



# *Journal of the North American Management Society*

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# Journal of the North American Management Society

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## Journal of the North American Management Society Editor's Preface

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This is the first issue of the *Journal of the North American Management Society* [*JNAMS*]. The North American Management Society [NAMS] is a scholarly organization that focuses on management scholars and practitioners, primarily in North America—the United States and Canada—but also from other nations in the global economy. Most members are from smaller educational institutions and from practitioners in for-profit and not-for-profit organizations.

NAMS is an inclusive “group” of “management” scholars in learning and practicing organizations. The Society fosters the development and distribution of new knowledge in management. Our mission statement states that we are an inclusive group of management scholars and practitioners who foster the development and distribution of new knowledge in all fields of management. We value new knowledge that comes from practitioner innovations as well as formal and informal research activities in schools, colleges, and universities. We recognize that new knowledge in management occurs as the result of dialogues between individuals as well as experimentation in the field by scholars and practitioners; by studies in laboratories; and by observations of individuals, groups, and institutions.

In support of the NAMS mission, the *Journal of the North American Management Society* is a multidisciplinary, online journal of interest to scholars, professionals, students, and practitioners in a broad range of management thinking. The fields of study that *JNAMS* encompasses include human resources, general management, organizational, ethics, leadership, entrepreneurship, global strategy, nonprofit, and public administration. *JNAMS* is committed to the development of theoretical and practical knowledge about management in all its forms.

This first issue of *JNAMS* features the five best papers accepted for the NAMS/MBAA 2006 meetings as determined by the blind review of at least two anonymous reviewers. Two papers were recognized at the Conference as being the best papers submitted. The outstanding human resources paper being published in this issue also received a McGraw-Hill/Irwin distinguished paper award. This paper is:

Kenneth P. DeMeuse, Todd J. Hostager, and Katie O'Neil. “Measuring the Effectiveness of a Workplace Diversity Training Program: A Field Study.”

Among the general management papers submitted, the outstanding management paper award went to:

Jonathon R. B. Halbesleben, M. Ronald Buckley, Michael G. Harvey, and Milorad M. Novicevic. “Promoting Ethical Corporate Behavior in a Global Context.”

The reviewers identified three other papers from the Conference as being worthy of publication in *JNAMS*. These three papers are:

Richard A. Barker. “Pointing the Finger at Leadership;”

Jann E. Freed. "Where have all the leaders gone? A Holistic Leadership Model for these Uncertain Times;" and

Katherine Karl and Joy V. Peluchette. "Perceptions Regarding the Impact of Workplace Attire on Workplace Outcomes."

In the future, *JNAMS* will offer both peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed articles, in general and theme sections. All peer-reviewed articles must meet the highest and most rigorous standards within their larger academic discipline and are anonymously reviewed by at least two scholars in the field. Non-peer-reviewed materials can be essay, research-in-progress, pilot studies, or commentary on some topic relevant to the fields of management study. All non-peer-reviewed materials will be reviewed by the Editorial Board for quality and appropriateness, but are not guaranteed publication.

This brings us to our vision by which we take *JNAMS* into its next stages of evolution. We want *JNAMS* to be a place where all aspects of management studies come together. We seek research and commentary globally from scholars, students, and practitioners of the art and science of management. We want *JNAMS'* content to represent the myriad disciplines that have insights to contribute. *JNAMS* will be open to all theoretical and methodological perspectives.

We solicit all of you who read this journal to let us know your interest in reviewing papers submitted for publication. Please send your resume and a paragraph or two emphasizing your area of expertise in order to help us assign manuscripts or other submissions appropriately. The review process is viewed as an important way to nurture up-and-coming authors by giving them the opportunity to be mentored as their articles are improved for publication in *JNAMS*. Our Guidelines to Contributors may be found at the end of this issue. We seek your suggestions, ideas, and critique to assist in making this journal best serve your interests and needs.

Specific recognition must be given to Baker College Online and Dr. Julia Teahen, its President, for accepting the important role of host for this online publication. Needless to say, you would not be reading this journal if not for Baker College's willingness to provide the technical expertise and the computer servers to facilitate *JNAMS* publication.

Welcome to this our first issue of *The Journal of the North American Management Society* and to its future online publication.

Edward Heler, Ph.D.  
Journal and Proceedings Editor

## Pointing the Finger at Leadership

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***Abstract: The word leadership is often used incorrectly to refer to management, supervision, command, and statesmanship. Scholars rarely, if ever, make any distinction among these four different constructs. Most theories of leadership are really theories of supervision, and the words leadership and supervision are used interchangeably. This paper attempts to distinguish between the two.***

Here she comes again! Every time I see that woman, she is handing me more work to do. What is it this time? Oh, goody! She wants me to create an instructors' guide for an online course in crisis management, something that does not fall neatly into my academic repertoire. She hands me a four inch binder stuffed with course documents developed for FEMA in 1999, and says I can do it any way I want to as long as it conforms to the institution's online format and incorporates government guidelines. To make a short story shorter, I agreed to do it. Many people call this good leadership; they might be right, but not for the reasons they may think.

Leadership is not about taking action to get people to work hard to accomplish organizational goals--that is called *supervision*; more specifically, it is the management function of *directing*. It does not matter if the supervisor in question is the highest ranking person in the organization or the lowest.

But, many people say, leadership is all about coordinating the work of others. No, coordinating the work of others is the broad object that distinguishes organizational management from what individuals do to manage themselves--that is, allocating resources toward the accomplishment of a goal. Commonly, the word *leadership* is incorrectly applied to good management, both personal management--which would be better called *efficacy*--and organizational management.

But, they assert, she persuaded/inspired/influenced you to accept an assignment you are otherwise under no obligation to accept. Not exactly. Her words and actions represented a small fraction of the many factors that influenced my cooperation, and it is the tendency to oversimplify this process of influence that leads to the misapplication of the word *leadership*.

The sources of my motivation to accept the assignment predated my encounter with this "leader" by more than fifty years, when my disposition toward doing the right thing was developed. Since then, that disposition has been built, battered, and otherwise shaped by the countless events and people which have provided varying degrees of support and discouragement. The specific reasons for my acceptance of this particular assignment began to form at least five years before the encounter, when my devotion to the institution was inspired by a character who had been dead for nearly one hundred years, and who did not say or write anything that was intended to be inspirational (for the full story of that incident, see Barker 2003).

### WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?

Many authors answer the question *what is leadership?* by suggesting that there are so many different opinions and so many potential answers that there is no point in trying to pin one

down. They say that because they either do not recognize or will not acknowledge that there are only two possible answers, and that the one they have chosen does not work. The answer they have generally chosen is that leadership is a product of the individual--all about traits, characteristics, styles, and abilities of the leader, and how these traits, characteristics, styles, and abilities interact with the situation to produce desired outcomes.

Whether we begin an historical discussion of leadership with Herodotus, who wrote biographies of kings and conquerors to illustrate moral consequences of *hubris* (outrageous arrogance or an abuse of power) and *ate* (moral insensitivity), or with Plutarch, who perfected the biographical form of recording history and was somewhat less interested than Herodotus in relating moral lessons than in what the lives of certain individuals had to teach us in positive terms, or with Machiavelli, who told the stories of princes to illustrate how they succeeded and how they failed, we are focused entirely on individuals and their performance. Machiavelli (1981) set us firmly upon the path of a feudal obsession with the persona of the leader (read monarch) and with its relationship to winning, and this is what most people mean by *leadership*. Modern industrial leadership theory, whether it is called transformational, LMX, servant leadership, path-goal, charismatic, etc., etc., is still attempting to define Plato's philosopher-king, and how that king's actions result in performance.

The answer to the question of leadership that stresses the individual is doomed to failure because, no matter how much we wish it were otherwise, nothing in social groups is accomplished by individuals working alone. It is the equivalent of suggesting that the erosion of a beach is caused by one particular wave. There is little, if any, evidence that any given individual has any reliable control over outcomes that involve other people. Those who do not perceive a gross oversimplification in this approach are either foolish, fraudulent, or trapped in an ideology.

The other possible answer to the question *what is leadership?* is that leadership is a product of a collectivity--all about what everyone is and what everyone does. The leader is a component of leadership--as the one wave is a component in the beach's erosion process--but not necessarily the chief component, and not deserving of focused attention. Even if the one wave is really big and powerful, it is still a small part of the overall process. The leader is **not** the determinant of leadership. This answer is not popular because it cannot be used to flatter or to glorify CEOs and politicians, and it provides little to sell to those who would be kings and queens.

Leadership is *a process of transformative change where the ethics of individuals are integrated into the mores of a community as a means of evolutionary social development* (Barker 2002, p. 106). Leadership does not result from the actions of an individual, but from the collective action of a community of individuals who have arrived at a more or less common understanding of the good, and at a consensus for how the good is accomplished. Leadership always occurs in the context of a crisis, though what constitutes a crisis is always defined by the community involved in the process.

Leadership is not something that emanates from the leader. It is something that emanates from "the sum of human wills" (Tolstoy 1952, p. 470). Tolstoy felt that to understand leadership, we must turn our attention away from the leader, and toward "the common and infinitesimally small elements by which the masses are moved."

