable situation.

The explanation of apology showing weak motivation for the misconduct, and the argument, based on equity theory, that apology can serve as payment of costs inflicted, are equally compelling. It is helpful to combine both arguments to more fully understand the effects of apology on discipline. I suggest that the offendee, in determining the level of punishment that the offender deserves, may evaluate both the likelihood of the violation occurring again and the offender's attempted restoration of equity from an inequitable situation. Both perceptions have been found to be highly correlated with each other (Rosen & Adams, 1974). Should they contradict each other - for example, if the offender apologizes in the face of clear evidence that he or she may engage in such violations in the future - the expression of apology may not have any effect.

Prior studies provide strong evidence of the effectiveness of apology in reducing discipline. However, as noted above, these studies have fundamental limitations. One limitation arises from the fact that conditions used have been restricted to "no apology" and "apology," without any attention to the effects of varying degrees of apology. It may be wrong to assume that all expressions of apology are the same in their effectiveness in reducing punishment. For example, Langer (1978) states that apologies and remorse evoke an automatic, scripted reaction that benefits the apologizer. Yet it is not clear that the expressions of apology necessarily lead to less punishment (see Goffman, 1971; Jones & Wortman, 1973; O'Malley & Greenberg, 1983; Schlenker, 1980).

ELABORATENESS OF APOLOGY AND SERIOUSNESS OF VIOLATION

Schlenker and Darby's (1981) findings support the notion that apologies can be expressed in varying degrees of elaborateness and that these degrees of elaborateness can be ordered along a continuum, starting with the least elaborate apologies such as "pardon me," to self-castigation - a

much more elaborate expression of self-blame. In their study involving social predicaments, they show that as the consequence of the violation becomes more serious, the offender's apology gradually becomes more elaborate. When the consequence of a social predicament is minimal or trivial, such as lightly bumping into someone, people tend to engage in more perfunctory forms of apology, such as saying "Pardon me" or "I'm sorry." This type of apology was seen as being the least complete. However, as the seriousness of the predicament increased, perfunctory forms of apology became less common. In a much more serious predicament, where the offender/subject knocked the offendee to the ground and hurt him or her, a much more elaborate apology tended to be given. Thus, under a serious and high responsibility predicament, the subjects were more likely to say they were sorry, express remorse, offer to help, castigate themselves, and explicitly request forgiveness. Schlenker and Darby's (1981) findings show that self-castigation was perceived by offendees to involve the most self-blame, followed by requests for forgiveness and expressions of remorse. More elaborate apologies were seen by offendees as being more complete.

Schlenker and Darby's (1981) findings suggest that as the severity of the predicament and the offender's responsibility increase, the potential for negative repercussions to the offender becomes greater, and so more elaborate apologies are required to remedy the situation. This becomes especially salient when, given the clarity of the violation, the offender is faced with no alternative but to admit guilt and to engage in elaborate apologies in the hope that a merciful discipliner will give credit for the self-imposed suffering. And since more elaborate apology signifies greater remorse and repentance, the type and intensity of punishment would be expected to be adjusted accordingly.

Based on Schlenker and Darby's (1981) findings and equity theory, we can surmise that as the seriousness of the violation increases the offender will be required to express more elaborate apology in order to reduce the punishment. There is an "appropriate level" of apology that is dictated by the severity of the violation. How effective the apology is in reducing the level of punishment appears to be at least in part driven by the severity of the violation. It would be inappropriate, as prior studies have done, to assume that even an apology that fails to take into account the severity of the violation will lead to less punishment. If we disregard the severity of the violation, the effect of varying degrees of apology on the level of discipline administered may not be predictable.

Schlenker and Darby's (1981) findings outlined above strongly suggest that the effect of apology on discipline is moderated by the severity of the violation. However, they did not look at the effect of apology on punishment nor did they look at the effect of severity of outcome on the relationship between level of apology and level of punishment. Their examination was limited to determining an offender/subject's preference for the different levels of apology given differing levels of embarrassing situations.

It has yet to be determined how varying degrees of apology affect discipline given differing levels of violation. This would seem important since the degree of equity restoration needed may vary with the severity of outcome, thus suggesting that the offendee will demand a greater "payback" from the offender when the violation is more severe.

A possible measure of the seriousness of the violation is the severity of the outcome stemming from the violation. Generally, the more harm or damage resulting from an offense, the more severe will be the sanctions and the greater the demand for reparations (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; O'Malley & Greenberg, 1983; Rosen & Jerdee, 1974; Schlenker & Darby, 1981; Schwartz, Kane, Joseph &

Tedeschi, 1978). O'Malley and Greenberg (1983) conducted a study in which the severity of the outcome of the violation was manipulated. In the major damage condition, an individual's negligence resulted in automobile damage amounting to $900-$1,000, while in the minor damage condition, the negligent behavior resulted in damage of $30-$40. The subjects recommended greater fines for those inflicting major damage as compared to those involved in minor damage, although the actions in both conditions were identical. The severity of harm, or the severity of outcome, resulting from identical actions had a pronounced effect on the degree of reparation demanded by the offendee.

Findings by Mitchell and Kalb (1981) suggest that a supervisor's knowing the negative outcome of a subordinate's infraction may lead to an increase in perceived probability of recurrence, an increase in perceived subordinate responsibility, and a tendency to make greater degree of internal attribution (also supported by James & White, 1983; Vidmar & Miller, 1980; Walster, 1966). These findings suggest that there is a greater tendency to blame the subordinate when there is a knowledge of a negative outcome than when there is no knowledge of the outcome. This might lead to greater punishment being directed against the subordinate. An effect of consequences on discipline is further supported by Rosen and Jerdee (1974) and Darby and Schlenker (1982). Rosen and Jerdee (1974) found that their subjects recommended a significantly greater sanction when illegal use of a company car resulted in a major accident than when it resulted in a minor one. Also, when an offender's illegal use of drugs led to lower performance, a greater sanction was recommended by their subjects than when there was satisfactory performance. The Rosen and Jerdee (1974) study also found that offenders were perceived by their subjects as being, more responsible for the incident when the consequences were severe than when the consequences were mild or trivial. Furthermore, when the outcome was severe, the offense was perceived to be more unethical and more serious.

There is strong support in the literature for the proposition that severity of outcome has a significant influence on disciplinary decisions. Specifically, as the outcome of the violation becomes increasingly more severe and negative (i.e., greater harm or more damage) the discipline becomes increasingly more severe and, consequently, much greater reparation is demanded. In anticipation of this, we can expect that offenders will engage in more elaborate apologies in order to satisfy the greater "payback" demanded by offendees where the outcome is severe. There may be an appropriate level of apology for a given severity of outcome. If the level of apology expressed by the offender does not fit, i.e., is inappropriate given the severity of outcome, then the apology may not be effective in reducing punishment. There may need to be a "goodness of fit" between the level of apology expressed and the severity of outcome.

GOODNESS OF FIT BETWEEN ELABORATENESS OF APOLOGY AND THE SEVERITY OF OUTCOME

According to Goffman (1971) and Schlenker (1980), those components that are contained in an apology should be tailored to fit the specific type of situation if it is to be effective. That is, "goodness of fit" is required between the severity of the violation and the elaborateness of apology expressed. A satisfactory apology is one in which the offendee perceives the apology to be adequate given the severity of the outcome.

If "goodness of fit" between the apology and the nature of the situation is lacking, then the perceived sincerity and credibility of the apology may be jeopardized. Consider a situation in which the nature of the infraction is perceived to be serious, yet the offender apologizes in a perfunctory manner such as "pardon me." The situation would continue to remain inequitable, the offending individual having not yet paid the full penalty for the cost inflicted. He or she has failed to restore justice. Even worse, if the apology is expressed nonchalantly, the offendee may become angry with the apologizer. This anger may in turn translate into increased aggression and harsher punishment. An inadequate expression of apology may be defined as a weak expression of apology that is perceived by the offendee to be less than satisfactory, i.e., not sufficiently elaborate given the nature of the violation.

An excessive apology may create another type of situation in which there is a lack of "goodness of fit" between the severity of the violation and the elaborateness of apology. In such a case, the offender engages in an elaborate apology when the nature of the situation warrants only a perfunctory apology. Again there is a lack of congruence between the situation and the type of apology expressed. According to Jones and Wortman (1973), an expression of extreme remorse may signal to the offendee that the offender is trying to manipulate the situation in order to receive pardon. So an extreme emotional reaction by the offender may indicate that he or she is trying to be ingratiating rather than sincerely trying to apologize. In essence, what this is suggesting is that the offender is not really sorry, and so is likely to engage in such behavior again, especially if he or she can get away with it. Thus, when an excessive apology creates a lack of fit between the elaborateness of the apology and the severity of outcome, the sincerity and the credibility of the apology may come into question.

In addition to the "goodness of fit," the perception of sincerity and the credibility of apology may also be significantly moderated by the type of reputation held by the offender. The offendee, in assessing the apology, may take the offender's reputation into consideration before deciding upon the response. The favorableness of the offender's reputation may either enhance the apology expressed, thus leading to even lesser punishment, or it could undermine the apology expressed, thus not leading to less punishment.

FAVORABLENESS OF REPUTATION

"Good reputation" of an employee is defined as "effectiveness as perceived from the perspective of the individual or a specific group of individuals who are satisfied with the job behavior and activities exhibited by the employee being evaluated" (Tsui, 1984, p. 65). This definition is based on role theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978) and role set analysis (Merton, 1957). According to role theory, each position in the organization is bounded by a set of role expectations. These may consist of "desirable behaviors, norms, attitudes, values, or other standards of work conduct" (Tsui, 1984, p. 65). Thus, an employee with a good reputation is someone who has responded successfully to these expectations. An individual who has a good reputation will be likely to be rewarded more and to advance more quickly than other employees, thereby further enhancing his or her reputation (Tsui, 1984). Similarly, Hutson (1971) states, "a man's reputation is what is said about him. It is the overall response of people to both actor and role performance; an assessment not only of the results achieved

but also of the manner in which they were achieved" (p. 79). This suggests that the construct "reputation" not only includes successful fulfillment of employee's role expectation, but also includes the manner in which employee achieved his or her role expectations. Thus, an employee with a good reputation is someone who has successfully performed his or her task through honesty and integrity.

The offender's reputation may determine whether the apology will have a negative or beneficial impact on degree of punishment (Darby & Schlenker, 1989). Thus, an offender's bad reputation may undermine the apology because the negative character of the offender is perceived as being incongruent with the apology. In contrast, an offender's good reputation may enhance the apology because the positive character of the offender is congruent with the apology. The good reputation of the offender may even save an expression of apology from being viewed as manipulative in circumstances in which it is excessive. In contrast, an offender with a "bad reputation" may attract even greater suspicion when apology is excessive. According to Jones and Wortman (1973), an excessive apology expressed by an offender who has a bad reputation may be viewed as being a manipulative and an ingratiating behavior.

An explanation for the above arguments can be made from a theoretical perspective by expanding upon and integrating both equity theory and attribution theory. These theories may provide further support for the arguments that the reputation of the offender will either enhance or undermine the offender's apology.

Equity theory can be expanded to take into consideration past exchanges between the offender and the other employees in the workplace (this may include the offendee). These past exchanges may have a bearing on how present and future exchanges are viewed. One of the ways in which we can obtain information on an offender's past exchanges is by ascertaining the offender's reputation. For example, an offender having a bad reputation indicates that he or she may have engaged in inequitable exchanges in the past. The offender has either failed to successfully fulfill the job requirements as expected and/or engaged in behaviors that resulted in inequitable relationships that have unfairly benefitted the offender. This is likely to have led to negative characteristics being associated with the offender. On the other hand, an offender having a good reputation may indicate that he or she has engaged in behaviors that established either equitable relationships or relationships in which the offender gave more than he or she received. Thus, positive characteristics have become associated with the offender.

Past exchanges may have a bearing on how the apology is perceived by the offendee. An apology expressed by an offender with a bad reputation may be undermined because of an inequity that already exists due to past negative behaviors. This will make it more difficult to remedy the present transgression. In contrast, when the offender's reputation is good, this may enhance the apology expressed. The past behaviors having been positive, the inequity resulting from a present transgression can be more easily rectified since there are no prior inequities added to the present one. Based on attribution theory, one can argue that an offense committed by an individual with a bad reputation may be internally attributed. If such an offender tries to apologize, the apology is likely to be viewed as being inconsistent with past behaviors. Further, an offender with a bad reputation will be viewed as being more likely to repeat similar offenses in the future given his or her past and present deviant behaviors. In contrast, an offender with a good reputation benefits from the perception that an expression of apology is consistent with his or her reputation. This favorable

perception may even mask the severity of the violation. The offendee may view the present offense as something "out of the ordinary" for the offender and thus the offender may be seen as being less likely to commit similar offenses in the future. The consistency between expression of apology and the past positive behaviors makes it much less likely that expression of apology will be viewed as being manipulative; therefore, the restoration of equity by an offender with a good reputation may be much easier than by an offender with a bad reputation.

In summary, a number of studies provide support for the assertion that expression of apology may lead to less punishment. However, these studies have been limited in their scope so that the effects of apology on discipline have been examined under only two conditions - "No Apology" and "Apology." Further, some important moderators that may significantly affect the relationship between apology and discipline have not been included. It is the intent of this study to broaden the scope of the examination to include elaborateness of apology, severity of outcome and reputation of the offender. This will let us begin to address the question of under what circumstances an expression of apology is or is not effective in reducing punishment.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As is demonstrated by the literature review, numerous efforts to understand the effects of apology on discipline have been made. Studies have found that apology may have a "payback" value that contributes to the restoration of equity, which can lead to less punishment. We can begin to address the limitations in the literature by focusing on some of those variables that appear to play an important role in determining apology's effects on discipline. The following variables are included in this study and are manipulated as follows:

(1) elaborateness of apology (No Apology/Simple Apology/Elaborate Apology),
(2) severity of outcome (Major/Minor), and
(3) the reputation of offender (Bad Reputation/Good Reputation).

Definitions

Elaborateness of Apology may be defined as follows:

(a) No Apology - defined as a condition in which the offender does not engage in expression of apology.

(b) Simple Apology - defined as a condition in which the offender engages in a simple expression of apology following the transgression. The "simple condition" should fall midway between "no apology" and "elaborate apology" condition. Simple apology is measured as the offender saying, "I'm sorry, I feel badly about this" (Darby & Schlenker, 1982)

(c) Elaborate Apology - defined as a condition in which the offender engages in an expression of apology that is considered to be extreme. Along the elaborateness of apology continuum, the elaborate apology is towards the "maximum" end of the continuum. Elaborate apology includes all of the following:

(1) self-castigation such as "How stupid of me";

(2) expressing a desire to compensate or help out with the damages resulting from the violation such as the offender saying, "Please let me help you"; and

(3) direct attempts at obtaining forgiveness from the offendee such as the offender saying, "Please forgive me"

(Schlenker & Darby, 1981).

Severity of the Violation

Manipulation involving the severity of the violation will be based on the outcome of the violation. The terms "minor outcome" and "major outcome" are used to distinguish those outcomes that are relatively less severe (minor outcome) from those outcomes that are relatively more severe (major outcome). In this study, a "minor outcome" involves a car that is slightly scratched. The repair to the car is estimated to cost $30-$40; whereas, in a "major outcome" condition, the damage to the car is severe and the repair to the car is estimated to cost $4,000-$4,500.

Favorableness of Reputation

Favorableness of reputation is operationalized based on a definition provided by Tsui (1984) and Hutson (1971). Tsui's (1984) definition is based on role theory which suggests that a person with a good reputation is someone who has successfully performed their set of role expectations while a person with a bad reputation is someone who has failed to perform those role expectations. In addition, Hutson (1971) suggests that the judgment about an employee's reputation also takes into account the manner in which the role performance was achieved. An employee with a good reputation achieves his or her role expectations through honesty and integrity while an employee who has successfully achieved his or her role may nevertheless be labeled a "bad" employee because the manner in which it was accomplished was through dishonest or unethical acts. Based on Tsui's (1984) and Hutson's (1971) definitions, this study will define the employee's reputation as follows:

(a) Bad Reputation - refers to an offender who is described as someone who is a person of dishonorable character and viewed by fellow co-workers as someone who lacked honesty and integrity.

(b) Good Reputation - refers to an offender who is described as someone who is a person of fine and honorable character and viewed by fellow co-workers as someone who possessed honesty and integrity.

Definition of Interactions

In addition to the three independent variables, the interaction effects of the elaborateness of the apology and the severity of the outcome are systematically manipulated to produce "goodness of fit" or lack of "goodness of fit." It was stated earlier that in order for an apology to be effective, it should be tailored to fit the severity of the transgression.