## COMMON AND INFINITESIMALLY SMALL ELEMENTS

Why did I act in conjunction with organizational objectives? In a word, *eudaimonia*. I acted out of an anticipation of a sense of personal fulfillment in doing something that I consider to be of consequence. I did not expect this action to result in "happiness" or necessarily anything resembling pleasure. In fact, I expected very little sensation of pleasure in taking on this grueling project. Rather, it was an opportunity to serve the needs of a community to which I have

committed my efforts and my good will. I anticipated the sort of contentment that proceeds from meeting someone else's needs.

What is the source of this commitment? It cannot be tied to any individual, or to any single episode of inspiration. It is something that was well-developed long before I ever heard of the institution, and applied to the institution when I arrived. It is an array of ideas, sensations, images, memories, and other internal, unmeasurable things that indicate to me that my efforts in relation to the institution are worthwhile.

This commitment is an outcome of all the moral lessons I have assimilated since I was old enough to be punished for misbehaving. It is the result of countless people I have seen, and a comparison of the sort of life these people live with the sort of life I think I should live. It is the result of an assimilation of the meaning of life and of the goals of life implied by the moral order in which I have lived. As Lawler (2005) observed about important personal qualities that are valued in effective relationships across varied situations, "we know relatively little about *how* these facets come together to constitute authenticity, effective leadership, or effective caring" (p. 225).

## THE CLAIM OF LEADERSHIP

The most perplexing bugaboo to leadership scholars seems to be the essential ontological question: When is it *leadership*, and when is it something else? The prevalence of logical positivism in modern scholastic endeavor, and the desperation of certain disciplines, such as psychology, to appear *scientific* by adopting logical positivism exclusively, has left the typical American academic woefully unprepared to consider ontological questions or to engage in ontological analysis. As a result, the term *leadership* is applied liberally to a wide variety of phenomena that would be better identified by the words *management*, *supervision*, *statesmanship*, or *command*.

If one has answered the question of leadership by accepting the notion that *leadership* is a product of the leader, then the answer to the ontological question is that it is *leadership* when the leader is doing it. Is **everything** the leader does *leadership*? There is no satisfactory answer to this question. If leadership is everything the leader does, what happens when the leadership role changes hands, as it nearly always does? When the leader takes a bath, is this *leadership*? If leadership is only some of the things a leader does, then which things? How does one make the distinction between the things that a leader does that constitute *leadership*, and the things that a leader does that do not constitute *leadership*? There is no possibility for a widely accepted answer, and that leads scholars to throw up their hands and claim that defining leadership is impossible or that many definitions are equally suitable. That is, of course, a consequence of their fallacious view of leadership.

If one has answered the question of leadership by accepting the notion that *leadership* is a collectivity, then the answer to the ontological question can avoid sorting behavior into an Hegalian dialectic. If leadership is a social process, then we can adopt Burns' (1978) conclusion that leadership is something we experience, such as a transformation of our moral consciousness, or an inspiration to be a part of something larger than ourselves. One *feels* leadership in the same sense that one feels contentment, feels desperation, or feels affiliation, and that is a property of all individuals involved in the process. The fallacy of the leader-centered view lies in the attribution of that feeling to the leader's style, characteristics, or actions.

Rost (1991) set out to define the circumstances that identify leadership when it is taking place. Rost's definition can be summarized in the following way: Leadership is a dynamic social and political relationship that is based in a mutual development of purposes which may never be realized. Rost pictured a group of people, working toward a collective end, with a leadership role that passes from person to person as dynamics of influence change over time.

The word *mutual*, which Rost adopted from Burns (1978), has a significance that makes this approach to defining leadership much different from the approach that centers on the leader and on the leader's role in getting people to work toward specific goals. Simply, no one needs supervision or inspiration to work toward a goal the priority of which is already internalized, and as I attempted to illustrate above, the process of internalizing a goal is not as facile as being exposed to the leader's song and dance.

When people have committed themselves to accomplishing a *mutual* goal, do the efforts of these people need to be *managed* to be effective? Certainly, resources must be allocated, timelines and other plans need to be coordinated, etc. But the view that people must be coaxed by the leader to work toward their own ends is simply wrong. If they are not working toward specific ends, if they do need to be coerced or beguiled, then the goals are not *mutual* and whatever they are involved in is *not* leadership.

It is the mutual development of purposes which indicates that *leadership* is taking place, and successful results are not required to establish an ontological standing. Experience is the basis for ontological assessment. We have all experienced a social process we are willing to call *leadership*, where we have worked toward an end of our choosing as part of a collectivity. Perhaps we did this in spite of the leader--probably not because of the leader, unless the leader symbolized or facilitated the end we hoped to accomplish.

## CRISIS AND LEADERSHIP

As stated above, leadership is normally experienced in a time of crisis. Depending on the social group doing the judging, the word *crisis* can be applied to a variety of circumstances that can range from a shooting war to a perception that children are not learning what they should be learning in school. Common crises include severe political conflict, natural disaster, economic disaster, gross injustice, threats to the community, and so forth. The degree of conflict or difficulty needed to stimulate action is also a matter of collective agreement.

Allison (1971) illustrated quite clearly the perils of attributing collective action to rational thought, to informed decision making, and to deliberate actions. By comparing different models of analysis of the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, Allison all but eliminated the rational model as a viable explanation of what happened. Still, the most common theory in use applied to leadership is the theory that attributes collective outcomes to a rational actor. Two more realistic possibilities emerged from Allison's work that can be meaningfully applied to an effective analysis of a crisis--Model II and Model III.

Model II, the organizational model, suggests that collective outcomes are the result of an application of standard operating procedures. The organization has a repertoire of behavior that it applies to all problems equally--the engineering department treats all problems like engineering problems, the security department treat all problems as security problems, the production department treats all problems like production problems, the marketing department treats all problems as marketing problems, etc. When there is a crisis, the new problem is met with standard conceptual frames and methods of problem solving whether they are appropriate or not. This is **not** leadership, and most people would not think of it as leadership. Yet, it does explain many organizational and social outcomes, it indicates why leadership and management are different things, and it also explains why *leadership* generally does not happen in organizations.

Model III, the political model, suggests that collective outcomes are the result of messy processes of bargaining, compromising, influencing, posturing, maneuvering, etc. When there is a crisis, there is no change in the process except perhaps a focus of attention and a reassessment of goals, priorities, and agendas. When a crisis stimulates a process of *leadership*, there is an alignment of goals, priorities, and agendas toward a common purpose; sometimes this alignment is strong, sustained, and highly defined, and sometimes it is less strong and dissipative. Model III is the only one of the three that can be used meaningfully to understand leadership.

The sort of crisis that stimulates a process of leadership has two important elements: There is a general consensus that a crisis exists to the extent that something needs to be done, and there is a general consensus regarding what it will take in terms of collective action to resolve the crisis. Usually, someone emerges from the group to be held up as a symbol of *what we all want*. This person is often an unlikely leader, sometimes a reluctant leader. This person either says something, or does something, or represents something that everyone else involved in the process understands about the crisis and how it should be resolved. It is rare that this leader has any real control over activities and events. The leader can stimulate directional thinking among those involved in the leadership process, but so can a commercial, a zoo animal, a cultural image, a sporting event, or any other person, group, or phenomenon.

## CASE EXAMPLES

The crisis management course that I develop will use various disasters as cases from which lessons of logistics, preparedness, response communication networks, organizing resources, etc. may be learned. They will not be lessons in *leadership*, but lessons in *management, supervision, and command*. A comparison of three cases can illustrate the difference for purposes of this essay: the attack on the World Trade Center, Hurricane Katrina, and the Iraq War.

The attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 created an instantaneous and more or less general, widespread consensus in the USA regarding the nature of the crisis, and how this crisis--that is, the rescue, recovery, and restoration operations, and not necessarily the political aftermath--should be addressed. Evidence for its claim as a leadership process includes not only this consensus, but the creation of a symbolic leader.

Rudy Giuliani, Mayor of New York at the time, could not mount enough support for a Senate campaign in New York before the attack. After the attack, Giuliani came to symbolize what was needed by the city and its people to cope with this unexpected crisis. Biographers will list his calmness, his personal resolve, certain of his utterances, his organization of the city's resources, and other things as indicating his great leadership traits and skills. But, as always, this list does not tell the actual story. Before September 11th, Giuliani was the lamest of lame ducks. He was no different in character, skill, or ability on September 11th, 12th, and 13th than he was on September 8th, 9th, and 10th. Why was he not a great leader then?

Giuliani is a good example of how leaders emerge from the leadership process, and not the other way around. He was widely respected by many citizens of New York--I know because I lived there when he was mayor--for facilitating various improvements, including reduction of the crime rate and a general cleanup of the city. But he was not respected widely enough to be nominated as Republican candidate for the Senate. After the attack, Giuliani acted the way he always acted, did the things one who knew him would expect him to do, and just clicked with virtually all Americans, both inside and outside the city. He was the right symbol for the crisis.