The evaluative terms "satisfactory" or "less than satisfactory" apology are used in the following definitions. Their use is based on the assumption that most people, through socialization, have acquired the skills necessary to determine the appropriateness of the apology following a transgression. Thus, it is expected that the more severe the outcome, the greater the apology that is fitting. Accordingly, an offense involving a "major outcome" is expected to require an elaborate expression of apology to be perceived as "satisfactory," while a simple expression of apology is expected to be perceived as "inadequate." In contrast, those violations involving "minor outcome" may require only a simple expression of apology to be perceived as "satisfactory," while an elaborate expression of apology may be viewed as "excessive." The definitions are as follows:

(a) Inadequate - defined as a weak expression of apology that is less than satisfactory, i.e., not sufficiently elaborate given the severity of the violation;

(b) Satisfactory - defined as either a simple or an elaborate expression of apology that is satisfactory given the severity of the violation. Here, there is a "goodness of fit" between the severity of outcome stemming from the violation and the elaborateness of the apology expressed;

(c) Excessive - defined as a strong expression of apology that is overly elaborate or "too much" given the severity of the violation.

Table 1 - 1. Goodness of Fit.		
	Simple Apology	Elaborate Apology
Minor Outcome	Satisfactory	Excessive
Major Outcome	Inadequate	Satisfactory

HYPOTHESES

Expression of Apology

Based on literature reviewed, which showed that the expression of apology may lead to less punishment, it is hypothesized that:

Hl: The more elaborate the apology, the less the punishment will be.

Seriousness of the Offense

Findings from past studies suggest that one of the ways in which we can measure the seriousness of the offense is by looking at the severity of the outcome stemming from the offense. According to equity theory and the literature reviewed, the more severe the consequence resulting from a violation, the harsher the punishment administered. Thus,

H2: The greater the severity of the outcome, the greater the punishment will be.

Offender's Reputation

According to the literature reviewed and the arguments presented, the reputation of the offender is predicted to have an impact on the level of punishment administered. An offender's good reputation will be perceived as congruent with the apology expressed. This is expected to enhance the impact of the apology expressed. In contrast, an offender's bad reputation will be viewed as incongruent with the apology expressed thus undermining the impact of the apology. Also the good reputation of the offender may inhibit punishment even in the absence of any apology. Accordingly, it is hypothesized:

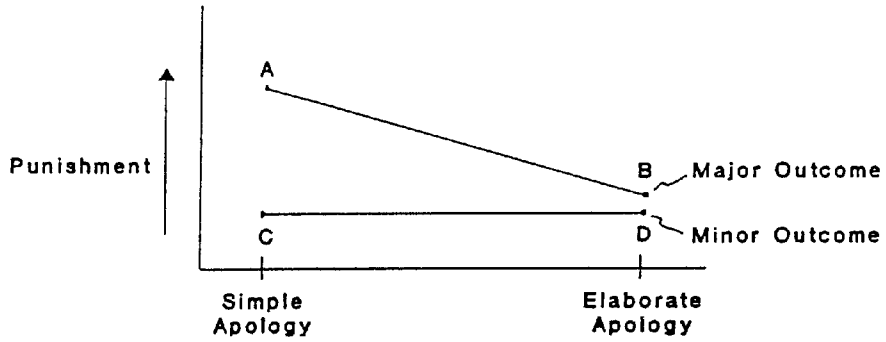
H3: When the offender's reputation is favorable, the punishment will be less than when it is unfavorable.

Elaborateness of Apology and Outcome

As was argued earlier, the effectiveness of an apology is believed to be dependent upon the “goodness of fit" between the elaborateness of the apology expressed and the severity of the outcome. Once the violation has been committed, the offender is portrayed as either apologizing satisfactorily, inadequately, excessively, or not at all.

Based on equity theory and the literature reviewed, it is predicted that those offenders who apologize "satisfactorily" and achieve "goodness of fit" will be punished less than those who apologize inadequately, or those who apologize excessively, or those who do not apologize at all. As shown in Figure 1 - 1, the interactions under which the "satisfactory" apologies will be achieved are: when a "simple apology" is expressed under the condition of "minor outcome" (C) and when an "elaborate apology" is expressed under the condition of "major outcome" (B). The "A" in Figure 1 -1 represents an apology that is inadequate ("simple apology" is expressed under the condition of “major outcome") and "D" represents an apology that is excessive ("elaborate apology" is expressed under the condition of "minor outcome"). Under this last condition, it is expected that increased elaborateness of apology will reduce punishment less than it would in the case of a major outcome.

Figure 1-1. Elaborateness of Apology and Outcome.



Thus, it is hypothesized:

H4: The effects of elaborateness of apology are moderated by severity of outcome such that the difference between a simple and elaborate apology is greater when the outcome is major than when it is minor.

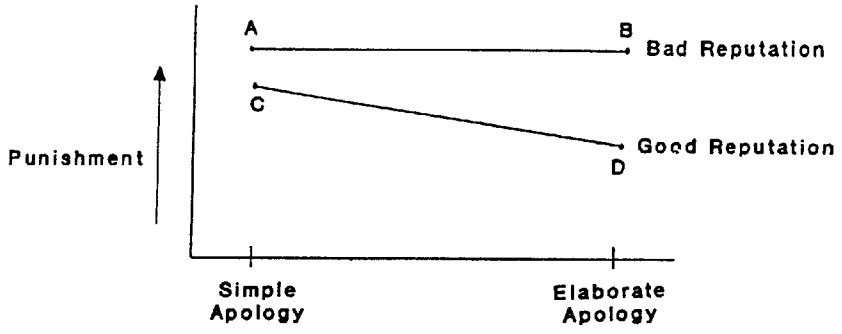
Elaborateness of Apology and Reputation

It appears from the literature that an offender's reputation may determine to what degree an apology will have an impact on the level of discipline administered. Thus, an offender's good reputation may enhance the apology because the positive character of the offender is congruent with it. In contrast, an offender's bad reputation may undermine the apology because the negative character of the offender is viewed as being incongruent with the apology.

As shown in Figure 1-2, the impact of elaborateness of apology on punishment is less when the offender has a bad reputation than when the offender has a good reputation. Based on the above arguments it is hypothesized:

H5: The effects of elaborateness of apology on punishment are moderated by the reputation of the offender such that the difference between a simple and elaborate apology is greater when the offender has a good reputation than a bad reputation.

Figure 1-2. Elaborateness of Apology and Reputation.



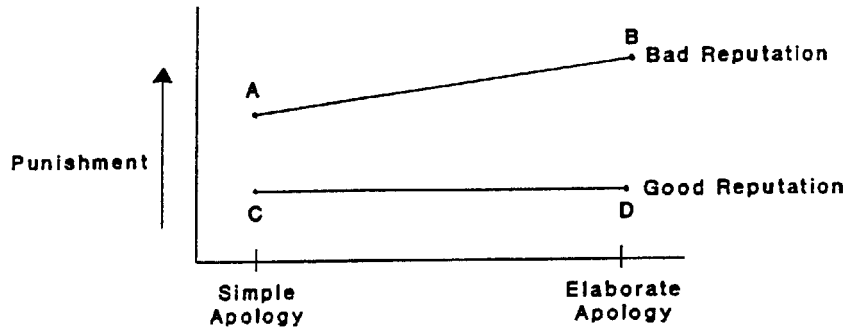
Interaction of Elaborateness of Apology, Reputation and Outcome

It has been argued above that an offender's bad reputation may undermine the apology. Jones and Wortman (1973) have argued that an excessive apology expressed by an offender may be perceived as intentionally trying to manipulate the situation in order to obtain pardon. It may be perceived as an attempt to ingratiate rather than to apologize sincerely. Thus, an apology that is excessive will not only not have any "payback" value, it may exacerbate the offense. The perception that an excessive apology is an attempt to manipulate is more likely to come about and more powerful where the offender has a bad reputation. In contrast, an offender's good reputation is expected to enhance the apology expressed so that even an apology that is excessive may be saved from being viewed as manipulative.

As shown in Figure 1-3, the interaction under which an "excessive apology" will be perceived to be manipulative is when an "elaborate apology" is expressed under the condition of “minor outcome" (B and D). Where the offender has a bad reputation, this may lead to greater punishment than a less elaborate apology. Thus, it is hypothesized:

H6: Under minor outcome condition, the negative impact of an elaborate apology is greater when the offender has a bad reputation than when the offender has a good reputation.

Figure 1-3. Interaction of Apology and Reputation when the Outcome is Minor.

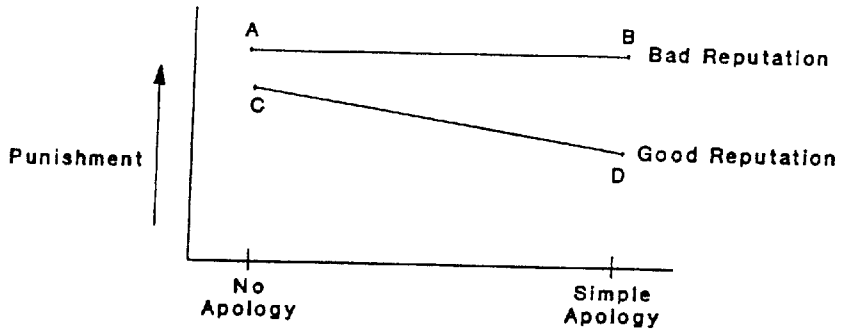


Although there are no prior studies dealing with inadequate apologies, it is possible to speculate on the outcome of an inadequate apology based on equity theory. It is expected that an offender with a good reputation who appears to be sorry about the violation and attempts to apologize for it, although he or she fails to do so satisfactorily, will be treated as someone who is partially aware of the responsibility for the harm done. Thus, an offender with a good reputation who

apologizes less than satisfactorily will experience less punishment than an offender with a good reputation who does not apologize. This is because a partial "payback" is preferable to no "payback." In contrast, for an offender with a bad reputation a less than satisfactory apology will not result in less punishment than no apology since the expression of apology will have been undermined by the negative character of the offender. More elaborate apology may be needed to "trigger" a substantial degree of "payback" mechanism for an offender with a bad reputation. In terms of Figure 1-4, this argument is to the effect that where the outcome is major, punishment will decline little or not at all as one moves from A to B (no apology to simple apology) where the reputation is bad, but will decline substantially from C to D (no apology to simple apology) where the reputation is good. Based on the previous arguments, it is hypothesized that:

H7: Under major outcome condition, the positive impact of a simple apology versus no apology is greater when the offender has a good reputation than when the offender has a bad reputation.

Figure 1-4. Interaction of Apology and Reputation When the Outcome is Major.



CONCLUSION

Many practitioners and scholars alike have underwritten the theory that expression of an apology may lead to less punishment. The studies and arguments presented to support this view appear to be well grounded. However, a number of researchers have argued that there are instances in which the expression of apology does not lead to less punishment. Consequently, it remains unclear under what circumstances the expression of apology is effective in reducing punishment and under what circumstances it is not. Thus, systematic research testifying to both the effectiveness of

an apology and ineffectiveness of an apology on the level of punishment has been scarce. This paper suggested ways to fill that void.

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COMMUNICATION RICHNESS AND THE SUCCESS OF THE EARLY CAREER PROFESSIONAL

J. Benjamin Forbes, John Carroll University
Kathleen M. Hiemstra, John Carroll University

ABSTRACT

Communication is an integral part of the process through which organizations seek to ensure the success of early career professionals. Appropriate communication richness can be a key factor in ensuring the effectiveness of this communication, and communication richness theory provides a model with which to predict the effectiveness of the communication. Correct communication media choice by the organization is especially important during early careers where there are often high levels of ambiguity and uncertainty. This is particularly true in organizations where there are specific probationary periods between being hired and being evaluated for promotion and/or retention. Such is the case with professions such as accounting, banking, the law and higher education. This study shows that managers of early career professionals in higher education rely on relatively rich communication media, and that the success of early career faculty is, in certain situations, related to appropriate communication media choice by their department chairs.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is one of the most critical management functions and is especially important for early career employees as they become socialized into the organization and attempt to succeed in their early career positions. This is particularly true in professions where there may be a great deal of uncertainty or ambiguity regarding what must be done to be successful during the early career. Several professions, including accounting, banking, the law, as well as higher education, have relatively specific time periods that comprise the early career period and in which the true expectations for success are not always clearly spelled out.

A wide variety of communication media can be used by managers to communicate to early career professionals. We have investigated the proposition that the choice of the appropriate media by the manager will affect the success of the early career professional during this critical formative period.

THE EARLY CAREER

The early phase of any career is a critical period. Both the individual entering and those already in the organization are learning about each other. As is true with any new relationship, early

impressions are very important. During the early career, the individual who is just entering the organization may be overwhelmed with new information. Whether planned or unplanned, the new employee will experience a period of socialization during which he or she will learn not only the official requirements of the job but also the unwritten expectations of new roles. The process of organizational socialization has been defined as the means "by which individuals are transformed from total outsiders of companies to participating, effective members of them" (Feldman 1988, p. 71). According to Feldman (1988), the first stage is typically complete within six months to a year.

Even after the initial socialization process, there are continuing issues to which the junior business or professional person must attend. First, she or he must continue to improve in performance on the job. Second, the employee typically must increase his or her technical competence in a specialized functional area (e.g., accounting, computers, marketing). Third, the new employee must still be willing to accept a relatively junior role in the organization. Fourth, this is the time to re-evaluate the choice of profession and organization (Schein, 1978).

In many business organizations, this early career phase is also a time of careful testing and evaluation. Performance and promotion within the first few years of a career often determines the trajectory of the later career path (Rosenbaum, 1979). However, in some firms, the entry-level evaluation may take as long as seven years (Forbes, 1987).

Within professional firms and academic institutions, there are well-established policies of "up or out." For example, universities evaluate assistant professors for tenure after a five-to seven-year probationary period. Those whose performance is acceptable are tenured and promoted. Others are asked to leave the organization. Likewise, firms in fields such as law and public accounting evaluate entry-level professionals after a similar trial period. Eventually only the best performers are offered partnerships.

Communication that is regularly sent to early career employees is an important aspect of their socialization and evaluation process. This communication can include written manuals, company policies and procedures, evaluations and letters, e-mail and memos as well as other forms of formal and informal written communication. Early career employees are also provided oral communication with face-to-face formal evaluations, voice mail and casual comments as well as other forms of formal and informal nonwritten communication.

One might assume that during the socialization and probationary periods, the entry-level employee becomes fully aware of the performance expectations of the organization. Unfortunately, this is often not the case. For example, it is not uncommon for junior university faculty to believe that they are performing satisfactorily but then be denied tenure. In professions such as public accounting, this can also be the case. One well-publicized case involved a top-performing accountant at Price-Waterhouse, Ann Hopkins, who was denied partnership. The reason seems to have been that, although she performed well by objective standards, she did not conform to stereotypical standards of feminine behavior. The courts supported Ms. Hopkins' claim of discrimination in this case. However, there was also clearly a breakdown in communication between the firm and Ann Hopkins concerning what was expected to achieve early career success (Lewin, 1990).

A similar more recent case involves allegations of discrimination against an African-American lawyer who was denied partnership in a major law firm. In this case, there is also a trail of communication and evaluation breakdowns (Barrett, 1999). While these issues come to light most

often when the unsuccessful early career professional has grounds to charge discrimination, basic communication problems are fairly common.

COMMUNICATION RICHNESS

The primary focus of this research is the contingency theory of media choice based on the concept of communication richness. Communication media may be classified according to the characteristic of "richness." This is a composite measure of the ability to "..handle multiple information cues simultaneously, ..facilitate rapid feedback, (and) ...establish a personal focus" (Lengel & Daft, 1988, p. 226). The richest medium is face-to-face communication because it is high in all of these characteristics. Communication media lower in richness would be telephone or other interactive electronic media due to the elimination of most nonverbal cues. Written media are leaner yet, since the information cues are limited, feedback is slower or nonexistent, and a personal focus may be lacking (Lengel & Daft, 1988).

Research by Lengel and Daft (1988) examined the process of selecting communication media. They have shown that the more successful corporate executives tend to choose communication media which match the "routineness" of the message. That is, while some messages are simple, logical, and easy to interpret (routine), others are characterized by ambiguity, time pressure, and surprise (nonroutine). Nonroutine messages require rich media in order for true communication to occur. Communication failures occur as the result of mismatches, i.e. rich media for routine messages or lean media for nonroutine messages (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Media Selection Framework

		MANAGEMENT PROBLEM	
		Routine	Nonroutine
MEDIA RICHNESS	Rich	*Communication Failure* Data glut. Rich media used for routine messages. Excess cues cause confusion and surplus meaning.	*Effective Communication* Communication success because rich media match nonroutine messages.
	Lean	*Effective Communication* Communication success because media low in richness match routine messages.	*Communication Failure* Data starvation. Lean media used for nonroutine messages. Too few cues to capture message complexity.