Contrast that with Hurricane Katrina which was no less a disaster, but did not produce a widespread leadership process insofar as I can tell at the time of this writing. There was no widespread consensus that there was a crisis sufficient enough for concerted action, and there has been no symbolic leader to have emerged from the process. This scenario should not be unexpected because it is a typical national response to hurricanes that hit the US every year. Hurricanes normally represent the sort of crisis for which there are institutional means of response, and no need for leadership. No real impression of crisis beyond an expected, and perhaps acceptable, level of tragedy was registered in the national consciousness until more than a week after the event when it came apparent that institutional support was not meeting expectations. The crisis was not Hurricane Katrina, the crisis was a failure of expected institutional support.

Eventually, news reports and government mismanagement encouraged people to raise funds and to offer assistance beyond what they did for hurricane victims in Florida the year before, but it was not generally something to which one would attach the word *leadership* without looking at isolated, local efforts. There appear, at the time of this writing, to be effective commanders in charge of operations, but that does not make it a *leadership* process. There will be some considerable political fallout, and preparedness reassessment, but these, too, do not constitute *leadership*.

The criticism of President Bush and other government officials, particularly Michael Brown, the head of FEMA at the time of the disaster, indicates why most people still cling to the old feudal paradigm of leadership--having someone to blame. If leadership is a collective process, then we have no one to blame if something goes wrong besides ourselves. Many people do not like to accept blame. On the other hand, maintaining the myth that leadership is a function of the leader gives us considerable leeway to blame those in charge for poor performance even though they may not have sufficient control to solve the problem (Gemmill & Oakley 1992).

The war in Iraq provides an interesting study of a leadership process. Setting aside those who support President Bush, right or wrong (indications are that this group represents about 30% of the population), there was no widespread consensus of a crisis concerning Iraq before the war. There was widespread concern over what to do in the aftermath of the attack on September 11th, but that leadership process was dissipating by the time the Iraq war began. Many people had concluded that the attack on Afghanistan was a good step in solving the problem.

By August 2005, there appeared to be a growing consensus among many Americans, again excluding radical Bush supporters, that the war was becoming a crisis. Rather than the instantaneous response generated by 9/11, this new response--as a widespread consensus--was rather slow to develop. There were, of course, people who opposed the war and considered it a moral crisis from the beginning, but a more general consensus became apparent at the emergence of a leader--Cindy Sheehan.

Sheehan emerged from obscurity as a symbol of the anti-war movement not because she held office, or knew the business, or communicated a vision, or was particularly charismatic, or had a winning strategy, or had any trait, or took any action often recommended for business or political leaders. Sheehan was a grieving mother who had one simple, personal goal--to meet with President Bush and to ask him to explain why her son died.

As many leaders do, Sheehan symbolically clarified *what we all want* for two different groups with opposing ideas about what the crisis is and how it should be solved. For the anti-war group, she symbolized what was wrong with the war, what was wrong with those who took us to war, and how the crisis should be solved--by ending it. For the pro-war group, she symbolized the danger of not supporting the war and why the war should continue. Other than President Bush, the pro-war group's symbolic leader in a negative form was Cindy Sheehan. Sheehan stimulated two opposing leadership processes, not on purpose, but, as often happens, by accident. She emerged as a symbol rather than choosing to be a symbol.

## CONCLUSION

"What we call leadership may actually be unique to a particular set of circumstances and events rather than something that may be generalized unproblematically to the world at large" (Prince 2005, p. 110). Western thinkers tend to take an object-oriented approach to understanding the world, and a command and control approach to understanding leadership in the face of overwhelming evidence that not all things can be known. Prince drew this conclusion after examining Eastern lines of thinking that focus on integration and coordination within an inclusive frame of reference.

It is clear that the generally accepted view of leadership is strongly influenced by the feudal system of government (Barker, 2005 2002), where the monarch is in charge. It is

unreasonable to assume that the feudal paradigm will be abandoned by organizations anytime soon, or that feudal principles of government will cease to define management. It is, however, reasonable to recognize that the "thing" we like to call *leadership* is something entirely different from management, and not management in some advanced form. There are other ways of thinking about leadership that are much more fruitful in facilitating an understanding.

Hurricane Katrina displaced the two opposing leadership processes stimulated by Sheehan. No doubt both these processes are still underway, but they will both dissipate and restructure themselves into some new form until there is no longer a perception of crisis. During this restructuring, new leaders will emerge from the process to symbolize and clarify *what we all want* as those wants and needs progressively change over time from interactive exchange with the environment (Barker 2002).

Foster (1986) considered leadership to be a *temporal property of the actor*. Using the examples above, along with commonly cited examples of Gandhi, who had no authority or official position, and Winston Churchill, who was obscure before World War II and thrown from office immediately after the war, we can see how time and circumstances combine to elevate a particular individual to the level of symbol. The leadership process creates the leader; it is not the leader who creates the leadership process. In reality, the leadership role will shift from person to person, and may be performed by many persons at once, as ideas and perceptions formulate, dissipate, and reform. That is *leadership*.

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## Measuring the Effectiveness of a Workplace Diversity Training Program: A Field Study

Kenneth P. De Meuse; University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

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Kathryn S. O'Neill; Rock-Tenn Company

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*Abstract: Although workplace diversity training has been a common practice in American companies for the past 15 years, little systematic assessment has been conducted. It appears that many organizational leaders and human resource professionals simply assume that the training activities had a positive effect. In the current study, a large manufacturing organization was interested in implementing a diversity program company-wide. However, before doing so, a pilot study was conducted with a critical layer of senior management to determine whether the training would be effective. The Workplace Diversity Survey was administered: (a) one week prior to the training, (b) the week immediately after the training was completed, and (c) three months later. The instrument measured the overall efficacy of the diversity training as well as five specific dimensions of participant perceptions. The results demonstrated that the program participants significantly increased both their overall and dimensional scores. This improvement was maintained throughout the period of study. Implications for the evaluation of diversity training and the use of executive management as a pilot group were discussed.*

Diversity in the workplace is one of the most critical challenges facing American organizations today. Nearly every issue of *Fortune*, *Business Week*, or *The Wall Street Journal* addresses some problem related to workplace diversity. Numerous articles, books, workshops, training programs, and college courses provide an abundance of information on understanding and managing diversity (cf. Bendick, Egan, & Lofhjelm, 2001; Cox, 2001; Kossek, Markel, & McHugh, 2003; Miller & Katz, 2002; Thiederman, 2003). The scholarly literature on diversity contains two main bodies of work. One area focuses on the development of conceptual frameworks for understanding diversity and its impact on organizational behavior and performance (e.g., De Meuse & Hostager, 2001; Mandell & Kohler-Gray, 1990; Thomas, 1990). The other area presents generalized prescriptions for effectively managing diversity (e.g., Cox, 1993; Piturro & Mahoney, 1992; Rynes & Rosen, 1994).

Despite the number of publications addressing diversity, relatively little research attention has been devoted to systematically measuring the effectiveness of diversity training activities (Comer & Solinman, 1996; Robertson, Kulick, & Pepper, 2001; Stockdale & Crosby, 2004). How do managers, training facilitators, and consultants know that the time and effort spent on diversity programs have made a positive impact on employees? How do administrators, teachers, and employers know that students completing a diversity course have gained an enhanced understanding and appreciation for diversity?

One of the few studies to present an instrument to scientifically measure the effectiveness of diversity training was published by De Meuse and Hostager (2001). Their *Workplace Diversity Survey* assesses diversity perceptions on the following five dimensions:

1. *Emotional Reactions* – initial, visceral responses to workplace diversity; an individual’s “gut feelings” about diversity in general;
2. *Behavioral Reactions* – what an individual does (or intends to do) in response to diversity; verbal and nonverbal actions;
3. *Judgments* – an individual’s normative evaluation of diversity; one’s value judgments regarding diversity in principle (e.g., is diversity good or bad);
4. *Personal Consequences* – beliefs regarding perceived outcomes on an individual level; an individual’s views on how diversity will affect them personally; and
5. *Organizational Outcomes* – beliefs regarding perceived outcomes on an organizational level; an individual’s views on how diversity will affect the company as a whole.

In addition, an overall effectiveness score is computed by summing the employee’s scores on those five dimensions.

The purpose of the present study was to measure the efficacy of a training diversity pilot program in a large manufacturing company using the *Workplace Diversity Survey*. The instrument was administered at three different times: (a) one week before the training occurred, (b) the week immediately after the course was completed, and (c) 90 days later. Depending upon the success of the pilot program, the diversity training would be implemented company-wide.

This research was designed to provide more meaningful data regarding program evaluation than earlier research. In one of the few studies that measured diversity program success, Rynes and Rosen (1994) simply polled human resource managers’ opinions. In their research, these authors asked 785 human resource managers to report how effective they perceived the diversity training. They found that 50% perceived their “programs as having either a mixed effect or a neutral or negligible effect.” Whereas, they observed another 18% reported them either “largely ineffective or extremely ineffective” (pp. 68; 70). While such opinions of managers may help identify broad problem areas, concrete measures of participant attitudes and perceptions are needed to more accurately measure the effectiveness of diversity training efforts. Further, concrete measures can improve understanding of various areas where diversity training may need to be corrected.

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants

Workshop participants consisted of 43 General Managers and 14 other management professionals at a manufacturing company based in the southeastern United States. Fifty participants were men; seven were women. To ensure anonymity, no other demographic data were collected. At the time of the research project, the company had \$1.5 billion in sales and 8,500 employees located at 70 facilities throughout North and South America. Locations in Canada, Mexico, and Chile were not included in the project. In addition, several executive-level managers and a pilot group had previously experienced the workshop and were not included in the data collection. Individuals who attended the workshop had titles such as Vice President, Six Sigma Director, Manufacturing Information Technology Manager, and Senior Human Resources Manager.

### Training Intervention

Workshops were conducted at four regional locations in the United States to economize travel costs. All workshops were delivered by the same two-person facilitation team, consisting of a white woman and a black man. The facilitators were employed by an outside consulting firm hired by the company to assist in setting direction for the diversity effort. The two facilitators

had previously conducted the same workshop for the senior management and pilot groups, and had assisted in defining the strategic positioning for the effort.

Workshop content included the company definition for diversity, exploration of stereotypes, identification of hidden forces that inhibit the progression of diverse employees within the organization, case studies, roleplays, and personal action planning. Skills practice focused on orientation for new staff members and on performance feedback and development skills. Length of the workshop was a day and a half; group sizes ranged from six to 18 attendees. The workshop was intended as the primary strategy to support the stated objectives of the organization which were to (a) integrate and embed diversity into the company culture, (b) reflect the diverse nature of the country and the community at all levels, and (c) provide career growth opportunities at all levels.

### Survey Instrument

The *Workplace Diversity Survey (WDS)* was administered to measure diversity training effectiveness (De Meuse & Hostager, 2001). The 20-item *WDS* assesses overall effectiveness, as well effectiveness on the following five dimensions: (a) emotional reactions, (b) judgments, (c) behavioral reactions, (d) personal consequences, and (e) organizational outcomes. Four items measure each dimension, using two positive and two negative statements for each one (see Table 1). Participants responded on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). For example, individuals responded to such positive statements as "I feel enthusiastic about diversity," "I support diversity efforts in organizations," and "Diversity is an asset for organizations." Negative statements include items such as "Diversity is expensive for organizations," "I feel frustrated with diversity," and "I resist organizational diversity efforts."

### Procedure

The survey was distributed via email at three different times: (a) one week prior to the workshop, (b) the week immediately following the workshop, and (c) 90 days after the workshop. Since participants responded through an electronic link, it was possible to identify respondents. Overall, 33 of the 57 workshop attendees responded for all three periods, for a response rate of 58%.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 presents the mean scores for each of the five *WDS* dimensions and the overall summary score for each of the three time periods. A series of one-way ANOVAs was performed to test the statistical significance of the differences in means. As can be observed, workshop participants had a statistically significant higher Overall Score following the training  $F(2,112) = 7.17, p < .001$ . The mean score increased from 18.15 for Time 1 to 26.03 and 26.83 for Times 2 and 3, respectively. In addition, participants reported a significantly higher score after the diversity training on the following four dimensions: (a) Emotional Reactions  $F(2,112) = 6.52, p < .01$ , (b) Judgments,  $F(2,112) = 3.92, p < .05$ , (c) Behavioral Reactions,  $F(2,112) = 11.24, p < .001$ , and (d) Organizational Outcomes,  $F(2,112) = 3.98, p < .05$ . The only dimension where diversity training had no appreciable effect was on Personal Consequences,  $F(2,112) = 2.65, n.s.$

**TABLE 1**  
**WORKPLACE DIVERSITY SURVEY**

Directions. Please circle the number which best reflects your view of diversity in the workplace for each of the following 20 items.

	1 Disagree	2 Disagree Somewhat	3 Neither Agree Nor Disagree	4 Agree Somewhat	5 Agree
1. I believe that diversity is fair.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Diversity is stressful for me.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I feel enthusiastic about diversity.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Diversity is expensive for organizations.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Diversity leads to harmony in organizations.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I feel frustrated with diversity.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel hopeful about diversity.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I believe that diversity is worthless.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I support diversity efforts in organizations.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I withdraw from organizational diversity efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Diversity is rewarding for me.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I feel resentful about diversity.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Diversity is an asset for organizations.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Diversity leads me to make personal sacrifices.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I participate in organizational diversity efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I resist organizational diversity efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I believe that diversity is good.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Diversity is unprofitable for organizations.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Diversity is enriching for me.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I believe that diversity is unjustified.	1	2	3	4	5

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When one examines the five dimensional scores more closely, it becomes apparent that the diversity training continued to positively impact the participants 90 days after the workshop. In fact, ratings actually increased from Time 2 (taken one week after the training) to Time 3 (90 days later) on four of the five dimensions, as well as for the overall score. One of the concerns that organizational leaders and training facilitators have pertains to the sustained effects of learning efforts (Hedge & Pulakos, 2002; Studer, 2003). The findings here suggest that this diversity intervention not only improved participant attitudes after the workshop, but continued up to three months later.

Although the increase in participant perceptions was fairly uniform across all five dimensions, the initial (pre-workshop) views were substantially higher on two dimensions. Scores on the Judgment ( $M = 5.03$ ) and Behavioral Reaction ( $M = 5.05$ )

**TABLE 2**  
**SUMMARY AND DIMENSIONAL MEAN SCORES ACROSS THREE TIME PERIODS**

WDS Score	Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	F-value
Emotional Reactions	2.73	4.65	4.91	6.52**
Judgments	5.03	6.50	6.29	3.92*
Behavioral Reactions	5.05	6.88	7.09	
11.24***				
Personal Consequences	2.73	3.65	4.26	2.65
Organizational Consequences	2.75	4.15	4.31	3.98*
OVERALL SCORE	18.15	26.03	26.83	
7.17***				

*Note.* Sample sizes are 40 (Time 1), 40 (Time 2), and 35 (Time 3).

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

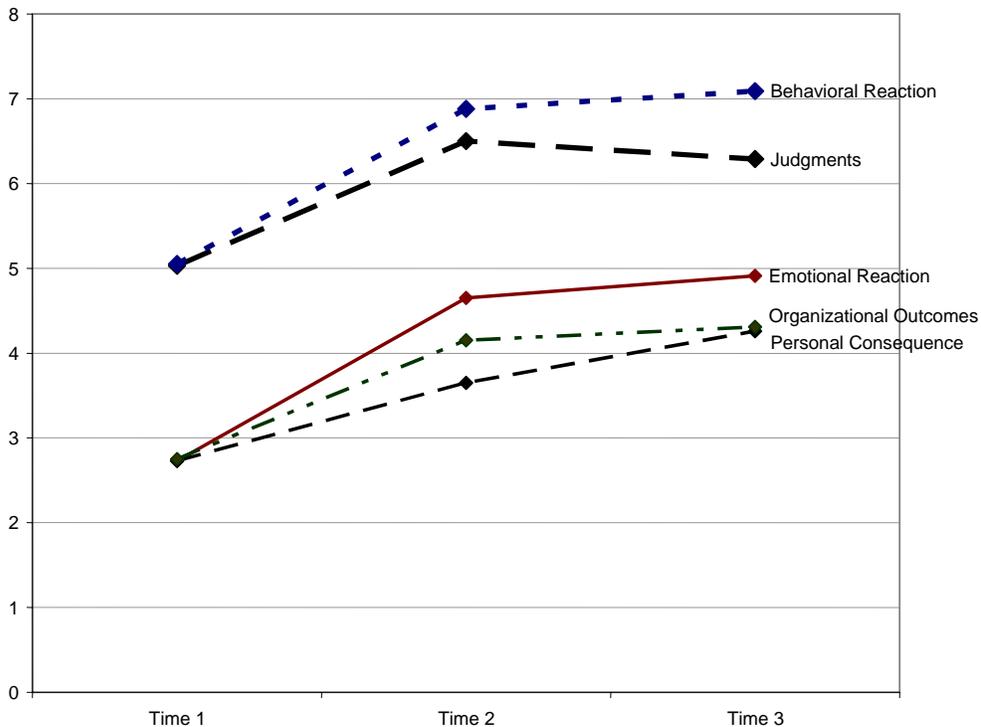
dimensions were more than two scale points higher than for Emotional Reactions ( $M = 2.73$ ), Personal Consequences ( $M = 2.73$ ), and Organizational Outcomes ( $M = 2.75$ ). This disparity was maintained after the diversity workshop as well (see Figure 1). Perhaps, the personal and organizational consequences of diversity were perceived more in a negative light because of job experiences with diversity in their organization (e.g., employees getting hired or promoted based on skin color rather than merit). Likewise, emotionally, the participants may harbor some negative sentiments regarding diversity. On the other hand, the behavioral reactions and judgments the employees expressed are more inner-directed and self-oriented. Hence, they may be more likely to rate themselves more favorably with regard to diversity. Regardless of the reason, it is reassuring that the *behavior* of employees appears to be so positively inclined toward diversity.