Source: Lengel, R. H. & R. L. Daft. (1988). The selection of communication media as an executive skill, *The Academy of Management Executive, 11*(3), 227.

In the Daft and Lengel (1988) study, the executives were classified according to their ability to match the media to the message, and this was related to job performance. In the most "media

sensitive" group, 87% of the managers had been rated by the company as high performers, while only 47% of the insensitive group were considered high performing managers (Daft, Lengel, & Trevino, 1987; Lengel & Daft, 1988).

Other more recent research has generally supported the model. A broad, comprehensive meta-analysis of over 40 studies provided fairly strong confirmation. Rice and Shook (1990) argued that differences in job categories and organizational levels would result in predictably different patterns of communication media usage. Specifically, higher level jobs involve more uncertainty and would require the use of richer communication media. The results did show that managers were more likely to use face-to-face communication, while nonmanagers spent more time with written communication. In addition, individual-level analyses in four additional organizations provided support for the hypotheses that both job category and level in the organization relate to the use of communication media. However, as the authors note, a methodological limitation of this study, as with many communication media studies, was the lack of a measure of performance.

A more focused study dealt with the use of information at various phases within innovation projects (Gales, Porter, & Mansour-Cole, 1992). As projects move through the phases of idea generation, project design, full-scale development and production, and commercialization, many existing models would predict that uncertainty would decrease. The authors point out, however, that managers may actually perceive that the uncertainty is increasing as the project progresses. In this study, there was a measure of performance: the success in selling the new technology.

The results showed that as the amount of information used increased, so did the importance of information richness. Furthermore, within the commercialization phase, the managers of successful projects with difficult analyzability emphasize rich information more than the managers of easier analyzability projects. In addition, successful managers with easier analysis of technical problems emphasize rich information less than unsuccessful managers of easier analyzability projects. Hypotheses relating the degree of variety and analyzability directly to the importance of information richness were not supported, however. The authors point out that although a project may objectively require more information processing, this occurs only when managers recognize the need and act accordingly.

SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Media richness theory prescribes the most rational choice to make with regard to communication media; however, as noted above, the actual choice may be influenced by other factors. The social influence approach argues that the attitudes and behavior of co-workers can influence media choices. Fulk, Steinfield, Schmitz and Power (1987) present a model that can be used to show how social influence processes can affect an individuals' attitude toward communication media as well as media use behavior. The model integrates social influences with elements of the traditional media use theory. Their article summarizes the traditional view of media use and describes a model of social influences on task-related attitudes and behavior in organizations.

Another study examined the effects of both media richness and social influence on the choice of communication media (Webster & Trevino, 1995). Policy-capturing methodology was used in two separate studies. These researchers found that both message equivocality and social influences had

significant effects on the choice of communication media. However, once again their methodology did not permit a test of the effect of media choice on performance.

An article by Rice (1993) assessed a scale, "measuring appropriateness of media for a variety of communication activities and comparing media across organization sites" (p. 451). This research focused on the "primary characteristics associated with two related theories: social presence and media richness" (p. 451). The study ranked both the traditional and newer media including face to face, telephone, meetings, desktop video and videoconferencing, voice mail, text and electronic mail (p. 451). Data was gathered about media appropriateness, new media usage, and job positions as well as some information about communication networks. "The overall ranking of media according to the full appropriateness scale, from highest to lowest, (was) face, phone, meeting, desktop video, vmail, text, and e-mail" (p. 462).

The hypothesis that managers chose media that was rich or lean in response to the task characteristics was tested by Donabedian, McKinnon and Bruns (1998). The study found "support for the task-characteristic hypothesis relating managers' choice of rich information media to high levels of task variety and low levels of task analyzability" (p. 393). Here the task variety and analyzability were fairly significant predictors of media choice, but the authors also found weak but statistically significant influences of the social factors of rank and functional area. They suggest that the socialization of the managers may explain these effects.

Staub and Karahanna (1998) have broadened the study of media choice to include the concept of social presence and recipient availability. They found that recipient availability may be associated with why knowledge workers choose certain communication media. One of their studies showed that, "voice-mail was substitutable for traditional media such as face-to-face meetings when the task was highly sensitive and the intended communication partner was likely to be temporally available. E-mail, in contrast, tended to be selected when the task was not sensitive to social presence, irrespective of whether the recipient was immediately available to receive communications or not" (p. 171). They propose that the usefulness of the results of their study is in explaining, rather than just testing, the determinants of media choice.

More research is needed to describe media choice in other settings and to determine the effect of these choices on performance. Our study focuses on the task of communicating with entry-level professionals in a complex and potentially very ambiguous environment (higher education) and examines the relationship between use of various communication media and successful development of the professionals (tenure-track faculty).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Several research questions have been developed. We seek to explore the various forms of communication that are important during the early career process when managers communicate to highly educated employees in inherently ambiguous and uncertain settings. The following five questions were investigated.

1. *What types of communication (oral and written) are used by managers of highly educated early career professionals?*
2. *What specific media are used most frequently to communicate with early career professionals?*
3. *Are the types of communication and the type of media related to early career success (i.e. tenure)?*
4. *Do other situational factors affect the successful use of various communication with early career professionals?*
5. *More specifically, in an inherently ambiguous process, is the richness of the communication media used by a manager a predictor of early career success?*

Questions 1, 2, 3, and 4 are primarily exploratory, while Question 5 represents a test of the Daft and Lengel (1988) media richness model.

METHOD

Data for the study was gathered by sending questionnaires to the deans of the colleges and universities who are members of a consortium of church-affiliated, private universities. The 28 colleges and universities in this group represent a group of American institutions of higher learning ranging from small regional liberal arts colleges, through medium-sized regional comprehensive universities, to large national universities.

Four copies of the questionnaire were mailed to each of 87 deans. A cover letter from our dean explained the purpose of the study and requested that the questionnaire be distributed to four department chairs. The initial mailing, therefore, contained 348 surveys. Two deans responded that their schools did not have tenured positions, reducing the survey by eight questionnaires. However, two deans requested additional surveys bringing the total number distributed to 358. One hundred and nine surveys were returned, for a response rate of 31.3%.

Of the 109 respondents, 100 (91.7%) indicated that they were department chairs. Of those who were not chairs, 4 indicated that they were a Dean or Associate Dean, 2 were Area Coordinators, 1 chaired the rank and tenure committee, but had been a chair, 1 was a Professor who had been a Chair and 1 a Coordinator of Courses. The data from all sources were used since all respondents seemed to be in positions from which they could accurately report on the communication process.

The 109 respondents reported on a total of 380 tenure-track faculty: Two hundred forty-nine who were granted tenure, 83 who left the department voluntarily, and 48 who were denied tenure. Those who left or were denied tenure were considered unsuccessful tenure candidates.

In their questionnaires, those responding indicated the number of years they had held the position of department chair. Their years as chairperson varied from 14 (12.8%) chairs having been in the position for one year or less to 2 chairs (1.8%) having served for 18 years. The largest group had served from 2 to 3 years (31.8%). The mean is 4.8 years of service as department chair.

The respondents were also asked to indicate the number of full time faculty in their department. Among the 109 respondents, the mean was 10.8 full time faculty. Departments reported as few as 1 full time faculty and as many as 43 full time faculty.

Respondents were asked to identify the highest types of degrees that are granted by their institution and by their department. Four year degrees only are granted by 7 (6.4%) of the respondents, a Masters Degree is granted by 59 (54.1%) of the institutions and PhDs are conferred by 42 (38.5%) of the institutions. Of the departments responding, 38 (34.9%) are four year degree granting departments, 44 (40.4%) grant Masters Degrees and 21 (19.3%) grant PhDs.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The sections on communication asked the department chairs to evaluate: 1) the degree of reliance on various types of communication on a five-point Likert scale where 1 indicated "very little reliance" and 5 indicated "very heavy reliance," and 2) the portion of communication that took place through various media (this was assessed as the percentage of communication through each medium). In the first section, we explored the combinations of formal versus informal communication with written versus oral communication. Respondents rated their reliance on specific examples of each type. In the media sections, respondents indicated the extent to which they used the categories of communication most commonly found in the communication richness literature (face-to-face; phone; personal letters, memos, e-mail; and general organizational documents).

On the Likert-type scale of 1 to 5, department chairs reported relying most highly on formal written communication, such as policies and annual evaluations. Also, relied upon heavily was informal oral communication, particularly that involving encouragement and acknowledgment of accomplishments. Less reliance was placed on the oral component of formal annual evaluations and informal written communication (see Table 1).

The use of various communication media is also reported in Table 1. The media are listed in order of richness, from the most rich (face to face oral) through the least rich (general written documents). Here, the department managers were asked to report the proportion of communication with untenured professionals via each of the four media.

Consistent with the proposition that richer media should be used in non-routine ambiguous situations, the large majority of communication with early career professionals is through face to face oral communication (over 60% of the communication). Lean media (written correspondence, e-mail, and institutional documents) are the media of choice when chairs communicate with tenure track faculty almost one-third of the time. Telephone communication is reported as the least used media.

Preliminary analysis of the data indicated significant relationships between certain situational variables and the use of different types and media of communications. Therefore, we explored the use of department size and manager experience as moderator variables. That is, we suspected that different types of communication might be appropriate in different situations and with different types of managers. The mean success rates were not significantly different between small and large departments nor between experienced and inexperienced managers. Department size and manager experience were dichotomized at the median for each. This defined a large department as one with ten or more faculty and an experienced manager as someone with four or more years experience.

Table 1
Communication Type and Media Used With Early Career Professionals By Department Chair (n = 104)

Communication Type	Rating of Reliance (1-5)
Formal Written Communication	
University and Department Tenure Policy	4.23
Annual Evaluations	4.33
Informal Written Communication	
Recognize and Acknowledge Accomplishments	3.73
Constructive Criticism	3.41
Warning Notes – Teaching, Research, Service	2.65
Formal Oral Communication	
Annual Evaluations	3.91
Informal Oral Communication	
Informal Evaluation or Comments	3.89
Encourage and Acknowledge Accomplishments	4.13
Department Expectations	4.07
Media	**Proportion of Use (%)**
Face to Face Oral	60.6
Phone	6.6
Personal Letters, Memos, or E-Mail	17.8
General University, School, or Department Documents, Announcements, or E-Mail	14.9

More experienced department managers indicated significantly greater reliance on formal communication, both the written and oral components of annual evaluations and department and organizational policies. They also emphasized informal oral communication of department expectations more than inexperienced department chairs (See Table 2).

Significant differences also exist in communication media depending on department size and manager experience. The size of a group is clearly a constraint on face-to-face oral communication, and our data show that managers in smaller departments use this media significantly more than in larger departments (65.4% vs. 55.7%). Interestingly, more experienced managers are also significantly more likely to use oral media than less experienced managers (64.8% vs. 56.3%). Conversely, in larger departments there is more reliance on the telephone (8.2% vs. 4.0%), and the phone is used more by inexperienced managers (8.5% vs. 4.7%). These data are also presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Communication Type and Media used with Early Career Professionals in Relation to Department Size and Chair Experience

Communication Type	Small Dept. (n=54)	Large Dept. (n=50)	Inexperienced Chair (n=52)	Experienced Chair (n=52)
Formal Written Communication				
University and Department Tenure Policy	4.22	4.24	3.94	4.48*
Annual Evaluations	4.41	4.24	4.13	4.54*
Informal Written Communication				
Recognize and Acknowledge Accomplishments	3.83	3.63	3.57	3.90
Constructive Criticism	3.57	3.24	3.20	3.63
Warning Notes - Teaching, Research, Service	2.66	2.67	2.75	2.55
Formal Oral Communication				
Annual Evaluations	4.13	3.65	3.64	4.20*
Informal Oral Communication				
Informal Evaluation or Comments	3.93	3.86	3.77	4.00
Encourage and Acknowledge Accomplishments	4.20	4.04	4.13	4.12
Department Expectations	4.09	4.04	3.90	4.24*
Media				
Face to Face Oral	65.4	55.7*	56.3	64.8*
Phone	4.8	8.2*	8.5	4.7*
Personal Letters, Memos, or E-Mail	16.7	19.0	19.2	16.4
University/School/Department Documents/Announcements/e-mail	13.4	16.7	16.1	13.8

* Statistically significant difference ($p < .05$)

We next examined the relationship between communication choices and the success of the early career professional. Our measure of success was the proportion of professional tenure cases within the department over the past 5 years which led to a decision to award academic tenure. The mean success rate was 0.67, however, this measure was highly skewed, with almost one-third of the departments having a tenure success rate of 1.0. Therefore, the nonparametric Spearman rank order correlation was used. Our general expectation was, given the ambiguity of successfully performing as an early career professional, the use of richer forms of communication would be positively related to success and the use of leaner forms would lead to negative correlations with success.

With respect to communication type, only one area was related to tenure success at a statistically significant level. Greater reliance on one of the least rich forms of communication, policy documents, was negatively related to early career success. This was true for the entire sample (r = -

.18, $p < .05$) and more strongly the case in smaller departments ($r = -.27$, $p < .05$) and with less experienced managers ($r = -.29$, $p < .05$).

This finding is confirmed by the relationships with media choice (See Table 3). The use of general documents, announcements, or e-mail is strongly, and negatively associated with early career success in departments with inexperienced managers. Also, inexperienced chairs who make greater use of the phone (a fairly rich media) have more success. An unexpected finding was that use of personal letters, memos, and e-mail was positively related to success in small departments.

Table 3
Correlations of Communication Media with Early Career
Professional Success By Department Size and Chair Experience

Media	Total (n=99)	Small Dept. (n=50)	Large Dept. (n=49)	Inexperienced Chair (n=49)	Experienced Chair (n=50)
Face to Face Oral	-.02	-.15	-.05	-.02	-.05
Phone	.03	.07	.06	.24*	-.15
Personal Letters, Memos, or E-Mail	.11	.25*	.03	.17	.09
General University, Schools, or Department Documents, Announcements, or E-Mail	-.15	-.10	-.12	-.36**	-.03

*Statistically significant ($p < .05$)
**Statistically significant ($p < .01$)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Numerous factors combine to determine early career success in a complex, ambiguous setting such as that facing professional employees. These factors include the early career employee's ability, motivation, and clear understanding of his or her role. In addition, measurement and evaluation of the professional's performance is often subjective and thus dependent on fulfilling the expectations of others. The manager plays a critical role in this process. He or she is a key point in the flow of information from the organization to the individual.

Managers should consider the concept of media richness in choosing how to communicate with early career professionals. That is, to the extent that the situation is not standardized and routine, more information must flow to and from the professionals. This is facilitated by the use of richer communication media.

Our results indicate that managers in this type of situation (university department chairs) rely most heavily on formal written communication (lean) and informal oral communication (rich). However, they use the richest communication media (face to face oral) for the majority of their

interactions with untenured professors. Our measures of reliance on various types of communication indicate that university department chairs believe that formal written communication and some forms of informal oral communication are necessary. However, much communication actually takes place through rich oral communication. Thus, formal written communication is necessary but not sufficient in this situation.

This supports the general descriptive finding in the literature on media richness - that uncertainty does affect the manager's choice of communication media. However, relatively few studies have validated the prescriptive or normative aspect of the theory. Using the department tenure success rate as a measure of early career performance, our data provide support for the proposition that those managers who choose the appropriate communication media are likely to perform at a higher level, that is, have more faculty achieve tenure. Specifically, two different measures showed that over reliance on lean communication from managers was detrimental to the success of the early career professionals.

This seems to mean that such department chairs fail to communicate all the information that is necessary for a tenure track faculty member to be successful. In this inherently ambiguous process, there is a need for policies, procedures and documentation, but it is a mistake to assume that this is all that is necessary. The interpretation of these more formal documents as well as other more subjective expectations requires richer communication between the department chair and the tenure track faculty. This finding provides support for the Daft and Lengel (1984, 1986) proposition that better managerial performance results from matching the type of communication to the routineness of the task.

We also found two situational factors which moderated the choice of communication and the relationships between communication choice and success of early career faculty. Department managers with more experience chose significantly different patterns of communication than inexperienced managers. They relied more heavily on both formal written and oral communication as well as on informal oral communication. The more experienced chairs seem to be focusing on clarifying the understanding of the role expectations for the early career professional. They also choose richer communication media: more face to face and less telephone communication. These differences may be due to the wisdom of experience or simply due to socialization of the manager. Manager socialization has been recently proposed as an explanation of why communication media usage varies with rank and with functional area (Donabedian, McKinnon, & Bruns, 1998).