The results of this pilot study are encouraging. Based on these results, top management can make a rational, well informed decision whether to expand this diversity training program throughout the company. Organizational leaders can be confident that this training will positively affect attending employees' emotional reactions, behavioral reactions, judgments, and organizational outcomes. Further, these findings persist well after the workshop ends. This conclusion is not simply based on employee testimonials or promotional material depicted in a consultant's brochure. Rather, it is gleaned from a systematic measure designed to assess how employees perceived and react to diversity training. It suggests that the time and money spent on this intervention will be worth the investment.

Beyond the opportunity to glean data to examine the merits of diversity training, the initial involvement of senior management in diversity training has an additional benefit. It visibly demonstrates to employees throughout the company that this training is important. It nurtures an organizational culture that asserts diversity is a worthwhile pursuit for everyone there. One can develop the most stimulating and creative workshop content, select qualified trainers, and deliver the message in an inspiring manner. However, without the perceived support of executive management, such efforts are likely to fail (Studer, 2003).

This study provides support that the *Workplace Diversity Survey* can help ascertain the efficacy of diversity training. Ultimately, the effects of training need to endure much longer than 90 days. Nevertheless, this instrument represents a significant step in the systematic evaluation of diversity programs. Organizations should not simply assume that such training programs are successful (Bendick et al., 2001; Hostager & De Meuse, 2002; Hedge & Pulakos, 2002). An instrument such as the *Workplace Diversity Survey* also can provide academicians and researchers a scientific approach to investigate the effects of various diversity training techniques. The period of assuming that any type of diversity intervention is worthwhile is over. Both

practitioners and scholars have a useful tool to measure and monitor the effectiveness of diversity efforts.



**FIGURE 1. DIMENSIONAL MEAN SCORES ACROSS THREE TIME PERIODS**

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## **Where Have All the Leaders Gone? A Holistic Leadership Model for these Uncertain Times**

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*Abstract: After seeking the wisdom of “sages” about what is needed to be a leader in the changing economy, the themes that emerged were developed into a holistic model that builds on creating an environment where people want to work. It is a process model that emphasizes attributes important for making a living and making a life in these uncertain times.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The world has been a tumultuous place since 2000. The dot.com era that took over crashed spectacularly, yet its impact is and will be with us. The webbed world has blurred the lines between work and private life. The Information Age and an Internet-based platform combined with the fiber optic highway is flattening the world according to Tom Friedman (2005).

If all of this was not enough, the scandals that made stable companies such as Enron, WorldCom, and Arthur Andersen crumble highlighted the greed and privilege that can accompany leaders who lack strong personal moral frameworks. Meanwhile, the tsunami and hurricanes left thousands of people uncertain about their homes and their lives. These situations call for strong leadership. If we know leadership when we see it, then the lack of leadership also becomes apparent. Where have all the leaders gone?

Clearly, much work is needed to create the conditions for an effective work environment. While creating a quality culture for learning and working (Freed 2005) is the place to start, it becomes challenging to simultaneously make a living and make a life. We may be drowning in information, but we tend to be starving for wisdom.

The literature in the area of leadership is exploding (i.e. Albion 1997; Autry 1994; Bolman and Deal 1995; Briskin 1996; Burack 1999; Chatterjee 1998; Deal and Key 1998; Hawley 1993; Koestenbaum 1991; Kouzes and Posner 1999; Moxley 2000; Palmer 1996; Vaill 1998), and elements being advocated are often different than the traditional leadership models. The emphasis is clearly on developing more “soft skills” and less emphasis on the technical and analytical skills.

While the leadership theories and models of the past ( i.e. Trait Theory, The Ohio State University Studies, Life-Cycle Theory, The LPC theory of leadership, and Hersey and Blanchard Model ) (i.e. Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson 1996) provide historical context and reflect how organizations have evolved, they seem too simplistic for the complexities that exist in organizations and the environments in which they operate. Conventional organizations are going away and nontraditional organizations that started with the dot.com boom are continuing to grow. The model and mind-set of the mass production era is incongruent with the needs and desires of people currently in the workplace (Reich 2000; Zuboff and Maxmim, 2002).

While Goleman (1998) makes a strong case for the soft skills in his work on emotional intelligence, there is a need to take this concept further as the aging baby boomers continue to live

longer and search for meaning and purpose. These dynamics are causing new forms of leadership to emerge and it is time to expand leadership skills into some new areas. Newer contributions to the field are advocating concepts such as spirituality (i.e. Biberman and Whitty 2000; Schachter-Shalomi and Miller 1995), imagination and creativity (Csikszentmihalyi 1996; Greene 1995; **Johnson 1993**), and **wisdom (Leider and Shapiro 2002; Marcic 1997; Vaill 1998)**. The current events of the past several years continue to remind us that the world has changed and these external environmental changes have drastically affected organizations and the people in them. According to Wheatley (2005), there is a need for many more storytellers. People who have insight from years of experience can tell stories to provide organizational memories through these uncertain times. From this study, emerges a story based on the wisdom from sages.

### **The New Adulthood in Uncertain Times**

As Bob Dylan wrote in the 1960s, "The times they are a-changing." These words seem as true in 2005 as when they were written. The economy is changing which affects organizations and the people who work within them. This new economy is based on innovations at an increasingly rapid pace. Consumers may have numerous choices because of technology and globalization, but in the end do we have better lives? (Reich 2000; Zuboff and Maxmim 2002) Many of our modern management practices came from the Industrial Age based on command and control where people are viewed as expenses and machines as assets. The motivational philosophy of carrots (rewards) and sticks (punishments) drives fear into organizations. As organizations move to the Knowledge Age, people need to be inspired from within by the meaningfulness of work. "Motivation is an Industrial Age concept whereas inspiration is a knowledge worker concept, meaning motivation from within" (Covey 2006, p. 48).

Friedman (2005) recently identified ten forces he believes have flattened the world. These forces have contributed to the new economy in which organizations operate and people live: the falling of the Berlin Wall; Netscape going public; the proliferation of work flow software; self-organizing communities; outsourcing; offshoring; supply-chaining; insourcing; in-forming (Google and Yahoo) and wireless and mobile mentality. All of these forces can positively and negatively affect how people think, feel, and act. They influence how people work and live.

Another powerful force to be reckoned with revolves around demographic trends. In 1900, the average life expectancy was about 47 years. Today, the average life span in the United States is 77 years. For people born since 1946, large numbers are venturing into this new adulthood for the first time. Roughly, 10,000 baby boomers are crossing over the middle-age line daily and few have probably thought about how to thrive after 55. This new life phase provides the possibility of a new mentality. Since people are living longer, they want and need different things from workplaces.

The title of the book, *Retiring Retirement: A New Roadmap for Longevity and Quality Living*, by Burack and Burack (2002) reinforces the fact that this is the time to think differently about aging. This new adulthood includes preparing for emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual needs as well as financial security. This new mentality is different from the thinking that led up to midlife. Zuboff (2004) characterizes early adulthood as a phase where the "need to earn a place in society kicks in: education, career, family, status, recognition, and achievement. Once those are accomplished, it used to be time to die. Now more decades stretch ahead" (p. 92). Planning for the future is more than having enough money and this realization should be incorporated into leadership and career development. Instead of talking about work/life balance, the goal becomes one of integrating work and life needs. There is a need for a viewing leadership of one's life and work holistically.

## METHOD

Since an increasing amount of research is being devoted to leadership, the challenge becomes what to read, what model to adopt, how to differentiate or prioritize the themes being advocated. Each author appears to advocate one message, but what to do with that message is the question. In fact, this is reinforced by the title of Marcus Buckingham's latest book *One Thing You Need to Know* (2005).

In order to answer this question, sages were contacted to "pick their brains" about the leadership characteristics and attributes needed by people to lead organizations and to lead successful lives in the changing economy. Using the definition as described by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Ronald Miller in their book *From Age-ing to Sage-ing: A Profound New Vision of Growing Older* (1995), a "sage" is described as a person who:

- Constitutes wise, prudent leadership
- Offers their experiences and wisdom for the welfare of society
- Expresses their hope in the future by the contributions they make for the generations that come after them
- Gives generously with encouragement
- Mentors younger people who are drawn to their wisdom, and
- Models a life that finds validation, self-worth, and meaning from within.

Email messages were sent out to the "sages" with a one-page attachment explaining the study. They were asked if they would be willing to participate in a 30-minute telephone interview. The high response rate (n=40/42) indicated that the people identified were interested in sharing their knowledge with others. Initially, the list consisted of 12 highly recognized authors in the field of leadership. The list continued to grow through recommendations of the interviewees. While almost all of the sages are authors, 18 are academicians, 17 are executive coaches, and five are former CEOs (See Table 1). The executive coaches are primarily known for their efforts on helping people find meaning in their life and work. Many of these coaches have been identified by the *Wall Street Journal* and *Forbes* as some of the top executive coaches in the country.

The driving motivation for this study was to seek the wisdom of sages; people old enough to be reflective on their work and life experiences. Since the sages in this study are intimately familiar with workplace issues, the goal was to seek their wisdom about what is needed to be a leader in the challenging and changing world of work referred to by Peter Vaill as *permanent white water* (1997). It is important to exploit the knowledge of wisdom keepers who are also experts. Without studies such as this, we are missing opportunities to apply useful knowledge from people who have the power of reflection. Five broad questions were asked of these authorities, but the focus of this paper is on the leadership characteristics needed in order to sustain making a living and making a life. The themes that emerged from the sage interviews have been developed into a holistic model.

## Findings

Using the constant comparative method for discovering theory from data (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Lincoln and Guba 1985), 12 major themes emerged across interviews. These themes have been summarized into constructs as listed in Table 1.

**TABLE 1**  
**CONSRUCTS FOR A HOLISTIC LEADERSHIP MODEL**

Self-insight	Recognizing strengths and opportunities for improvement through feedback and self-exploration.
Spirituality	Finding meaning and purpose to life. Developing the inner strength. Discovering one's soul.
Wisdom	Reflecting on experience to gain more understanding.
Experience	Incorporating a variety of experiences to enhance the other constructs.
Vision	Valuing aspirations and confidence. Forward thinking and proactive both professionally and personally.
Passion	Committing energy focused interest to causes and goals.
Creativity	Thinking and behaving differently. Using the imagination to be innovative.
Mentoring	Sharing knowledge with others. Appreciating the wisdom gained from experience.
Citizenship	Making holistic ethical decisions that go beyond the bottom-line. Doing well by doing good. Creating a caring community.
Courage	Involving one's heart and instincts in the decision making process.
Learning	Transferring information into knowledge through application.
Authenticity	Displaying genuine and honest behaviors and communication.

While individually these constructs are not necessarily new to the leadership literature, viewing these concepts holistically is a new perspective. Since these constructs are interdependent and reinforcing, each of them increases in value for helping people integrate life and work. Each construct affects another, but there is no order or priority. After analyzing each construct, it became apparent that the model needed to reflect a “web” because they are all woven together. Many constructs are embedded in several others and the power of the model comes from understanding that the constructs have to be viewed as a whole. This is a good example of synergy where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Since self-insight is the *heart* of the model, the web serves as “arteries” pumping life into the system; going in and out of the “heart.” Without self-insight, the constructs are not likely to come alive and each part is weakened. Figure 1 illustrates the constructs for creating an environment for peak leadership performance and organizational development.

### **Self-Insight**

One clear theme was the emphasis on qualitative rather than quantitative skills. No interviewee stressed spending more time and energy on the technical and analytical skills while every person interviewed talked about the value of being more self-aware. While self-awareness is a common concept in the literature, self-insight is thought of as a continuum that ranges from being aware to recognizing what one can accomplish and gaining confidence (London 2002). The people in this study had creative ways on how to gain insight. They suggested journaling, personal retreats, meditation, yoga, Thai Chi, or centering prayer. It is essential to quiet the mind in order to gain greater clarity and a broader perspective. As stated by one sage, “Find ways to get to a higher ground so that you have a better view.”

Insight can also be gained through self-assessment and feedback. The Myers-Briggs Personality Indicator is often used to obtain feedback based on self-reported information. There are a variety of feedback techniques to gain input from others (Ashford and Cummings 1983; Butler and Winne 1995; Huba and Freed 2000) such as a Plus/Delta tool. The sages almost always felt that self-insight is the *heart* of the other constructs which is why it is located at the center of the model. All of the constructs flow in and out to inform self-insight. When people are committed to continuous improvement on a personal level, they are less threatened by feedback and have a strong motivation to improve. As people increase their self-awareness and self-insight, they are more in touch with their inner selves and their desire for having purpose and a more meaningful life

## **Spirituality**

For the purposes of this study, spirituality was defined as meaningfulness, purpose, soul, or connectedness (i.e. Bolman and Deal 1995; Neal 1997); to something or someone beyond material things. This interpretation includes religion, but is not exclusive to religion. In fact, in the recent *Fortune* article (Colvin, 2006) on the 100 best companies to work for based on employee surveys, it was reported that finding a sense of purpose in one's work was a common denominator among these companies.

Much has been written about how leaders need to inspire hope in others. Hope is defined by the American Heritage Dictionary as "a wish or desire accompanied by confident expectation of its fulfillment." To wish or hope for something is to aspire it. Aspire comes from the Latin root meaning "breathe," which is also connected to the word spirit. The breath, in many faith traditions is part of a spirit. Peter Senge defines leadership as the ability "to breathe life into something or someone" (Personal Communication, 2002). It is a sense of spirituality that breathes life into the other constructs.

Vaill (1998) concluded that "there is a growing consensus that learning for leadership needs to occur at this quite personal and profound level of spirituality if a person is to have resources and the resilience to lead under trying modern conditions" (p. 95).

One sage stated, "You can't give what you don't have. Therefore, it all starts with the heart and building an inner strength." After self-insight, there was a strong consensus that people need to conduct the inner work necessary to effectively lead others. It is in the process of conducting the inner work that wisdom often emerges.

## **Wisdom**

Wisdom comes from the root word meaning "to know" (Srivastva and Cooperrider 1998). According to one of the sages, wisdom is "being able to access what's really important in the moment." Several of the sages expressed how putting in time and gaining experience was not the same as reflecting upon one's work and gaining wisdom. Although age provides more experience of coping with adversity, just getting older does not guarantee wisdom.

Sharing wisdom is one way for people to find meaning both professionally and personally. Since wisdom is dependent on the power of reflection, the sages stressed how leaders need to learn and to practice methods of reflecting. The same methods used to gain self-insight and to reduce the perception of stress can be used for reflection: journaling, meditating, and praying. Finding ways to reflect and to learn from previous experiences can lead to enlightenment and fulfillment. Learning how to reflect and making the time to practice one or more of these methods is essential in leading an effective life. Perhaps Winston Churchill said it best, "We are all happier in many ways when we are old than when we young. The young sow wild oats. The old grow sage" (Vaillant 2002 p. 256).

**Figure 1**  
**HOLISTIC MODEL OF ENLIGHTENED LEADERSHIP**  
**Model**

Characteristics of a Quality Culture and Constructs of Enlightened Leadership		Model		Outcomes
Changing the questions	Self-insight			Peak Performance for Leadership and Organizational Development
Focusing on learner-centeredness	Spirituality			
Emphasizing self-awareness	Wisdom			
Communicating openly and honestly	Experience			
Cultivating relationships	Mentoring			
Sharing value systems	Vision			
Practicing reflection	Passion			
Making connections	Creativity			
Achieving peak performance	Mentoring			
Serving the community	Citizenship			
Not knowing the answers	Courage			
	Encourage			
	Authenticit			

Freed (2005)

## **Experience**

These sages described how a sense of spirituality often leads to wisdom and is based on experience. Reflecting on these experiences and learning from them is more important than the experience itself. Another theme that emerged was the significance of integrating activities that help people develop the self-awareness and reflection that leads to wisdom. The model reflects how the constructs are woven together; each having an impact on the others. Learning how to operationalize one construct actually enhances several constructs.

Creating organizations to meet the wants and needs of these uncertain times for people in the new adulthood is necessary. Leaders need to be social architects and pay attention to the constructs of this model. Designing, structuring, and shaping organizations to create more meaning is a significant role of leaders. In order for people to perform at their peak performance, leaders need to create environments where people are encouraged to be grow and have a vision for themselves for the future; to be creative and to use their imagination; where they can take risks and demonstrate courage; where they can continue to learn and grow; where they can find meaning and renew their inner strength; and where they are valued for their experience and wisdom.

## **Vision**

Vision was mentioned throughout the interviews, but often in a different way. The sages talked about having a vision for life as well as work. This included focusing on an inner life as well as a work and family life (Leider 1997; Warren 2002). They talked about vision as a way of thinking of the bigger picture that is beyond organizations such as building communities and creating dialogues and conversations around important questions that need asking.

Vision is also important in thinking about this new adulthood. If we are what we do and we don't do it anymore, then who are we? According to the sages, answering long-term personal questions should start earlier rather than later in life so that people can be better leaders of their own destinies. Engaging in visioning exercises is one way to start thinking about the whole of life. Sages talked about finding a purpose and doing work, even volunteer work that is meaningful. This is directly related to one's self-insight and being intentional about a personal vision. One sage said, "The key question is: Why do I get up in the morning (purpose)? The answer should drive one's life and work."

## **Passion**

One common theme among the sages was the significance of passion. The word "enthusiasm" comes from the Greek, *enthousiasmos*—to be possessed—*en theos*, "in God" (Leider and Shapiro 2004). Discovering what one is enthusiastic or "in God" about should be a goal. One sage stated that "to be a leader is to be awake and alert." Finding one's calling allows people to engage in meaningful work in which they contribute their gifts and talents. Being passionate enhances energy and commitment devoted to tasks. Sages talked about the value of being involved in activities both in the workplace and in the community with a desire to make a difference. Passion supports creativity, stimulates learning, and breathes life into projects. Passion can breathe life into others through mentoring and teaching (Soloman 1993).