One might conclude that less experienced managers should model their behavior after that of the experienced managers. However, our data suggests that such a practice would not always be appropriate. For example greater reliance on formal written communication in the form of tenure policies, although used heavily by experienced managers, was negatively related to tenure success - for the total group and more strongly for inexperienced managers. More successful low experience department chairs also chose to use the phone more and general documents, announcements, and e-mail less. The choice of these communication media was not significantly related to tenure success rate for experienced chairs. Thus, it seems that choosing the appropriate communication makes a bigger difference for the less experienced managers. Perhaps, with experience, managers become more skilled at communicating meaning through a wider variety of media. Or perhaps, early career

employees may be more likely to rely on all types of communication from more experienced managers.

Similar differences were related to department size. In large departments, there was less face to face and more phone communication. This is logical given the difficulty of spending face to face time with a larger number of professionals. We also found that the effects of communication choices were stronger in the smaller departments. Successful chairs in smaller departments were less likely to rely on tenure policies and constructive criticism (although this variable was not quite statistically significant) and more likely to use personal letters, memos, and e-mail. Communication choice did not relate to success at all in the large departments. Perhaps the ability of one person, the manager or chair, to make a difference is lessened as the size of the group increases.

In conclusion, our data from over 100 managers of highly educated early career professionals supports media richness theory by showing that in this potentially ambiguous, uncertain, nonroutine situation, managers prefer to use richer communication media. We have also identified a characteristic of the situation (department size) and a characteristic of the manager (years of experience) which moderate the choice of and the effectiveness of communication. Finally, there is also evidence that appropriate communication choice is predictive of the successful development of early career professionals in smaller departments and by less experienced managers.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study surveyed managers in higher education. Perhaps communication practices are different in other sectors. Additional research is needed in other areas with similar career paths (early intense evaluation, then up or out) such as public accounting, law, banking and many business firms (see Forbes & Piercy, 1991).

The data were also the subjective opinions of only one party in the process. Future studies should also focus on the early career professional and on others, such as more experienced non-managerial professionals as sources of critical information.

Finally, while the choice of communication media by practicing managers seems to consistently follow media richness prescriptions, we need further research which focuses on the effectiveness of such choices.

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WHAT ARE THE PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION STUDENTS TOWARDS GAYS AND LESBIANS IN THE WORKPLACE?

Bill McPherson, Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Lisa O'Hara

ABSTRACT

In preparing future employees for work in business, many business communication courses discuss corporate cultures. Many business communication authors have stressed the need for students to be successful in today's workplace they must understand corporate culture. When discussing corporate culture, many business communication textbooks offered specific guidelines for dealing with various groups that make up the culture of the organization. Business communication curriculums are provide extensive literature on how work successfully with various groups of people in the workplace, Examples of such groups that receive attention in most business curriculums are: (1) Asians; (2) Afro-Americans; (3) Women; and (4) Handicapped. Although this is not an exhaustive list, one culture that there appears to be a dearth of literature in business communication textbooks are preparing future employees to work with gays and lesbians as a culture in corporate America.

The research focused on asking business communication students about their perceptions and attitudes towards gays and lesbians in the workplace. In addition, this research study ascertained what the current climate on college campuses towards gays and lesbians. Certain other demographic factors were also considered. The following research questions guided the study:

What are the perceptions and attitudes of business communication students towards gays and lesbians in the workplace?

What is the current climate on campus towards gays and lesbians?

What types of diversity training and instruction should be provided to business students as future employees on working with gays and lesbians?

INTRODUCTION

In preparing future employees for work in business, many business communication courses discuss corporate cultures. Many business communication authors have stressed in order for students to be successful in today's workplace they must understand corporate culture (Boone & Kurtz, 1995; Bell, 1994; Bovee & Thill, 1999). When discussing corporate culture, many business communication textbooks offered specific guidelines for dealing with various groups that make up the culture of the organization. Business communication curriculums provide extensive literature on how to work successfully with various groups of people in the workplace. Examples of such groups that receive attention in most business curriculums: (1) Asians; (2) African-Americans; (3) Women; and (4) Handicapped. Although this is not an exhaustive list, one area that does not appear to be addressed in business communication textbooks is the preparation of future employees to work with gays and lesbians as a micro culture in corporate America.

Most workplaces have programs in place to increase the awareness of issues particular to minorities and the physically challenged. Unfortunately few programs exist which address the issues pertinent to gays and lesbians. While programs designed to increase awareness of minorities exist, the issues that face gays and lesbians in the workplace are not one of numbers. Woods (1994) estimates that

> As a group, lesbians and gay men probably outnumber Hispanics, Asian-Pacific Islanders, the disabled and others whom we have traditionally classified as minorities. If the standard 10% estimate can be believed, their proportion of the professional work force approaches that of African Americans, who represent 12.1% of the population--but only 5.6% of the professional work force (p. 207).

Yet countless employers continue to overlook the needs of a group of employees that may comprise anywhere from 6% to 12% of the work force (Woods, 1994). By choosing to ignore sexual orientation as a diversity issue, companies send a clear message: Diversity means valuing only those employees with whom we feel comfortable.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

There is no question that a significant portion of the gay and lesbian population has expressed that they have experienced some kind of discriminatory treatment in the workplace (Kovach, 1995). Similarly, a significant number of CEOs have indicated in surveys that they would hesitate to give management jobs to workers who are homosexual. However, it is only recently that homosexuality has been openly discussed, particularly within the context of the workplace. So it is no surprise that

to date there is no federal law that prohibits discrimination in the workplace based on sexual orientation. The research focused on asking business communication students (BCS) about their perceptions and attitudes towards gays and lesbians in the workplace. Certain other demographic factors were also considered. The following research questions guided the study:

(1) What are the perceptions and attitudes of BCS towards gays and lesbians in the workplace?

(2) What types of diversity training and instruction should be provided to BCS as future employees on working with gays and lesbians?

(3) What types of topics, training, and instruction should be provided to business students as future employees to increase an awareness and understanding of gay and lesbian students?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many human resource managers ignore the issues that affect gay men and lesbians in the workplace. Not only do managers avoid resistance from other managers and employees, but also they lack education about such issues (Lucas & Kaplan, 1994). Consequently, human resource policy decisions regarding homosexual employees may be based on stereotypes and misinformation. In such cases, a significant segment of the workforce--gay men and lesbians--becomes the object of discrimination (Lucas & Kaplan, 1994).

A recent *Time* magazine article provided mixed reports on the progress of gay men and lesbians toward social acceptance in this country (Henry, 1994). Henry reported that although some positive steps have been made during the past 25 years, a period of intense gay activism, "gays may already be bumping up against the limits of tolerance" (p. 55). In reporting the results of a Time/ CNN survey conducted in June 1994, Henry noted that approximately 65% of the Americans polled thought that " homosexual rights were being paid too much attention"(p. 55). He also noted that the proportion of people who described "homosexuality" as "morally wrong" was identical to that revealed by a 1978 survey–53% (p. 55). The survey also showed that 64% of respondents believed that "marriages between homosexuals" should not be recognized legally (p. 58).

Polls have consistently demonstrated that women have more liberal attitudes on gay issues than do men. For example, according to a Gallup Poll conducted in 1993, 56% of the women surveyed favored extending civil rights laws to include "homosexuals," compared to 35% of men (Moore, 1993, p. 30). Similarly, 30% of the women surveyed agreed that they "prefer that homosexuals stay in the closet," compared to 45% of men (p. 34).

Caudron (1995) states,

> We're spending a lot of time and effort creating workplaces that value diversity because we don't want to lose talented employees to the competition or underuse anyone's skills or unique perspective. Besides, a diverse work force helps us do business in a diverse marketplace. But there's one minority group that's continually overlooked in our diversity discussions. A group whose challenges and unique perspective are so misunderstood that many people in human resources simply choose to ignore them. Unlike other minority workers, these employees are still the target of toxic humor, if not outright discrimination, harassment and scorn (p. 42).

According to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in Washington, D.C., since 1990, at least 130 private companies have added the words "sexual orientation" to their statements of non-discrimination. Furthermore, well over 60 companies have extended domestic-partner benefits to gay employees, including Lotus Development Corp., Levi Strauss, Microsoft Corp. and Apple Computer.

The gay and lesbian rights movement has spilled over into the workplace as well as into other social arenas (Smith, 1994). Management will have to take steps to diffuse any potential problems arising from the controversial issues involved.

INSTRUMENTATION

The population for the study were three hundred and ten male and female business communication students (BCS) who were enrolled in business and interpersonal communications at a state-supported four-year university in the Northwest section of Pennsylvania.

Students enrolled in the business communication courses for the spring of 1998 were the population for the study. Participation was voluntary. This study followed a descriptive research design using survey methods with statistical treatments. In deciding which survey method is best suited for a particular piece of research, Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) stated that it is necessary to evaluate which criteria are most significant to the research objective.

The design was a cross-sectional survey. Babbie (1990, p. 65) stated that the cross-sectional design is the most frequently used study design. Babbie (1990) supports the use of this type of survey when

> ……data are collected at one point in time from a sample selected to describe some larger population at that time. Such a survey can be used not only for purposes of description but also for the determination of relationships between variables at the time of study (p. 62).

The survey method is one of the most important data collection methods in the social sciences, and as such, it is used extensively to collect information on numerous subjects of research (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996, p. 247). If the researcher's aim is a single-time description, then a cross-sectional survey is the most appropriate. As Babbie (1990) states, "The researcher would identify the population relevant to his interests, select a sample of respondents from the population, and conduct his survey" (p. 68). This survey modeled Babbie's statement.

The survey instrument employed was a Likert scale entitled, "Attitudes and perceptions of business communication students towards gays and lesbians in the workplace." When employing survey research, one must be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of this type of research. Nachmias and Nachmias (1996), when discussing the survey method offered, "…its major advantages are lower costs, relatively small biasing error, greater anonymity, and accessibility. Its disadvantages are a low response rate, opportunity for probing, and the lack of control over who fills out the questionnaire" (p. 248).

In order to minimize the disadvantages of using the survey methods, "the design method" (TDM) suggested by Dillman (1978) was used as a guide. Dillman (1978) defined the TDM as

> …consisting of two parts. The first [part] identifies each aspect of the survey process that may affect either the quality or quantity of response and to shape each of them in such a way that the best possible responses are obtained. The second [part] organizes the survey efforts so that the design intentions are carried out in complete detail" (p. 12).

Using Dillman's TDM will help to minimize the problems of response quality and quantity. In other words, "…this is nothing more than the identification of each and every aspect of the survey process that may affect response quantity or quality and shaping them in a way that may encourage a good response" (Dillaman, 1978, p. 2).

The data in this descriptive study was collected using standard survey procedures as described by Dillman (1978). Each of the potential participants received a coded survey packet containing the following items: (1) Cover letter describing the study to the potential participant and an outline of the procedures to be followed in completing the forms in the survey packet; (2) The survey with a section on demographics (brief questions asking for biographical and demographic information such as gender, major, age, etc.).

In order to preserve the confidentiality of all survey respondents, each packet was not assigned a code number. This non-coding insured that all survey packets remained private.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data for scores from the Likert scale were scored through the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences for Windows (SPSS+ for Microcomputers, release 4.0); statistical tests were performed on the data from the scale. Descriptive and comparative analyses were made.

FINDINGS

Two hundred and forty three students participated in the survey which was a 78% response rate. Table 1 posed the question concerning anti-gay attitudes in the workplace and Table 2 focused on asking the BCS specific questions related to attitudes towards gays and lesbians in the workplace. The questions in Table 2 covered the following areas: management, supervisory and entry level workers, negative comments and joke telling, and the need to address gays issues in their careers. Table 3 summarized BCS attitudes and perceptions related to an array of topics concerning gays and lesbians in the workplace.

Table 1: Anti-Attitudes

	Very little extent	Little extent	Some extent	Great extent	Very great extent
To what extent do you think anti-gay, anti-lesbian, and anti-bisexual attitudes exist in the workplace?	.1%	16.1%	57.0%	21.9%	2.9%

Table 2: Specific questions relating to the workplace

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
Do you think that a supervisor's knowledge of an employee's sexual orientation would affect his or her chances of promotion or a favorable job assignment?	3.3%	4.1%	54.4%	26.1%	12.1%
If you were a professional, would your knowledge of an employee's sexual orientation affect his or her chances for promotion or favorable job assignment?	50.2%	23.2%	17.4%	5%	4.2%
How often do you believe sexual orientation influences an employee's choice of career or organization?	2.5%	10%	45.6%	30.7%	11.2%

Table 2: Specific questions relating to the workplace

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
How often does an employee's sexual orientation create stressful situations at work?	2.9%	14%	41.7%	27.7%	13.7%
How often do you believe that sexual orientation affects an employee's career success or ability to develop professional networks and contacts?	7.1%	17.9%	43.3%	25.8%	5.9%
Does sexual orientation affect an employee's ability to work as part of a team?	30.4%	32.5%	25.8%	7.5%	3.8%
Do you believe that employees are discriminated against in their current jobs because of sexual orientation?		8.8%	47.1%	32.1%	12.0%
Do you think people at work care about the sexual orientation of other employees?	.8%	18.3%	55%	19.2%	6.7%
Do you think the work environment is accepting of gay and lesbian people?	2.5%%	22.5%	57.5%	15.8%	1.7%

DISCUSSION

Business communication students need to realize that "in an organization of any size, statistically speaking, at least 3% to 12% of the people in the organization are gay, lesbian or bisexual" (Adams, 1996, p. 78). Caudron (1995) states that countless employers continue to overlook the needs of a group of employees that may comprise anywhere from 6% to 12% of the work force.

Most workplaces have programs in place to increase the awareness of issues particular to minorities and the physically challenged, but not gays and lesbians (Woods, 1995). Sexual orientation issues should be integrated into workforce diversity initiatives. It is important that gay and lesbian employees be considered as valuable by the organization, as women, religious minorities and people of color. It should be explained that the reasons for recognizing the importance of gays and lesbians is the same reason everyone else is given importance, that is, to encourage all employees to contribute their maximum potential.

Table 3: Various statements towards gays and lesbians

	Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly
I will most likely have co-workers who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual during my career.	7.2%	12.2%	44.3%	36.3%

Table 3: Various statements towards gays and lesbians

	Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly
I could work comfortably with a gay, lesbian, or bisexual co-worker.	5.9%	13.1%	40.9%	40.1%
High school sex education classes should include information about being gay, lesbian, or bisexual.	16.9%	17.3%	39.7%	26.2%
There should be law prohibiting gay and lesbian relationships.	47.5%	28.4%	16.1%	8.1%
Gay or lesbian people should be allowed to serve openly in the US military.	17.2%	23.5%	25.2%	34%
Gay or lesbian people should have the legal right to adopt children.	28.7%	23.2%	27%	21.1%
Gays and lesbians should have the legal right to get married.	18.9%	16%	37%	28.2%
Gay and lesbian people should not be allowed to teach in public schools.	43.5%	31.8%	13.8%	10.9%
Gay and lesbian people should not be allowed to hold positions in the clergy.	28.2%	28.2%	17.1%	26.5%
Gay and lesbian people should not be allowed to hold management or within organizations.	57.1%	27.7%	9.2%	5.9%
Gay and lesbian people should not be permitted to hold a political office.	52.5%	30.5%	9.7%	7.2%
Gay and lesbian people should not be permitted to hold positions in the health care field.	48.7%	32.8%	8.4%	10.1%

As shown in Table 1 business communication students indicated to some extent that there is an existence of prejudice towards gays and lesbians in the workplace (57% some extent, 22% great extent and 3% very great extent). It appears that BCS do feel that there does exist anti-gay/lesbians attitudes. Acknowledgment of this situation could be a very important first step into breaking down barriers for gay and lesbian employees. Another finding in Table 2 that supported the idea of prejudice in the workplace was that only roughly 18% of BCS indicated that the work place environment is accepting of gays and lesbians. BCS as future managers need to value diversity, especially when it comes to gays and lesbians. They need to push for the workplace to change. Homosexuality is merely another component of diversity in an already diverse workforce (Caudron, 1995). Many anti-attitudes exist

because people do not understand the difference between tolerance and acceptance. Lewis (1995) carefully differentiates tolerance from acceptance arguing that,

> employers can only demand the former and should teach their employees that tolerance does not necessarily mean approval: Christian managers don't think they are endorsing or encouraging Judaism when they refer to the December office social function as a holiday party (p. 65).

Lewis (1995) offers a good example for BCS to think about.

Findings in Table 2 and Table 3 regarding promotion offer some interesting information. Nearly 83% of BCS indicated to some extent that a supervisor's knowledge of an employee's sexual orientation would affect his or her chances of promotion. Over 55% of the BCS strongly disagreed with the statement that gay and lesbians should not be able to hold management and supervisory positions. Yet, when asked when they become professional, if would their knowledge of an employee's sexual orientation would affect their decisions when determining promotion or favorable job assignment, over 50% indicated it would never affect and another 23% indicated that it would rarely affect. It appears that if these BCS enter the workplace, employees' sexual orientation will be a mute point when determining promotion or favorable job assignment for employees.

Sexual orientation as it relates to creating stressful situations at work; as it relates to discrimination; and as it relates to career success and the ability to develop professional networks and contacts are issues that BCS indicated affects gays and lesbians in the workplace. Over 92% of the BCS indicated that employees are discriminated against because of sexual orientation to some extent. Nearly 75% of BCS indicated that sexual orientation does affect an employee's career success and ability to develop professional networks and contacts. Almost 83% of the BCS indicated that employees sexual orientation can cause stressful situations at work.

In a 1992 survey by Out/Look, 28% of gay men and 38% of lesbians who responded said the need to hide their sexual orientation was a constant source of stress on the job (Hernandez, 1996). Change comes slowly, but it comes. Hequet (1995) states

> At least 115 big U.S. companies now have formal language vowing they won't discriminate against employees on the basis of sexual orientation in hiring, firing and promoting. A score or so offer benefits to homosexuals' domestic partners, as they do to straights' spouses. Eight states and a number of local governments forbid discrimination based on sexual orientation. All told, about 32 percent of all U.S. citizens live in areas with laws forbidding discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (p. 53).

Given the findings, BCS as future workplace employees must strive to create an environment where gay and lesbians (1) are not discriminated against; (2) whose career success is not hindered; (3) whose ability to develop networks and contacts are not hampered; and (4) whose workplace does not create stressful situations based on sexual orientations. BCS need to push for sexual orientation issues to be integrated into workforce diversity initiatives. It is important to tell people that gay and lesbian employees are considered as valuable to the organization as women, religious minorities and people of color. Lucas and Kaplan (1994) state that it should be explained that the reasons for putting importance on gays and lesbians is the same reason everyone else is given importance, that is, to encourage all employees to contribute their maximum potential. Over 60% of the BCS indicated that sexual orientation never or rarely affects an employee's ability to work as team. The literature offers a grim review on the ability of a gay or lesbian to be an effective team player. Henry (1994) offers,

> Some straights agree that coming out is good for the workplace. The closeted are likely to be what organizational development experts call "alienated-committed" - that is, halfheartedly committed to the job, but only until something better comes along. One study of gay Belgian men found that lack of social support contributes to depression; the inference is that a bad time at home and closeting at work can make for one gloomy, hard-to-be-with colleague. Another finding: Gay men who felt stymied at work because they were closeted said co-workers judged them to be "difficult and angry" (p. 54).

Hequet (1995) stated "Still another consideration: Effective teams tend to socialize off the job - and closeted homosexuals who don't want to bring partners will not participate much if at all (p. 53). A closeted gay or lesbian makes a lousy team member stated says Tim Peterson, associate professor of management at the University of Tulsa. We have to encourage them to be themselves (As found in Hequet, 1995, p. 53). Business communication students can take measures to reassure that gay or lesbian employees can be contributing team players by fostering a more accepting environment.

Over 40% of BCS indicated often to very often and over 45% of them also indicated sometimes that sexual orientation influences an employee's choice of career or organization. Change is coming about. A significant shift now under way in the American workplace is causing more human resources professionals to address gay employment issues, not because they feel they "should," but more because they have to--- and that shift stems from the comfort more and more gay employees are feeling about revealing their sexuality at work (Caudron, 1995, p. 42). It could be that gay and lesbians are being attracted to companies that are becoming more and more "gay friendly." The most successful companies are ones that understand both the nature and the needs of their workforces and their markets. That is one reason diversity awareness is becoming a high business priority (Hernandez, 1996).

Table 3 asked a variety of questions on issues relating to the workplace. Over 80% of BCS indicated that they would have co-workers who are gay or lesbian and that they could work comfortably with gay or lesbian employees. When asking about gays and lesbians ability to hold certain position or occupations, BCS reported positively on many items. Most BCS disagree or strongly disagree to the following statements: (1) gays and lesbians should not hold political office (30.5%, 52.5%); (2) gays and lesbians should not position in health care (32.8%, 48.7%); (3) gays and lesbians should not hold clergy positions (28.2%, 28.2%); (4) gays and lesbians should not hold teaching positions in public schools (31.8%, 43.5%); and (5) gays and lesbians should be allowed to serve in the military (23.5%, 17.2%). Well over 76% BCS disagree to some extent on laws prohibiting gay and lesbians. In addition, over 65% indicated that they agree to some extent that gays and lesbians have the legal right to get married and reported that high school sex education classes should include information on gays and lesbians. It appears that BCS were spilt on agreement on whether gays and lesbians should be able to adopt children (21% agree strongly, 27% agree somewhat, 23% disagree somewhat, and 28% disagree strongly). It appears that BCS, again, indicated that sexual orientation should not matter in relation to occupation. They also report that personal issues like marriage and discrimination laws should be a part of workplace policies.

Gay people who feel comfortable revealing their true selves are probably more productive and more loyal employees (Caudron, 1995). Given this fact, BCS as future professionals must be equipped with strategies, tactics, and information that will enable them to work successfully with all members of their workplace. As stated earlier, most business communication textbooks offered information on working with other minorities, but some text on the issues of gays and lesbians in the workplace still needs to be included. Until that becomes “matter of fact," the following literature can be offered as initial curriculum for business instructors of any discipline to insure that they are preparing the best and most well rounded professional.

INCLUSION CURRICULUM FOR THE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION CURRICULUM

The following is offered from various authors on providing information on understanding the issues surrounding gay and lesbian employees. Exposure of this information to BCS will be a first step in preparing these future employees with tools for working with gays and lesbians in the workplace.

Kaplan and Lucas (1994) offer,

> The key is to present sexual-orientation issues in the context of three Ps: presence, policy, and productivity. “Presence" makes it clear that gay and lesbian people do work in the organization. "Policy" involves reviewing organizational nondiscrimination policies as well as state and local laws that affect the workplace. "Productivity" emphasizes financial results and a discrimination-free, workplace (p.34).

Fated with countless occasions to reveal or hide their homo- or bisexuality, Woods (1995) argues, gay men choose among three major strategies (counterfeiting, avoidance, and integration), each of which has its own costs and benefits:

- *Counterfeiting strategies* include counterfeiting a straight identity, but all had done so at some point in their careers. Some men invented girlfriends or ex-wives, other men described a simpler strategy of not providing evidence of one's homosexuality: talking repeatedly about old girlfriends without mentioning any current lover; describing a lover as a roommate; withholding the gender of dates and friends. Even these smaller deceptions, however, place gay men "in a tenuous moral position," conflicting with both their personal respect for honesty and with a growing gay perception that such acts are cowardly and disloyal to the gay community (p. 96). A man who counterfeits an identity has a "recurrent sense that the social world has become unreal. The more effectively he presents a facade, the greater a man's difficulties in experiencing the reality of his everyday life" (p. 102). Frequently, the result for the counterfeiter is stress, anxiety, and depression.

- *Avoidance strategies* currently used by more than half Woods' sample involve dodging the issue of one's sexuality. "Rather than reveal misinformation about his sexuality, a man reveals nothing. He tries to appear asexual" (p. 141). This can be attempted through verbal dodges changing the subject or rebuffing any inquiries about one's sexual or romantic relationships as "rude, inappropriate, or unwelcome") or situational dodges (avoiding casual interactions such as lunches, parties, or sports events, where exchanges of confidences are expected). Avoidance strategies are less successful than counterfeiting strategies in hiding homosexuality, but many men who use them are perfectly comfortable with the idea that coworkers might be aware of their sexuality. The disadvantages of avoidance include uncertainty about who has figured out the situation and who has not, and the absence of opportunities for coworkers to discuss homosexuality, leaving the gay employee unsure how colleagues view the issue and straight employees without information to counteract gay stereotypes. Many severely limit their social involvement with peers, and this not only deprives them of important friendships but cuts them out of social networks that may be essential for career advancement, especially in managerial positions where social interactions are crucial (p.163).

- *Integration strategies* call for gay, lesbian, and bisexual employees to acknowledge their sexuality on the job. While Leinen incorrectly concludes that "[o]nce out in the open, gay cops no longer have to manage information about their homosexuality" (p. 5), Woods argues that the gay man who comes out faces decisions about where, when, and how often his sexuality is to be displayed.... By coming out, a man trades one set of managerial tasks for another" (p. 172-173). Gay people first must decide how (and to whom) to come out. The most common strategy is to introduce the subject in a "mundane and familiar" context, often by referring to an important personal relationship in a way that shows the similarities between gay and straight lives.

In addition, the open-ended questions provide some information that could provide prescriptive measures for the current classes; as innovative suggestions for classroom practice; and overriding comments worth attention. The survey respondents, BCS provided the following responses as summarized in three categories- Class, Suggestions, and Comments:

Class
Health and Wellness classes which include more information about the topic.
A class totally devoted to the issue should be offered.
Non Western 100 Level LS course on this topic.
The need for making it a required topic for discussion for EN 121, Humanities Literature.
I'm not really sure, I think that by the time people get to college they already have there thoughts on this issue, which would be hard to change because a lot of people don't want to become comfortable with the situation. It should start at home and in high schools. However, there should be a course dealing with the fact that when you are a professional you can discriminate anyone and you will have to become comfortable working with any particular type of person.
A class on understanding diversity, and make it a requirement.
Well, you can't teach acceptance. However, as a science or medical type of classes with concern on what makes people gay would maybe fly. This hypothetical course curriculum should only be a liberal study and not mandatory.
I think freshman should enroll in a course in the beginning of their college career that introduces them to the different things that they *will encounter in a college setting.*

Suggestions
A gay & lesbian awareness group.
More information about them in Health & Psychology classes.
Seminars and workshops in residence halls.
Talk about GLB issues during freshman summer orientation. Having a workshop on these issues will probably prepare high school students for more interaction with GLB individuals.
Well-advertised awareness day.
Openly gay profs.
Biographical studies of important people who were gay.
Exposure of acts of hatred and their effects on people.
Student group discussions in which they express their feelings.
Formations of groups with a voice like athletics, fraternities, and others.
Teachers who can relate to what is going on with these individuals.
More understanding and empathetic people.

Comments
I believe discriminating against homosexuals should be looked at in the same light as discriminating against African Americans. It shouldn't be tolerated. Sexuality is a very personal thing and professors do not have the right to encourage feminine behaviors that mock that of a gay man. It's ridiculous! I'm in a place to learn. I'm here to get a broad knowledge of all cultures. If we don't become educated about certain cultures in college, where will we learn? Professors need to grow up. We're all here together…we need to learn to live together peacefully.
I don't believe there is a need for course curriculum devoted to understanding gay and lesbian individuals. I do not see a need to know people's sexual preference.
I believe everyone should be open-minded.
I believe sex ed. should be taught at home. I have no problem with homosexuals as long as they keep to themselves. I do not advance my sexual orientation and I do not expect them to either. Keep it at home.
I do not believe it should be a course, as it would be singling out one group over another.
I don't believe sexual orientation should matter. Who cares who people sleep with I don't. There just shouldn't be any sexual harassment in the workplace straight or gay.
I believe that people are going to believe what they want to believe, and I don't know if adding this subject to course curriculum will help or make it worse. It is true that gays and lesbians are equal to straights, but some people are just ignorant and narrow-minded.
I believe everyone knows as much as they need to – learning more about it won't help them open their minds – they'll just tune it out.
I personally believe that if people keep their sexual orientation away from the workplace there would be a lot less discrimination towards them.
I believe that there needs to be discussions on both sides of the issue at the same time, which may cause problems. The reason being that there are some "straight" people who are confused on the issues, and may need to know more about the gay & lesbian community to make fair decisions.
Does it matter to anyone if I an interested in women at the workplace? So why should it matter if some people are interested in either genders or whatever. I think, the gays overreact to people. Even if I saw a man and a woman kissing with passion I would be grossed out, I would react the same way with two man or woman kissing in public.
I believe people should be informed not to be afraid, just to relax and look at the person and their personality.
I believe that everyone should stop trying to jam it down his or her throats! People answer for their own choices and actions and therefore it should NOT be a course curriculum. Stop trying to make other peoples sexual choices acceptable to everyone who might not agree.
I don't believe there needs to be because the bottom line is: I love lesbians but I prefer to stay away from faggots. Bi-women are okay, Bi-men are faggots. Transsexuals are just freaks.
I don't believe there should be any curriculum about it. If people want to "learn": about the subject they can do it on their own. Too much emphasis is always put on sexual preference…who cares.
I personally believe experience is the only "real" way a person can learn to understand diversity. No methods of teaching or knowledge can change attitudes or pre-judged ideas. I lived with 2 gay guys this summer and the experience totally opened my eyes into a whole new world that I had completely shut myself off from. I would never choose that type of lifestyle myself, but I kind of understand now why some people do.
I believe faculty & staff should have to go through some sort of diversity training course. It would be beneficial to them in their curriculum to include some information on GLBT issues where appropriate.

I believe children should be taught from the time they enter kindergarten to respect everyone despite their differences.

I believe more disciplinary action should be taken for students & teachers who publicly degrade students who are gay in class.

I don't believe it needs to be discussed in the workplace, it should be left as it is, don't ask, don't tell.

STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE A NON-DISCRIMINATORY WORKPLACE

The following strategies are offered to increase employees' comfort level concerning sexual orientation and to increase awareness of issues affecting gays and lesbians in the workplace. These strategies can be offered as information for instruction in current business communication classes. Techniques for removing barriers to acceptance and obtaining information about the organization's gay-and-lesbian sector are discussed. They are as follows:

- ♦ Adopt, publicize and enforce a written policy prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in recruitment, hiring, evaluation, advancement or compensation.
- ♦ Train managers, interviewers and employees to be sensitive to gay and lesbian issues and to make a clear distinction between these and AIDS issues.
- ♦ Avoid double standards. Apply policies dealing with sexual harassment, nepotism, spousal listings in directories equally to opposite-sex and same-sex situations.
- ♦ Combat insensitivity and isolation. Allow gay and lesbian employees to form workplace networks, and treat them the same as other employee groups. Promote fair and balanced coverage. Consider lesbian and/or gay angles important elements of coverage.
- ♦ Develop a nondiscrimination policy that explicitly includes sexual orientation.
- ♦ Create a work environment free from heterosexist, homophobic, and AIDS phobic behaviors.
- ♦ Incorporate a company-wide education about gay and AIDS workplace issues.
- ♦ Provide an equitable benefits program that provides for domestic partners
- ♦ Integrate sexual orientation into ongoing diversity efforts, telling people that the reasons for valuing gay and lesbian employees are basically the same as reasons for valuing women, religious minorities, and people of color in the workplace; so that all employees can contribute to their fullest potential, unhampered by prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination. What makes homosexuality a pressing workplace issue in 1999 is that more gay people are coming out of the closet, and they as do, their friends and family members expect equitable treatment for them.
- ♦ Explain that the reasons for recognizing the importance of gays and lesbians issues is the same as the reason for recognizing the importance of everyone else, that is, to encourage all employees to contribute to their maximum potential.
- ♦ Encourage senior executives to get involved so that they won't feel blindsided if called on to discuss relevant employee policies. One way is to provide senior and line managers with a half-day workshop on sexual orientation as an aspect of workforce diversity or on homophobia in the workplace. If the issue of sexual orientation surfaces in the context of gay bashing, ask frank questions that get to the heart of the matter. Point out that the productivity of all employees can be adversely affected by homophobia and "heterosexism," a belief that heterosexuality is superior to homosexuality and that everyone is or should be heterosexual.

- Don't assume everyone is heterosexual.
- Examine the office language and culture. Are homophobic slurs common in everyday conversation? Are antigay jokes told without concern for whom they might hurt? If so, remind those who use them of their potential for harm. (This includes offenses to any minority)
- Include "significant others" or "friends," not just "husbands and wives," on invitations to corporate functions.
- Have an open-door policy that allows employees to feel free to talk about anything of a personal nature that affects their work.
- Consider diversity training as a way of making all employees comfortable with these issues.
- Check into company's policy on anti-discrimination to see if sexual orientation is included. Look into the feasibility of extending hard benefits to same-sex domestic partners.
- Realize that forming official networks for gays and lesbians make great sense to a corporation that wants to remove workplace obstacles that keep people from flourishing. (Adams, 1996; Badgett, 1995; Hernandez, 1996; Lucas & Kaplan, 1994).