Interestingly, several of the sages mentioned how valuable it is as a leader and as an enlightened person to acknowledge the fear of dying or the deeply ingrained habit of denying the presence of death. Death puts life into perspective. Having a healthy perspective of dying as a key to living was a theme throughout most of the interviews. According to one sage, "Denying one's death as an individual leads to self-deception and inauthenticity. Whereas recognizing, accepting, confronting, and integrating death leads to authenticity, meaning, and courage." In other words,

“When you learn how to die, you learn how to live” (Albom 1997, p. 82). Steven Jobs, CEO of Apple Computer and Pixar Animation Studios, concluded, “Death is very likely the single best invention of Life. It is Life’s change agent” (Jobs 2005 p. 32).

### **Creativity**

According to the sages in this study, creativity (Csikszentmihalyi 1996) and imagination (Greene 1995) are critical leadership development in the new economy. Innovations come about by thinking differently and this takes creativity. Continuous improvement is based on thinking “outside of the box” and encouraging paradigm shifts. Changing perspectives helps to see new solutions to new and old problems. Since technology is “flattening the world,” the issues facing organizations will depend on creative solutions and human imagination. This holistic view of these leadership constructs depends on demonstrating creativity. Creating an environment that encourages and rewards imagination is necessary. Creativity is needed to lead organizations in these uncertain times and to create fulfilling and meaningful lives.

The new adulthood is uncharted territory full of challenges and opportunities as people explore what it means to grow older gracefully. Americans are obsessed with aging, but more emphasis needs to be placed on “sage-ing” or “approaching life filled with new possibilities, enriched with wisdom and learning gleaned from life experience” ([www.spiritualeldering.org](http://www.spiritualeldering.org)). Imagine how workplaces and the people within them would benefit by utilizing sages. Organizations that do not value their people with history and wisdom are missing opportunities to exploit knowledge that is lost when they are no longer in the organization. One way to capitalize on this wisdom is to encourage and reward people to mentor others.

### **Mentoring**

Mentoring has been an important element in leadership development for years, but the sages partnered the term with eldering to take advantage of wisdom within the workplace. Most of them mentioned how valuable it is for people to reflect on their experiences and share that experience with others. This is also an important theme in the books written by these sages (Autry 2002; Burack and Burack 2002; Leider and Shapiro 2002; Schachter-Shalomi and Miller 1995). Passing on knowledge to others and helping them to learn is one of the keys to “sage-ing.” Leaving a legacy is essential in continuing to feel value and self-worth.

Several of the sages mentioned the metaphor of tribes and sitting at the fire listening to elders pass on their wisdom. They suggested that this practice is missing and organizations and communities are hurt because of it. Appreciating elders and seeking their advice on professional and personal issues should be encouraged. This expression might be applicable: “You don’t miss what you don’t know.” Most people have lived at a time when the sense of community is being lost. This concept was summarized in Putnam’s *Bowling Alone* (2000). Based on scholarly research, Putnam makes a strong case that the United States has lost much of the social glue that once allowed society to have communities. He believes we are in danger of becoming a nation of strangers to one another with inadequate social bonds. Sharing knowledge and learning skills from mentors or elders is a valuable way to create social bonds that are important to both people and organizations in building a sense of community.

### **Citizenship**

It is not surprising that acting ethically and being good stewards emerged as another element for healthy organizations and a life well lived. Since spirituality is defined as meaningfulness and connectedness, citizenship refers to the recognition of being connected to some cause or to someone larger than oneself. It is understanding the need to create a caring community and it is

ethical to care about one another and to be in relationship with one another (Giroux and McLaren 1986; Noddings, 2002). While the Internet and Worldwide Web has literally connected people from countries around the world and redefined globalization, it can be shallow when used to communicate with each other. Email communication lacks the sense of authenticity since there is no visual, tone, or inflection. Even though people are “connected,” they often feel disconnected because email is being used too often to communicate and can be a liability in building effective relationships.

Given the current business scandals and recent trials, leaders need to be good citizens and the sages described different ways of being productive citizens. They talked about Generativity or taking care of the next generation. Volunteering and giving back to communities is not just important for organizations, but essential for feeling valued and it contributes to one’s legacy. There comes a time when the focus changes from how high one is climbing the corporate ladder to thinking about what one is leaving behind.

In *Outliving the Self*, John Kotre summarizes Generativity in this way, “To invest one’s substance in forms of life and work that will outlive the self” (1984 p. 10). As most of the sages pointed out, people get so caught up in *doing* that they often don’t know what to do with themselves when they are not working. More time needs to be spent finding interests beyond one’s work that outlives the self and this often takes courage and getting out of one’s comfort zone.

### **Courage**

*Courage* is derived from the French word for “heart” (Srivastva and Cooperrider 1998). While risk propensity is often discussed in leadership literature, these sages talked about the importance of being courageous in these turbulent times. Having passion and showing compassion often takes courage (i.e. Kouzes and Posner 1999; Stampatori 2004) and this is different than taking risks. Courage is a strong emotional commitment that involves the heart. Authors have been encouraging the heart (Kouzes and Posner 1999), but viewing this as courage is a new perspective. It takes courage to shift one’s paradigm. In fact, it takes courage to incorporate many of the constructs being advocated by the sages in this study.

On a personal level, several of the sages mentioned learning about the transitions of life. It takes courage to understand the highs and the lows of life. Realizing the phases of adult development and the options and decisions that accompany each stage is important. As people live longer, there is more time to experience disengagement, disidentification, disenchantment, and disorientation (Bridges 1980). Endings of anything (i.e. career, marriages) are experiences of dying and it takes courage to deal with the consequences associated with transitions. In these turbulent times of stress, alienation, and burnout, real wisdom comes from learning how to work through life’s transitions. Maya Angelo said it this way, “Without courage, you can’t practice any other virtue consistently: be consistently fair, consistently just, consistently merciful, consistently loving” (Pierre 2005, p. B1).

### **Learning**

The sages emphasized different aspects of learning such as self-learning and developing a commitment to life-long learning. Learning often comes from reflecting on all of the constructs. As Vaill (1997) points out, “learning is a way of being.” When people stop learning, they quickly become outdated and disconnected. Life-long learning is a key requirement to successful living, not to mention successful leadership (Whetten and Cameron 2005). All of the previous constructs involve learning new skills or unlearning some skills that are counterproductive to living and working in the current environment. “Managerial leadership is not learned; it is learning. That is its essence” (Vaill 1998 p. 121). It involves learning to be more self-aware and using that

feedback for self improvement is important. Quality is personal and learning is involved in every aspect of continuous improvement.

John Gardner, author of *Self-Renewal: The Individual and the Innovative Society* (1995) captured the spirit of learning expressed by many of the sages by saying, “Don’t set out in life to be an *interesting* person; set out to be an *interested* person.” Learning people learn until they die, because they see learning as part of the reason for living.

For example, creativity can be used in seeking out the advice of mentors and sages and showing them how much their experiences are valued. Learning that “doing the right thing” is the essence of developing personal integrity and authenticity.

### **Authenticity**

Authenticity includes aspects such as honesty, integrity, and sincerity. It is often described as being “real” and the sages emphasized that it is almost impossible to practice any of the other constructs previously described without being genuine. It is hard to be passionate, encourage and have courage, be creative and imaginative (Greene 1995; Johnson 1993), and be committed to continuous learning without being genuine and authentic (Ayim 1997). It is the layer of realism that makes the constructs believable and influential. Emotional intelligence (Goleman 1998) is living an authentic life based on self-awareness and empathy. Authentic leaders “remain focused on where they are going (vision), but never lose sight of where they came from” (Goffee and Jones 2005, p. 88). Since authenticity reflects aspects of the leader’s inner self, it can’t be an act. Therefore, behaviors must consistently embody beliefs and values.

Developing the inner soul so as to sustain self would be a waste of time without a genuine concern for self and others. During the conversations with sages, authenticity kept winding in, out, and around all of the topics being discussed. In fact, several sages talked about the problems caused by poor leaders. One sage expressed a real concern about the return of command and control leadership that drives in fear instead of driving out fear as advocated by Deming (1986). In contrast, the holistic model is based on creating a more humane workplace where people want to work and enables them to create a life of purpose beyond work.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Yet, it is not enough for leaders to create an environment where people want to work. This study expands the concept into new areas by drawing attention to aspects of leaders needed to sustain their effectiveness and their life balance. While the constructs in this study are often discussed individually, this study treats them holistically emphasizing how one construct affects all of the others. When viewed in this way, there is no hierarchy or priority. The focus is on realizing the “web” of influences upon living a life others want to follow and a life that is personally fulfilling. As people lead others in organizations and think about leading themselves into new phases of life, all of these constructs need to be considered as important. Some of these interrelationships are summarized by Csikszentmihalyi (1996):

Even though personal creativity may not lead to fame and fortune, it can do something that from the individual’s point of view is even more important: make day-to-day experiences more vivid, more enjoyable, more rewarding. When we live creatively, boredom is banished and every moment holds the promise of a fresh discovery. Whether or not these discoveries enrich the world beyond our personal lives, living creatively, links us with the process of evolution” (p. 344).