To be effective, diversity training must be designed to change the myths of diversity (such as, it's just a code name for affirmative action), to educate participants about the realities of diversity, and to offer ways to respond to the challenges of valuing and managing diversity.

ACTIVITIES FOR THE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION CURRICULUM

The following activities can be utilized by BCS as case studies to get a greater appreciation of workplace diversity as it relates to gays and lesbians:

- BCS can apply a traditional approach to understanding a segment of the workforce, which involves students' going to the members of that segment to gather information and look for patterns of discrimination. But the fact that many gay men and lesbians in the workplace are "in the closet"—not open about their own sexual orientation—makes this approach difficult but there does exist groups within organizations who are open.

- BCS, when working, can create employee survey aimed to gather information about an organization's gay and lesbian employees should include questions that enable such employees to identify themselves as gay or lesbian, describe their experiences as members of a minority in the company, and give their perceptions of what others think about their sexual orientation.

- BCS can create human resource professional surveys that ask about incidents of discrimination against gay and lesbian employees and about nondiscrimination policies, awareness training, and domestic-partner benefits in other organizations, focusing on competitors that are in the same industry and that compete for the same labor pool.

- BCS can tap into informal networks for gay and lesbian employees via the Internet. More than 30 major companies in the United States--including Xerox, AT&T, Eastman Kodak, and Apple--have such networks. Often, the members discuss sexual-orientation issues with top-level managers. Through networks, companies can identify people who might be willing to participate in focus groups or provide testimonials about their experiences as members of a minority in the company. Keep in mind that only people who are willing to risk being "out" may agree to participate, even when assured of confidentiality. Many companies have organizations that are specifically for gay and lesbian workers.

- BCS can summarize and critique articles related to the diversity issues facing gays and lesbians in the workplace such as an article such as "Gay in Corporate America" (Fortune, December 16, 1991), and ask for feedback, including a written analysis of the implications in the context of the corporate culture.

SUMMARY

The gay and lesbian rights movement no doubt will continue to make its way into the workplace. In turn, more employees are likely to discuss their sexual orientation at work. Therefore, BCS as future employers/employees need to foster tolerance of gay and lesbian individuals to avoid potential problems, such as discrimination, harassment and even violence. More companies today are making efforts to support their gay and lesbian employees. Business communication students who will be future managers must understand that the gay and lesbian rights movement has spilled over into the workplace as well as into other social arenas. As businesses face greater competition, both domestically and globally, companies will have to ensure that they are recruiting the most qualified candidates available. In a sense, it is self-defeating for a company to deliberately cut itself off from a particular talent pool just because of misgivings about that group's lifestyle. Addressing sexual-orientation issues is both a personal and an organizational responsibility. Whereas the feelings and fears of individuals tend to work their way into company policy, company policy tends to form the attitudes and behaviors of individuals. Today's students as tomorrow's professionals will need to foster acceptance, exhibit tolerance, and promote positive attitudes in order to help the individual, and in turn, the organization achieve its goals. As one person stated, "The opportunity to be able to be who I am and express myself allows me to break down the barriers I have erected out of my own internalized homophobia. My self-respect is higher. I'm able to be a more fully functional employee and a better human being "(anonymous). Future professionals can continue to help break down barriers by having an understanding of the issues facing gays and lesbians. In addition, information in this manuscript will equip them with the knowledge necessary to make that happen. BCS as future professionals who understand and value workplace diversity will certainly create an environment free of discrimination and help the organization achieve its full economic potential.

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EXECUTIVES' PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF SELECTED CRITERIA WHEN EVALUATING CANDIDATES FOR INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS POSITIONS

Shirley H. Tucker, Sam Houston State University
Sara A. Hart, Sam Houston State University
Mitchell J. Muehsam, Sam Houston State University

ABSTRACT

Even though international business or global awareness has been discussed in academia since the 1959 Gordon and Howell and Pierson reports, international business is still in the frontier stages of development. The purpose of this study was to determine the importance corporate executives place on interpersonal and communication skills when evaluating international job candidates.

INTRODUCTION

While international business was addressed in the 1959 Gordon and Howell and Pierson reports, no concrete action was taken until 1974 when the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business, now known as the International Association for Management Education, (AACSB) changed its accreditation standards to include a worldwide dimension in the curriculum. Then, in 1979, AACSB approved the addition of the international dimension in its core curriculum requirement (Nehrt, 1987).

Since the inclusion of the international business dimension in AACSB's standards, numerous articles have been written from the *college of business* frame of reference or have been discussed as if international coverage would be offered through the college of business curricula while many other publications approach the topic from academic disciplines outside the college of business such as geography, political science, law, sociology, and foreign language. The diversity of approaches in attempting to define and incorporate international business as well as the complexity of business environments of and within various cultures have caused this disparate approach and have resulted in international business education itself taking on a spiraling, overlapping effect.

In academia, the Academy of International Business (AIB), in an effort to trace the development of international business within schools of business, has sponsored research projects at five-year intervals. This research has primarily presented a profile of academia's response to international business. The first study, completed by Terpatra in 1969, sought to develop information on the nature and type of international business courses being offered. In 1974, the study conducted

by Daniel and Radebaugh focused on placement of international business within degree programs as well as its placement within the school of business organizational structure. Grosse and Perritt, in l980, sought to profile the development of the academic and organizational configuration of international business education. The 1986 study, by Thanopoulos and Vernon, addressed faculty and international business programs of AACSB member and AACSB non-member schools (Kujawa, l987). The latest AIB study by Arpan, Folks, and Kwok (1993), in cooperation with the AACSB, surveyed over 1,275 business schools in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North and South America to determine course and curriculum offerings.

In the 1980s, research studies became more directed toward the business executive. Generalizations from these findings, however, have been somewhat hindered by the myriad of research designs. The interpretation of research findings is complex because some surveys dealt with

(a) skills needed by business graduates going into international operations,
(b) skills needed by international managers,
(c) skills needed by workers (whether hired from another firm or promoted from within) for international positions,
(d) skills needed for entry level international positions, and
(e) skills needed for *both* domestic and international positions.

Additionally, surveys have been conducted of executives but limited to a particular country such as the United States or Canada, while other surveys have been international in nature involving a cross-section of countries.

Four studies conducted in the 1980s (Kobrin, 1984; Kohers, 1984; Beamish, 1988; Reynolds & Rice, l988) surveyed *business executives* to identify factors essential for international business. Kobrin's survey of United States business executives, which was concerned with people being hired to work only in international operations, identified key components such as the need for functional and technical knowledge, country knowledge, knowledge of the industry and competitors, "people" and organizational abilities, knowledge of the company, and international experience. Kobrin (1984) stressed that adaptability or interpersonal traits, which are now being referred to as "soft skills," are *essential* skills. Furthermore, according to Kobrin's (1984) findings, the corporate world does *not* perceive education to be a significant factor in the development of international business expertise. Based upon his findings, experience, travel, and overseas assignments were considered the most important preparation (Kobrin, 1984, 38).

The l984 Kohers study surveyed southeastern United States firms to determine their employment needs, opportunities, and expectations for graduates with an internationally oriented collegiate curriculum. Kohers' respondents gave the highest preference to the traditional business major with an international business orientation and proficiency in a foreign language (Kohers, 1985, 35).

The Beamish (1988) study, which addressed Canadian CEOs and corporate recruiters recruiting preferences for positions of international responsibility, identified the same underlying components as Kobrin. Respondents ranked adaptability, leadership, and interpersonal skills as the most important attributes which is in agreement with Kobrin's findings. However, Beamish's respondents also included communication skills as one of the most important attributes. In regard to recruiting practices, Beamish (1988) findings revealed that 73 percent of the corporate respondents recruit candidates with previous international experience for positions of international responsibility. Apparently, because international business skills are sought primarily at the post-experience level and not at entry level, international business skills are viewed as being needed and important, but complementary to regular business skills (Beamish, 1988, 35).

Reynolds and Rice (1988) surveyed United States firms engaged in international business in order to determine their preferences for educating international managers. They concluded, as did Kobrin and Beamish, that respondents generally valued overseas experience more than university education; additionally, they preferred a solid foundation in a functional area more than international education. Based upon Reynolds and Rice (1988) survey responses, when hiring university graduates it is not the job candidates' *international* education but their grounding in a technical/functional area that will enable them to learn the company's operations through domestic experience before sending them overseas. The importance of overseas experience combined with the importance of domestic experience indicates a strong vote of confidence for "experience." Reynolds and Rice (1988) state: "What does *not* seem justified, at this point, is a proliferation of courses with "international" in their titles, and curricula which are "international" at the expense of a thorough grounding in the fundamental disciplines of business administration" (Reynolds & Rice, 1988, 56).

There have been four significant studies conducted in the l990s. The 1991 study by Ball and McCulloch surveyed CEOs of the major American multinational corporations to determine the importance of international business education for *all* business graduates. Respondents were asked the importance of selected international academic preparation. The Ball and McCulloch (1991) survey determined that 77% of the executives believe that employees will learn the international aspects of business on the job. Ball and McCulloch (1991) use a quote from one of the major automobile manufacturers to interpret their sometimes conflicting results:

> "While we do not require international business training for our new college graduates, some familiarity with international business practices would be desirable in view of our ever expanding global markets" (Ball & McCulloch, 1991, 391).

Because of Kobrin's (1984) use of interpersonal skills as well as Beamish's (1988) inclusion of interpersonal and communication skills in their research projects, the Hart, Tucker, and Muehsam (1992) study surveyed CEOs representing U.S. and international corporations to determine the importance corporate executives place on identified components of international business. The findings provide an evaluation and resulting ranking of the importance corporate executives place on these same key variables when evaluating business graduates. Three factors, interpersonal skills, technical/functional skills, and communication skills, were consistently rated as the most important by

both U.S. and foreign executives (Hart, Tucker & Muehsam, 1992, 260). Thus, the Hart, Tucker, and Muehsam (1992) study reenforces the Kobrin (1984) and Beamish (1988) studies on the value business executives place on interpersonal and communication skills. While this study supports the Kobrin and Beamish findings that the acquisition of technical/functional skills remains vital in the preparation for international business positions, the Hart, Tucker, and Muehsam (1992) findings indicate business executives perceive interpersonal and communication skills to be equally as important.

Another study by Tucker, Hart, and Muehsam (1993) indicated that corporate executives perceive a need for collegiate international business preparation; however, they do *not* believe that current collegiate offerings meet their needs, and they base this inadequacy on lack of corporate input between academia and the corporate world.

QUESTIONNAIRE CONSTRUCTION AND DATA COLLECTION

Prior to the construction of the measurement instrument, a series of in-depth personal and telephone interviews were conducted with business executives to determine factors that contribute to success in international business. The corporations selected for the discovery phase of the research covered a wide spectrum of business interests including communications, service, energy, and manufacturing. The survey instrument was designed incorporating

(l) information gleaned from interviews in conjunction with components identified by Kobrin (l984) and Beamish (l988),

(2) data collected from an extensive topic review of the three top selling textbooks of the five AACSB common core areas, and

(3) information collected from an extensive literature review.

The resulting questionnaire was further defined via a series of pilot tests. The questionnaire was fashioned to allow for the creation of a socio-business profile of the respondents to determine discriminating factors that could influence an executive's perception concerning what contributes to success in international business. A five-point Likert scale was used to determine how executives rate various factors pertaining to success in international business roles.

Data collected for this study were garnered from questionnaires which were mailed to the chief executive officers of the top 600 corporations in international sales listed in *Standard and Poor's Compustat PC Plus*. The initial mail out was conducted in May, 1991; the follow-up in June. Of the 600 questionnaires distributed, 243 (23.8%) were returned of which 106 (17.7%) were useable. The data were then examined using basic descriptive statistics to include measure of central tendency and spread as well as frequencies, crosstabs, and contingency table analysis.

RESULTS

General Description of Respondents

The business executives surveyed represented a wide variety of business and personal backgrounds; 59% of the respondents have international work experience with two-thirds (66.7%) of these having spent two years or more in international work atmospheres. Thus, just under 40% of all respondents have over two years of experience in the international arena. With respect to multi-lingual capabilities, 34.6% of the business executives surveyed are fluent in at least one foreign language. The majority (56.2%) of the business executives represent corporations whose primary role is manufacturing and processing. Most of the remaining business executives are distributed among businesses directed toward technology, 10.5%; mining, oil, and gas, 9.5%; transportation, 6.7%; financial/banking, 5.7%; and retail, 2.9%. The remaining 8.5% of the executives were categorized as "Others."

FINDINGS

In an effort to better understand the criteria used in evaluating prospective employees for work in international business assignments, business executives were asked to indicate the level of importance they place on each of four criteria: an undergraduate business degree, a graduate business degree, past work experience, and interpersonal skills; ratings were completed on a five- point scale ranging from (5), "very important," to (1) "not important."

Table 1 shows that interpersonal skills were perceived as "very important" by 71.7% of the respondents; furthermore, all respondents gave interpersonal skills a rating of "important" or "very important" indicating the perceived importance of interpersonal skills for success in international business. Past work experience was rated "very important" by 59.4% and "important" by 30.2% of the respondents. Undergraduate business degrees and graduate business degrees were perceived as "very important" by 28.4% and 13.5%, respectively.

Previous studies such as the Kobrin (1984), Beamish (1989), and Reynolds and Rice (1988) have indicated the importance the business world places on past work experience versus undergraduate or graduate degrees.

TABLE 1. EVALUATION OF SELECTED CRITERIA WHEN HIRING FOR IB POSITIONS

Criteria	5 Very Important	4	3	2	1 Not Important
Interpersonal Skills (n=106)	71.7%	28.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Past Work Experience (n=106)	59.4%	30.2%	9.4%	0.0%	0.9%

Undergraduate Business Degree (n=102)	28.4%	19.6%	28.4%	13.7%	9.8%
Graduate Business Degree (n=105)	13.5%	24.0%	38.5%	19.2%	4.8%

While work experience was considered the most important criteria in hiring for international business assignments by both Kobrin and Beamish, both studies found that "people skills" or interpersonal skills were essential for success in the international arena. However, this study shows that the business world *placed even more importance on interpersonal skills* than on past work experience. This shift in evaluation criteria may be the result or combination of two factors:

(l) That executives are now realizing how essential interpersonal skills are for successful international performance and/or

(2) the limited availability of American managers with overseas experience.

Regardless of the reason, interpersonal skills was definitely considered the most important criteria when selecting employees for international business positions.

As displayed in Table 2, business executives were next asked to rate the importance of selected factors when evaluating current employees for an international assignment. These factors included interpersonal skills (adaptability, leadership, flexibility); communication skills (oral and written); technical/functional skills; knowledge of social, cultural, and business customs; foreign language fluency; and geographic and political awareness.

TABLE 2. EVALUATION OF SELECTED SKILLS/KNOWLEDGE FOR SUCCESS IN INTERNATIONAL POSITIONS

Skill/Knowledge	5 Very Important	4	3	2	1 Not Important
Interpersonal Skills (adaptability, leadership, flexibility) (n=105)	65.7%	32.4%	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%
Communication Skills (oral & written) (n=106)	45.3%	48.1%	6.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Technical/Functional Skills (accounting, marketing, management, finance) (n=105)	39.0%	40.0%	19.0%	1.9%	0.0%

Knowledge of Social, Cultural, & Business Customs (n=106)	19.8%	49.1%	29.2%	1.9%	0.0%
Foreign Language Fluency (n=106)	22.6%	36.8%	26.4%	11.3%	2.8%
Geographic & Political Awareness (n=105)	10.5%	41.0%	39.0%	8.6%	1.0%

Again, interpersonal skills was considered the most important criteria with 65.7% respondents rating it "very important," and 98% rating it either "very important" or “important." Communication skills were perceived to be "very important" by 45.3% and "important" by 48.1%. Neither interpersonal nor communication skills were rated "not important" or of "little importance." In fact, interpersonal skills and communication skills were rated as either "very important" or "important" by at least 92% of the business executives.

Technical/functional skills was rated "very important" by 39% of the respondents and "important" by 40% of the respondents. Knowledge of social, cultural, and business customs was rated "important" by 49.1% and "very important" by 19.8%, with foreign language fluency and geographic and political awareness receiving somewhat diminished rating levels.

Historically, functional skills have been perceived as the dominant contributing factor for business career success. Although technical/functional skills are highly emphasized in the findings of this research, especially in the job selection process, technical/functional skill level ratings did not match the level of importance obtained by interpersonal and communication skills. While this is contradictory to the study conducted by Reynolds and Rice (1988), the Reynolds and Rice (1988) survey did include interpersonal or communication skills on their questionnaire, and, as one corporate executive stated in the exploratory stage of this study, ". . . one must possess technical expertise, but without the interpersonal and communication skills, the technical knowledge will not be utilized or prove successful.”

As employed in the context of the international work environment, Table 3 displays business executives' rating of skills traditionally categorized as interpersonal--adaptability of the job candidate, adaptability of candidate's family, flexibility, leadership abilities, and high ethical and moral standards. In evaluating skills needed for international business success, adaptability (of the job candidate) was by far viewed as the most important. All executives considered adaptability to be "important" or "very important," with 78.1% rating adaptability of the job candidate as "very important." High ethical/moral standards had the second “very important” highest percentage with 59% of the respondents rating it "very important." Although, flexibility ranked second when combing percentages for “important” and “very important.” Adaptability of the candidate's family ranked third with 92.3% considering it either "important" or "very important."

TABLE 3. EVALUATION OF SELECTED INTERPERSONAL SKILLS/QUALITIES FOR SUCCESS IN INTERNATIONAL POSITIONS

Interpersonal Skill/Quality	5 Very Important	4	3	2	1 Not Important
Adaptability (job candidate) (n=105)	78.1%	21.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Flexibility (n=105)	52.4%	40.0%	7.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Adaptability (candidate's family) (n=105)	56.1%	36.2%	6.7%	1.0%	0.0%
Leadership Ability (n=105)	50.5%	40.0%	9.5%	0.0%	0.0%
High Ethical/Moral Standards (n=105)	59.0%	31.4%	8.6%	1.0%	0.0%

The arduous question now is "what will be the most valuable skills for international positions in the new millennium"? Arnold reports (McPherson, 1998) that regardless of their field or career, students stand a better chance of being hired if they possess strong communication skills. Review of 120 job descriptions appearing in the *National Business Employment Weekly (published by The Wall Street Journal)*, enabled Arnold to conclude that almost every message read: *The persons we seek must have strong oral and written communications. The need for communication skills was required for job candidates from chief financial officers to pet buyers.*

Further, based upon survey results of 1,400 Chief Financial Officers, Messner (1999) reports that more than half of the CEOs indicated that information technology training would be their first priority in accounting professional development; however, respondents revealed that technology is creating another effect on the importance of interpersonal and communication skills. Current technology that allows workers to communicate more frequently, more rapidly, and with more people, will increase the need for communication skills, both oral and written. Messner (1999) goes one step further and states that in additional to basic technical skills, employees will need to be familiar with international standards and have well-developed interpersonal and communication skills.

Messner (1999) further states that "soft skills" will become increasingly important as businesses move toward increased use of self-directed work teams and company "big-picture" inputs. Lastly, Messner (1999) emphasizes the importance of international competencies and familiarity with language and cultures.

A research project by international staffing firm Office Team of 1,400 Chief Information Officers predicted that by 2005, the workplace's technology transformation will put a premium on technology competencies and put employees "people skills" to their greatest test. Their findings also indicate that interpersonal and communication skills could make or break a person's career success (Anonymous, 1999). Use of e-mail and such technologies as audio and video teleconferencing will require workers to communicate more effectively and articulately.

Additionally, a survey of CEOs by an international recruiting firm reported that talk may be cheap, but it is worth more than technical knowledge if applicants and employees want to get ahead in information technology. These findings are reinforced by a survey of 1,400 CIOs in the United States with 27% reporting interpersonal skills are the most important factor for reaching management levels in the information technology field (Solomon, 1999).

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are based on the findings of this research:

1. This research indicates that 100% of CEO respondents perceive interpersonal skills to be the most important criteria when hiring for international business positions. This finding contradicts previous studies that reported past work experience as the most important criteria, although these studies were in agreement that "people skills" or interpersonal skills were essential.

2. This study substantiates that interpersonal skills (98.1%) and communication skills (93.4%) were perceived as being more important than Technical/functional skills (79%); Knowledge of Social, Cultural, and Business Customs (68.9%); Foreign Language Fluency (59.4%); and Geographic and Political Awareness (51.5%) in the evaluation of skills/knowledge required for success in international positions. These findings agree with an international recruiting firm's survey of CEOs reporting "talk may be cheap, but it's worth more than technical knowledge if one wants to get ahead" (Solomon, 1999).

3. When interpersonal was "exploded" into five specific qualities–adaptability of job candidate, flexibility, adaptability of candidate's family, leadership ability, and high ethical/moral standards–100 % of CEO participants perceived adaptability of job candidate to be "important" or "very important." Over 90% of respondents rated *all five* of these characteristics as "important" or "very important." Colgate (Geber, 1992) supports these findings in its search for global managers by prioritizing "adaptability" above management or sales experience. Geber (1992) states, "skills can be developed. It's harder to develop 'adaptability'."

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AN EXAMINATION OF E-MAIL USE AMONG FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES

Maryanne Brandenburg, Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Lynn E. Wasson, Southwest Missouri State University
Karen L. Woodall, Southwest Missouri State University

ABSTRACT

A study among Fortune 500 companies was conducted to better understand the standards and uses of e-mail and the Internet among leading businesses of the nation. The survey was distributed by e-mail, and e-mail responses were analyzed for specific answers to four survey questions and .for qualities of content and format. Results indicated that a disproportionately large number of companies did not have a CIO, did not place restrictions on employee use of email or the Internet, and were unable to provide an estimate of employees using e-mail on a daily basis. Companies indicated that e-mail messages were preferred over the use of hard copy memo or telephone calls for certain reasons of economy or convenience. However, evidence that e-mail has become apart of the organizational culture was not well supported by the results. Qualities of content and formatting indicated that standards used for more formal business writing were also maintained for e-mail messages. The study was useful for clarifying e-mail practices and expectations among major corporations and is expected to be of interest to business educators. Future studies were recommended to better identify messaging trends.

INTRODUCTION

The use of electronic mail (e-mail) as a communication tool for businesses coincides with the rapid expansion of computers in the workplace. A review of literature associated with communication practices indicates that the acceptance and use of e-mail have grown significantly from the inception of e-mail to the present. During this growing phase, email has been viewed by many experts as having both positive and negative impacts on communication practices in organizations both large and small. Evidence also suggests that email standards and practices may differ widely among companies. The purpose of this survey research was to investigate among leading corporations the shared standards and practices of email use.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Literature pertinent to the topic addresses e-mail pervasiveness, effects on corporate culture, benefits and drawbacks, uses and abuses, and factors that contribute to the quality of email messages for business purposes.

Pervasive Use of E-Mail

At least 1.1 billion business e-mail messages are sent per day by 90 million U.S. workers, according to International Data Corporation (IDC). IDC further estimates that 130 million workers will send 2.8 billion messages daily by the year 2000 (Hawkins, 1999). For an increasing number of these people, e-mail is a way of life, not just a way to communicate. Email is a basic component of corporate culture.

The *Wall Street Journal* estimates that the yearly number of e-mails in the U.S. surged to nearly 4 trillion messages in 1998, as compared to the 107 billion pieces of first- class mail delivered by the U.S. Postal Service (Quick, 1999). On a daily basis, Sklaroff (1999) reports a recent figure of 2.2 billion e-mail messages versus 293 million pieces of first-class mail. The rise in the amount of communication can perhaps be attributed to the attempts by many organizations to achieve a paperless office, along with the innovations in technology that permit quicker and more efficient communications than ever before (Hunt, 1996). In 1996, for example, Microsoft was using e-mail in place of telephoning (Kinsley, 1996). And, according to a study conducted of personal computer users by Industry Analysts, Inc., e-mail applications have replaced database applications to become ranked second only to word processing applications as important to computer users (1998 Personal Computer User Survey).

Reynolds (1997) states that more than 90 percent of major U.S. companies use e-mail; and over 70 percent of foreign-owned and -based companies communicate via this medium. An Ernst & Young LLP poll of 400 executives revealed that 36 percent of those attending the American Management Association's Human Resources Conference used e-mail more frequently than any other communication tool (Galbreath, Booker, Werner & Smitty, 1998).

Effects of E-mail on Corporate Culture

Executives now find themselves in public arenas communicating with shareholders, customers, and front-line staff In the past, hierarchical chains of command did not require every employee to be a highly skilled communicator. Today, however, companies need the input and commitment of empowered employees. To that end, communication lines are becoming interactive rather than one-sided, as corporate leaders recognize how essential communication is to today's changing corporate climate (Hunt, 1996).

A social advantage of e-mail, therefore, is its equalitarianism that contributes to a new corporate culture in which executives keyboard their own messages rather than dictate them or develop drafts for another to keyboard (Kinsley, 1996). E-mail has contributed to the flattening of the corporate structure, enabling individuals to communicate interactively with everyone, internally or

externally. E-mail combines the immediacy of the telephone or face-to-face interaction with the planning and preparation of writing. The technology allows staff to be spread over wide areas of the country and the world without being out of daily, and often hourly, communication. As such, communicators must now consider the diversity of their audiences. Whereas executives once communicated primarily with the corporate inner circle, they now find themselves communicating with people who possess a level of technical knowledge they, themselves, may not have (Hunt, 1996).

These claims of e-mail pervasiveness, inclusiveness, and effects on corporate culture suggest a specific question; that is, what are the specific business circumstances where an e-mail message would be selected over other channels of messaging, such as memorandums or telephone interaction?

Benefits and Drawbacks of E-mail

Changing trends in corporate communications are understandable given e-mail's many reported benefits to office productivity. These benefits, however, must be weighed against email's drawbacks.

Benefits include the following. (a) E-mail is fast. E-mail lets companies communicate instantaneously with anyone on Earth who has access to the Internet. (b) E-mail is reliable. If it's undeliverable, it's automatically returned to the sender. (c) E-mail is inexpensive. The service comes along with your Internet access fee, but is sometimes available separately. It pays for itself over postage, stationery, etc. (d) E-mail saves time. It permits the simultaneous transmission of messages instantaneously anywhere to everyone with e-mail access, permitting collaboration among employees. (e) E-mail can be programmed to perform certain tasks automatically. Auto responders are inexpensive and practical for automating the task of sending specific types of information. Customers can get information about a company's products and services 24 hours a day, seven days a week, without the need for human intervention (Foley, I 999).

Despite e-mail's many benefits, however, some aspects of e-mail are negative. For example, because e-mail is fast and easy, recipients are regularly bombarded with junk e-mail. A recent study by Worldtalk Corporation (McDonald, 1999) reports that almost one-third, or 31 percent, of corporate e-mail is junk. Of this 31 percent, 14 percent contained bulk or junk mail, 9 percent disclosed confidential information or violated corporate policy, and 8 percent contained profanity, jokes, or viruses.

This junk mail is causing financial loss and service interruption. In fact, according to M. Welles, president of EdWel & Co., in commenting on the results of a study of the Fortune 500 companies, "...it isn't uncommon for an e-mail user to spend a quarter of the day reading and responding to internal communications" (Frazee, 1996, 23). Employees spend, on average, 30 to 60 minutes a day sifting through their deluge of e-mail. Unsolicited messages from unknown senders (spam-mail) can cost a 5,000-person organization more than $12,000 per day to process (The Mess Made, 1999). As a result of these detriments, the following question is appropriate: Do companies have a chief executive officer (CIO) to manage e-mail and Internet systems so as to minimize possible drawbacks?

Many companies, though, choose to ignore the detrimental effect e-mail has on office productivity and continue to use it anyway (You've Got Mail, 1999). According to a survey conducted by the Institute of the Future and sponsored by Pitney Bowes, 60 percent of executives, managers, and professionals felt overwhelmed by the flood of daily e-mail. While employees at every level felt

overwhelmed by the flood of communication to varying degrees, the higher up the organizational ladder, the more overwhelmed the individual felt (Galbreath, et al., 1998).

D. Fluss, a research manager at Gartner Group Inc. in Stamford, Connecticut, stated that companies themselves are often responsible for this flood of unwanted e-mail because they do not provide adequate information on their Web sites. This situation can be addressed by using email response management systems that route and track e-mail through an organization or that apply case-based reasoning to customer queries and then send back automated responses (Fusaro, 1998).

Abuse or Misuse of E-mail

Since e-mail is used so extensively by people around the world because of its novelty and ease of use, it is often abused, misused, or misunderstood. People frequently misdirect e-mail to inappropriate audiences (recipients) by inputting the wrong e-mail addresses or replying to all recipients when a reply to the original sender was intended. Additionally, messages are created spontaneously, often in anger or with humorous intent, and then sent immediately without review, thus leading to writer's remorse. People often fail to realize that their messages may be forwarded to many others for whom the original message was never intended. They often fail to consider who may be reading the mail and what is appropriate for those persons (The Ins and Outs, 1998).

Another complicating factor in producing effective e-mail may be messages that are too informal, lacking in clarity, or simply too long and disorganized. The tendency to attach long or multiple files to e-mail messages already long and unclear further complicates speedy transmission and handling. Plus, the formats of many attachments created by the sender are often incompatible with the system formats of the receiver.

Without question, the anonymity of e-mail often contributes to wordiness, many times encouraging (or at least permitting) the writer to give more information than is normally divulged using other forms of communication. Anonymity can contribute to water-cooler gossip and rumors and/or the circulation of profane, sexist, or discriminatory issues. And since e-mail messages are considered documents, they can be used against a company in court. Consider that one major American corporation in 1995 paid $2.2 million to settle a sexual-harassment lawsuit filed by four of its female employees; among the evidence were e-mails listing sexist jokes (Vassallo, 1998).

Further complicating the effectiveness of e-mail is personal use of e-mail at work. Within many corporations, employees' use of e-mail for personal use is acceptable, providing it doesn't interfere with productivity and that it conforms to acceptable usage standards. Many employees, however, fail to understand that e-mail messages created for personal or business uses are not private and that something deleted can be recovered from routine backups.

Because of an increasing number of abuses, many companies have implemented monitoring systems. While monitoring is not a simple procedure and may require increased staff to do nothing but monitor e-mail, the number of U.S. companies who say they monitor e-mail continues to increase from 35 percent in 1997 to 45 percent in 1998, according to the results of a study by the American Management Association (McDonald, 1999). The lack of privacy, or the ability to intercept, obtain, or just read others' e-mail, requires management to develop policies governing the use of electronic messaging. Filtering mechanisms and etiquette conventions, if not already in place, may also need to

be developed (Kinsley, 1996). Incorporating such procedures would undoubtedly contribute to increased costs, at least in the short term.

While the need for policy, filtering mechanisms, and/or etiquette conventions is clear, the question remain: Are companies actively establishing controls to govern the use of electronic messaging?

Despite the potential speed, ease, and efficacy of e-mail, several negative factors highlight a lack of professionalism in many e-mail messages (Reynolds, 1997). Although e-mail usage continues to increase, the number of ineffective and poorly written messages remains high. Much e-mail appears as if it were produced by elementary school writers. It contains either all capital or all lower-case letters and no punctuation. Lack of attention to detail may be a key reason why almost 60 percent of all e-mail messages leave the receiver unable to act, without first getting more information. Users cite lack of organization; poor construction, sentence structure, grammar, and punctuation; and misinformation as common e-mail problems (You've Got Mail, 1999). An additional danger is that disregard for the rules of good writing could spread and eventually become the norm.

Understanding that different people respond differently to the same information also requires stronger communication skills than were needed in the past. E-mail loses its effectiveness as a tool for communication when incorrect grammar, wrong spelling, or missing or improperly used punctuation makes the message difficult to read. Although the beauty of email may center on its simplicity, its efficiency, and its immediacy, no reason exists to abandon the standard English fundamental rules. Poorly written e-mail wastes time because it compels the recipient to read the message several times or to contact the sender for clarification.

Companies often lose business because of misunderstandings. D. Bagin, publisher of *Communication Briefings,* a business-communication newsletter in Alexandria, Virginia, says ... an employee who is a poor writer could embarrass you and your organization." He adds, "Poor writing could lose a potential client or alienate a current one" (as cited in Maynard, 1995, 12).

In view of the overwhelming use of e-mail in the corporate communication culture with its many reported benefits and concerns, the need for quality communication skills is essential. A 1997 survey by Robert Half International of the 1,000 largest employers in the U.S. reported that 96 percent say employees must have good communication skills to get ahead. And several detailed studies have shown a clear correlation between literacy and income (As cited in Fisher, 1998).

Because the purpose of e-mail is to communicate ideas and information, messages that require the recipient to read and reread, to return the e-mail for clarification, or to make a phone call to gain understanding defeat the purpose of e-mail. Standard English rules are necessary for efficient and effective communication (Romei, 1997).

Factors that Contribute to the Quality of E-mail

While an input-and-send approach contributes to quick communication, it can also contribute to factors that obscure clear, correct, and concise communication. To achieve both speedy and understandable communication, elements associated with quality content and format must be considered in e-mail message development.

Factors that contribute to the quality of the content of e-mail messages include tone, courtesy, conciseness, clarity, and correctness.

Tone refers to the use of positive, or at least neutral, language presented in a conversational style, much as one would talk. According to Vassallo (1998, 195), “What you write is half the game; how you write it is the other half." Obtaining the desired response from an e-mail message, therefore, often depends on the positive, friendly tone with which the message was written.

Courtesy includes using "Please" and "Thank you" when appropriate (Galbreath, et al., 1998) and demonstrating a sincere interest in the reader by using the "you" approach (Forman, 1999). Respectful acknowledgment of the receiver's needs and wants reflects beneficially on the writer (Vassallo, 1998).

Conciseness requires sticking to the point of the message and eliminating all but the necessary information. E-mail senders can achieve conciseness by writing "a specific, talking, eye-catching subject or entry line" (Reynolds, 1997, 8) and by positioning important information first. Since many e-mail readers may only read the beginning of messages, using an "umbrella opening" (Reynolds, 1997, 8) lets the reader know early what is contained in the message.

Clarity refers to using language that is specific, understandable, and clear. Planning and organizing before inputting an e-mail message improves clarity (Forman, 1999). In addition, avoiding a reply of one word or only a few words also improves clarity. For example, repeating an essential part of a previous message reminds the reader of why the reply was sent, thus improving clarity (Galbreath, et al., 1998).

Correctness in grammar, spelling, and punctuation makes an e-mail message, and other written messages, easier to read and understand. E-mail messages lacking correctness are often difficult to read and may cause the receiver to perform additional reading and study, may waste the reader's time and require follow-up requests for clarification, or may contribute to poor decisions based on misconstrued messages. Letting the ease, quickness, and informality of e-mail replace careful editing and proofreading nullifies salient benefits of e-mail (Reynolds, 1997).

Factors that contribute to the quality of format include personalization and identification, paragraph and sentence length, and layout.

Personalization and identification clarify who the sender and receiver of an e-mail message are and add to the message's conversational tone. Personalization of an e-mail message is achieved by putting the reader's name in a salutation or including the name of the reader in the first sentence or two. Identification means ending the message with the sender's name, work title, company name, and/or address (Galbreath, et al., 1998). Some e-mail systems provide such identification automatically when the message is sent.

Paragraph and sentence length improve the quality of e-mail messages when the lengths are kept short. Paragraphs should be no longer than five or six lines, according to Grazian (1996/1997), and no longer than seven or eight lines, according to Vassallo (1998), For average sentence length, authorities generally agree on 17 to 20 words per sentence. In addition, the average computer screen shows about 24 lines; so keeping the message to one screen prevents the reader's need to scroll to find important information (The Ins and Outs, 1998).

Layout includes conventions for use of capitals, white space, headings and subheadings, and font. Use of all capitals, for example, should be avoided because the capitals give the appearance of

shouting the message. In addition, white space should be used effectively to improve ease in reading the message (Grazian, 1996/1997). For messages that require more than one screen, use of headings, subheadings, and listings can help the reader easily scroll to important information (Reynolds, 1997). Lastly, the use of a font that is easy to read as well as large enough to read-at least 12 point and preferably larger--improves the overall quality of a message's format (Vassallo, 1998).

Based on the information above, the quality of e-mail messages can be improved by following the guidelines listed here relative to content and format of e-mail messages. The question remaining, however, is: What qualities of content and format are evident in typical email messages of today's leading corporations?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the review of literature pertaining to the use of e-mail for business purposes, the following questions can be stated:

Research Q1:	What are the specific circumstances where ane-mail message is preferred over a memorandum or a telephone call? A related question is:
Research Q1a:	What percentage of corporate employees use e-mail on a daily basis?
Research Q2:	Do corporations employ a CIO to direct and manage the corporation's electronic and Internet use among employees?
Research Q3:	Do companies generally create a formal policy for employee use of e-mail and the Internet?
Research Q4:	What standards are evident among businesses regarding qualities of e-mail content?
Research Q5:	What standards are evident among businesses regarding qualities of e-mail format?

METHODOLOGY

To answer the research questions, Fortune 500 corporations of 1998 were surveyed by email. These corporations were selected because they are generally perceived to be models for business practices and communication standards across the nation. To quality as a Fortune 500 company (Fortune FAQS, 1999), companies must meet the following criteria.

(a)	All companies must publicize financial data and report part or all of their figures to a government agency.
(b)	Ranking on the Fortune 500 list depends primarily on comparative revenue for the period. Revenue figures for all companies include consolidated subsidiaries and exclude excise taxes.
(c)	Companies must also provide figures for profits, assets, and shareholder equity.

To gather data that would answer the research questions about e-mail use and standards among employees of these leading corporations, an e-mail message was created and sent by the researchers. The message followed basic guidelines of quality content and format (Forman, 1999; Galbreath, et al., 1998; Grazian 1996/1997; Reynolds, 1997; Vassallo, 1998). The message was concise (12 lines), made appropriate use of white space to increase readability, presented questions in a direct and courteous manner, and appropriately greeted the receiver and identified the researchers.

Three questions collected quantitative data regarding the presence of a CIO (yes or no), the existence of e-mail or Internet use policies (yes or no), and the percentage of employees using e-mail on a daily basis. A fourth question asked respondents to provide written information describing circumstances where e-mail messages were preferred over other message types. The remaining analyses consisted of content and format analysis of each e-mail response.

Type of response format was first categorized by whether the messages were "canned" or personal. Canned (automated) replies referred to those that were obviously form statements. They were typically off-target for the study and typically welcomed customers to the website, thanked the e-mail sender for the message, and stated how much the company valued customer communication. Personal replies were those that provided useable information in direct response to the survey questions, acknowledged receipt of the survey and included additional remarks (though they may not have answered the questions), or stated they referred the message to another person in the corporation.

Quality of response content was evaluated on a scale of 1 (high degree of presence), 2 (moderate degree of presence), to 3 (low degree of presence) for tone (being conversational and positive), courtesy (using please and thank you, and generally illustrating a reader focus within the content), conciseness (sticking to the point and eliminating all but necessary information), clarity (being specific, logical, and understandable), and correctness (displaying correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation).

Quality of format was evaluated on a scale of 1 (yes) and 2 (no) regarding evidence that the particular format quality was evident in the message. Format qualities included (a) personalization (message used the receiver's name), (b) identification (sender provided his/her name along with company name, position, or other business information), (c) paragraph and sentence length (paragraphs contained no more than 6-8 lines and sentences contained no more than 20 words), and (d) layout (caps and lower case, white space, headings and subheadings, and font were appropriately used). Additionally, the use of ads, logos, and slogans was noted.

Descriptive statistics as well as content analyses were used to interpret the results. Each e-mail message was directed to the Web Master or Information Officer of the corporation. When a corporation did not include an e-mail address among other information provided on the Fortune 500 listing, an Internet search was conducted to locate the URL address elsewhere. All e-mail addresses were eventually located, with the exception of nine corporations.

Internal and External Validity Considerations.

Content coding was based on established criteria by professionals in the field of business communication as well as on the cumulative university teaching consulting experiences of the three researchers. The researchers and a graduate assistant completed the coding process, and any

disagreements were discussed and satisfactorily resolved. A validity threat may exist, however, regarding who answered the e-mail. The person responding by return e-mail may have been any number of individuals, ranging from the CIO to an entry-level employee hired to respond to "routine" messages. Additionally, whether the message was answered by someone at the headquarters, in a subsidiary of the company, or by a contracted sublet of the company hired for Web Master responsibilities was not distinguished in the data collected.

A limitation of the study is the communication context. Corporations responded to external constituents, the researchers. The content and formatting of messages intended only for internal constituents (other employees of the same company) are not represented in this study and may vary somewhat from the reported results. The study is also delimited by the inclusion of large successful corporations that are generally in the public's eye and which receive, by the nature of their visibility, many e-mail messages.

RESULTS

The response rate for the study was 29%; 110 corporations sent a return e-mail. E-mail responses were received within two business days in most cases. Not all companies, however, provided answers to all questions. Only 83 (75%) answered one, or more of the four survey questions, 16 (15%) of all messages were automated responses and off-target to the study. The remaining 11 (10 %) of the return messages were referred to another person. Regardless of the completeness of the message, each was analyzed for content and format qualities. Thank you email messages were sent to all corporations that responded, regardless of whether or not they agreed to participate.

Question 1 of the study asked: "Does your company have a Chief Information Officer (CIO)?" Of the 110 companies responding to the survey, 23 companies (21 percent) answered yes to this question and 87 companies (79 percent) answered no or left the item blank, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Answer to Survey Question #1

	Yes	No, or Did not Answer this Item
Does your company have a CIO?	23 (21%)	87 (79%)

A disproportionately large number of companies indicated they did not have a CIO. A person by another title, however, could have been performing CIO responsibilities. The survey question was not worded so the respondent would be encouraged to consider an alternate title.

Question 2 asked: "Does your company place restrictions on employee use of e-mail or the Internet? Please describe." Of the 100 respondent companies, 21 answered yes, 5 companies answered

no, and 27 forwarded this question to another person for response. However, further responses were not received. The remaining 57 companies did not answer this item, as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2
Answer to Questions # 2

	Yes	No	Referred to another for response	No Response for this item provided
Restrictions on employee use of e-mail or the Internet?	21(19%)	5(4%)	27(25%)	57(52%)

Some of the 21 companies indicating they had e-mail policies stated their policies were formal written documents; others companies may have had policies that were merely word-of-mouth understandings. The survey question did not ask for a distinction between the two. One company forwarded an entire six-page document as evidence of a rigorous policy by e-mail (over 2,000 words in 10-point font). As further indicated in Table 2, a disproportionately high number of company respondents did not have policies or did not know whether policies existed.

Question 3 stated: "Please estimate what percentage of your employees use e-mail on a daily basis." Only 24 (22%) of the 110 companies answered this question. As Table 3 indicates, 13 (12%) of the companies stated that between 76 percent and 100 percent of employees used e-mail on a daily basis, 3 (3%) of the companies stated daily use between 51 % and 75% of their employees, and 8 (7%) of the companies stated daily use by 50 percent or fewer of their employees. Several corporations not providing estimates for daily use inserted comments such as "We have no idea," or "too hard to estimate."

Table 3
Answer to Survey Question # 3

Daily Usage	0-25%	2(2%)
	26-50%	6(5%)
	51-75%	3(3%)
	76%-100%	13(12%)
	Had no idea, or left item blank	86(78%)

Based on these results, only 16 percent of employees within the major corporations, on the average, used e-mail on a daily basis.

Question 4 stated: “Please describe circumstances where e-mail messages are preferred over the use of hard copy memos and/or telephone calls." Of the 100 corporations responding, 35 provided information for this item. Since the item required a written statement, the responses were categorized into four areas: (a) general message conveniences (13 companies); (b) economical reasons (3 companies)- (c) special conveniences (attachment options and time zone advantages--5 companies); and (d) organizational culture, meaning, "It's just the way things are done around here" (9 companies). Additional information gleaned from Question 4 results was that e-mail messages were not used for lengthy documents, complex documents, documents requiring signature or notarization, or documents containing sensitive or confidential information. The implication was that e-mail is preferred over other message types for a wide variety of reasons. Answers to Question 3 regarding percentage of employees using e-mail on a daily basis counters the results for Question 4. The stated conveniences may reflect what employees thought was expected to be true, rather than the reality of the work place.

Coded Analysis

All e-mail messages were analyzed for content and formatting qualities. Content qualities were evaluated by the following criteria, using a scale of 1 (high degree of presence), 2 (moderate degree of presence), and 3 (low degree of presence):

- Tone-was conversational and positive
- Courteous-used please and thank you and was reader centered
- Conciseness-eliminated unnecessary verbiage
- Clarity-was specific, logical, understandable
- Correctness-used correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation

As shown in Table 4, 80 percent of the companies rated high, overall. The most frequently occurring high ratings were for the criteria of Clarity (104 companies) and Conciseness (89 companies). Criteria most lacking was Tone (74 companies illustrated conversational and positive tone, but 36 did not). Clipped, staccato tone, abbreviated messaging, and grammatical short cuts were not evident, as only 6 percent overall included these characteristics.

Table 4
Qualities of Content

	Rating 1 (high)	Rating 2 (moderate)	Rating 3 (low)
Tone-conversational & positive	74	23	13
Courteous/polite	89	11	10
Conciseness	91	15	4
Clarity	104	6	0
Correctness-grammar, punctuation, spelling	85	20	5
Total, Categorical % of all ratings	443 (80%)	75 (14%)	32(6%)

Formatting qualities were evaluated by the following criteria, using a 1 (yes) or 2 (no) rating:

- Personalization: used name of receiver in the opener or early in the message
- Identification: provided sender name and company affiliation, position, or other information
- Paragraph and sentence length: had paragraphs between 6-8 lines and sentences with 20 or fewer words.
- Layout-used capitalization and lower case, white space, headings and subheadings, and font size for ease of reading and understanding.

As shown in Table 5, most companies demonstrated high-quality formatting features and very seldom included ads, logos, or slogans. Overall, e-mail messages contained the same high quality formatting standards expected for more formal, hard-copy business messages.

Table 5
Qualities of Format

	Yes	No
*Personalization (for receiver) and identification (of sender)	73 (66%)	37 (34%)
*Paragraph length (within 5-8 lines)	110 (100%)	0
*Sentence length (having 20 or fewer words)	99 (90%)	11 (10%)
*Layout (use of capitalization and lowercase, white space, headings and subheadings, 12 pt. or larger font.	99 (90%)	11 (10%)
*Use of ads, logos, or slogans	9 (8%)	101 (92%)

As a final part of the survey, respondents were encouraged to provide additional comments. Only a few companies added information at this point, but typical expressions by those companies included the following:

"Immediate interaction is best accomplished by phone."

"The corporate office use of e-mail is very high, but in the field it is not so much."

"We receive between 800 and 1,000 e-mail messages a day and answer each one personally with a return e-mail response."

"The software used for our e-mail system is Lotus Notes."

"Our company is trying to foster a paperless office."

"A new phenomenon for our company is the use of interactive pagers, which have a keyboard, a seven-line display of words, radio communications, and operates on one AA battery."

DISCUSSION

As expected, e-mail messages were claimed to be a part of the corporate culture.-It's just the way we do things around here! The conveniences of economy, speed, wide-range contacts, and file transfers were frequently cited as major benefits. These claims agree with the studies conducted by Hawkins (1999), Quick (1999), Hunt (1996), and others. However, the claims of use and report of actual use did not coincide. Only 16 percent of employees use e-mail on a daily basis (See results

shown in Table 3). Additionally, a disproportionately large number of respondents failed to confirm the presence of a CIO (only 23 of the 110 companies) or the existence of an e-mail usage policy (only 21 companies).

Perhaps the person responsible for managing e-mail and Internet use was identified by some other title or specified within some other job description. Future studies should ask this question in a manner that would incorporate the responsibilities of e-mail and Internet use. Future studies may also find a higher number of CIOs by title alone as technology and information system issues become increasing more challenging.

The lack of a formal and well-publicized usage policy would suggest that companies could face problems in terms of productivity loss and misuse of electronic messaging by employees. In light of the complaints launched by corporations regarding improper use of e-mail or the Internet, the absence of a formal policy is risky in terms of efficiency and productivity. Results of this study suggest that e-messaging may be out of control within corporations, as based on comments that some respondents had no idea how many employees daily used e-mail or that the information was too difficult to calculate and that most respondents were not aware of any messaging restrictions.

The study results were also expected to show an abundance of short, abbreviated, staccato messages. Instead, standard content and format criteria, as used in other more formal, hard-copy business messages, were evident. The results do not agree with earlier literature (Romei, 1997) which suggests a "dressing down" of standards for e-mail because of its speed, ease, breadth, and inclusiveness.

For educators, this finding is important. The study has been important for identifying the specific uses and current practices of major corporations, thus educators can better prepare students to meet the expectations of their potential employers.

Similar studies are recommended in the future and should be conducted on a regular basis. Periodic studies would be instrumental in identifying trends and shifts in electronic messaging practices and preferences among corporation. Educators would then have the opportunity to keep abreast of electronic messaging issues in a quickly evolving area of corporate communication. Accordingly, students will be better prepared for their workplace responsibilities.

A change recommended for future studies is to clarify the question regarding a CIO and allow other titles or positions which may incorporate the responsibilities of managing e-mail and Internet use among employees. Additionally, the question regarding restrictions for employee use of e-mail and Internet should clarify the existence of formal, written policy statements; word-of-mouth understandings; or other policy enforcements. More specificity in the survey could add to the clarity and understanding of specific corporate preferences, expectations, and actual use of e-mail and Internet among employees.

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