If “creativity is the muscle of the soul” (Seaward 2005), woven within the construct of creativity is the significance of living passionately, continuing to learn and grow, having a vision

for life that is authentic, and being rewarded for acting as good citizens. When we live and work with creativity and passion, we feel connected to others and breathe life into people and projects. Holistic leaders know themselves, know their boundaries, know their gifts and are generous. They focus on being human *beings* more than on their human *doings*. In creating these organizations, it may be important to examine reward systems to determine what behaviors are being rewarded and reinforced. If the strategy is to become a more humane economy and more balanced society, organizations will have to be reshaped by leaders responsible for designing these organizations and the reward systems.

This kind of leadership is a calling. Where have all the leaders gone? There is a call for holistic leaders at this time:

The need for new leadership is urgent. It is needed in communities everywhere. We need leaders who know how to nourish and rely on the innate creativity, freedom, generosity, and caring of people. We need leaders who are life affirming rather than life destroying ... New leadership becomes a central and pressing challenge of our time” (Wheatley 2005 p. 164).

**TABLE 2  
LIST OF SAGES**

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Role</b>
Russ Ackoff	Academic	Barry Heerman	Executive Coach
Patricia Adson	Executive coach	Peter	Academic
Ray Anderson	Former CEO	Koetstenbaum	
Jim Autry	Former CEO	Richard Leider	Executive Coach
Richard Barrett	Executive Coach	Yvonna Lincoln	Academic
Warren Bennis	Academic	Dorothy Marcic	Academic
Peter Block	Academic	Russ Moxley	Executive Coach
Lee Bolman	Academic	Judi Neal	Academic
Marilyn Blair	Executive Coach	David Noer	Executive Coach
William Bridges	Academic & Executive Coach	Robert Ouimet	Current CEO
		Parker Palmer	Academic
Juanita Brown	Executive Coach	Dan Peterson	Executive Coach
Elmer Burack	Academic	John Renesch	Executive Coach
David Campbell	Academic & Executive Coach	Peter Senge	Academic
		William Thomas	Current CEO
Kim Cameron	Academic	Michael Thompson	Executive Coach
Terry Deal	Academic	Peter Vaill	Academic
Andre Delbecq	Academic	Margaret Wheatley	Academic
Anne Doshier	Executive Coach	David Whetten	Academic
Max DuPree	Former CEO	Zalman Schachter-Shalomi	Academic
Ann Fabor	Executive Coach		
Marshall Goldsmith	Executive Coach	Shoshana Zuboff	Academic

**\*Note: Additional details on the research group and questions can be obtained by contacting the author.**

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## Promoting Ethical Corporate Behavior in a Global Context

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*Abstract: The goal of this paper is to provide executives with actionable strategies for promoting ethical corporate behavior through the recognition, understanding, and management of the social comparison process. To that end, we discuss how social comparison may influence the behavior of managers in ethical contexts and particularly how errors in social comparison (like pluralistic ignorance and false consensus) may increase the number of ethical dilemmas in organizations. We suggest that the appropriate management of social comparison could limit the occurrence of unethical behavior in organizations. We conclude with recommendations for executive actions to initiate programs that may facilitate the development of an ethical corporate culture by emphasizing managerial accountability.*

“Wrong may be mainstream these days but that doesn't make it right.”  
(Parker 2001)

The Sarbanes Oxley Act of 2002 has increased the transparency in mechanisms of external corporate governance designed for oversight of executive ethical behavior. The mechanisms of internal corporate governance, designed for oversight of managerial ethical behavior, are however still vulnerable to moral hazards of managerial misconduct as “hierarchy is the ultimate court of appeal” in organizations Williamson 1994). Although the U.S. Federal Sentencing Guidelines of 1991 allowed for substantially reduced fines and penalties for companies with established programs for ethical education, training and enforcement, the mushrooming of these programs over the last decade or so has not prevented major occurrences of managerial misconduct that have attracted a great deal of public attention in the media.

The concerted nature of such managerial misconduct indicates that the managers made poor judgments when comparing each other's behavioral norms, while neglecting to engage in moral reasoning about the very acts. The resulting spread on unethical behavior, engendered by errors in managerial judgment, shows how biased social comparison may easily make inappropriate behavior become mainstream within groups of managers and employees (as illustrated in the quote under the title of this paper).

Errors that individuals make in social comparison judgments are well known in psychological research, but are seldom a topic of ethics compliance programs. It has been suggested that a plethora of factors influence the resolution of employees' ‘personal-professional’ moral dilemmas, but these authors omit the profound effect that social comparison may have on managerial ethical choice in the face of this dilemma (Trevino, Hartman, Brown 2000). The purpose of this paper is to integrate past research findings related to the influence of social comparison on ethical decision-making in organizations, with the objective of providing practical guidance to executives on effective ways of addressing these issues.

## What is Social Comparison?

Social comparison occurs when a manager seeks information about his or her behavior by looking to another person (whom we call a referent other). Interest in this topic has remained steady since Leon Festinger first proposed a theory of social comparison in the early 1950's (Festinger, 1954). Festinger postulated that social comparison occurs because of an innate need to evaluate our opinions, abilities, and behaviors in comparison to those of others. Making this comparison assists in assigning meaning to our opinions, abilities, and behaviors. For example, a manager in the organization may receive ratings of "outstanding" on all of the dimensions of a performance evaluation, and on the surface, one might think the manager was doing outstanding work. This might be confirmed if the manager compared the appraisal information to that of others to find that others received lower ratings (e.g., "good"). Alternatively, if the same manager determined that other managers received "outstanding" on all of the dimensions of their performance appraisals, the manager may question how well he or she is actually performing. In essence, this would facilitate a reevaluation of the term "outstanding" due to the social comparison process.

## To Whom do Managers Compare Themselves?

Understanding the dynamics of a managers' choice of referents is a key issue in understanding social comparison in an ethical context. In such situations, managers may turn to any number of referents, including their colleagues, superiors, and even others that work outside the organization. Past studies of referent selection have supported two important considerations in choosing a referent other: 1) the availability of the referent information (e.g., ease with which observation of behavior is available, prominence in the organization, proximity in the organization to the manager) and 2) the relevance of the referent information (e.g., how similar the referent is to the manager, individual motivational issues such as whether imitating the referent might lead to rewards) (Fulik & Ambrose 1992).

In terms of both availability and relevance, comparison to one's colleagues is expected. For example, it is often easiest to observe colleagues and they are often most similar to the employee in terms of job status. Indeed, research has found that employees and managers compare to their peers when looking for information that is specific to the job (or position) in the organization (Shah 1998). This suggests when considering the ethical standing of behaviors that are specific to one's job, he or she would compare to others doing the same job.

However, considering only the role of colleagues would not fully incorporate the situational determinants of referent selection, particularly in terms of referent relevance. When they can obtain referent information from sources at higher levels of an organization, employees and managers may value that information to a greater extent, because of the political value of aligning one's actions with those of senior managers and executives of an organization (Byrne 1971). Moreover, when the behavior in question is not necessarily limited to the scope of a specific position in the job (e.g., where the actions on the job may have more far-reaching organizational impact), a common referent will likely be a senior manager or executive of the organization, as managers may likely perceive that these individuals represent the entrenched and espoused ethical culture of the organization.

Managers can also compare to a "self-referent," where they compare their behaviors to their personal goals. This phenomenon is related to the "two-selves" problem that has seen a resurgence in management research. The two-selves problem emerges in situations where managers feel social pressure to do the same thing they think others would do, but privately they want to do something different. In the case of ethical behavior, managers may *want* to act unethically, because they observe other managers in the organization acting unethically and want to fit in, but know they *should* act ethically. Under what circumstances will managers choose to

behave in the way that they want to act rather than in the way that they should act? Researchers have suggested that in situations of low accountability, where there is less perceived need to justify one's behavior, managers will be more likely to choose behavior in which they *want* to engage (Bazerman, Tenbrunsel & Wade-Benzoni, 1998).

### Adding Challenges: Errors in Social Comparison

One of the underlying assumptions of the preceding discussion has been that managers may err in choosing appropriate referents and/or norms of behavior, but always make accurate comparisons with others. Unfortunately, there is a growing body of research that suggests that this is not always the case (Halbesleben & Buckley 2004).

FIGURE 1

#### THE IMPACT OF PLURALISTIC IGNORANCE AND FALSE CONSENSUS ON ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING

##### Social Comparison Phenomena

	<b>Pluralistic Ignorance</b>	<b>False Consensus</b>
<i>Functional</i>	<p><b>May lead managers to act ethically even if they might otherwise act unethically</b></p> <p>(e.g., observation of ethical behavior might lead one to mistakenly assume others act ethically)</p>	<p><b>Justifies ethical behavior that one would have engaged in anyway</b></p> <p>(e.g., everyone else is acting ethically, I'm not any different from anyone else)</p>
<i>Dysfunctional</i>	<p><b>May lead managers to act unethically even if they might otherwise act ethically</b></p> <p>(e.g., observation of unethical behavior might lead one to mistakenly assume others act unethically)</p>	<p><b>Justifies unethical behavior that one would have engaged in anyway</b></p> <p>(e.g., everyone else is acting unethically, I'm not any different from anyone else)</p>

I may be unethical, but I'm just like most others: false consensus. One social comparison error, called false consensus, occurs when the manager believes that he or she is acting similarly to most other managers. False consensus is the tendency for managers to overestimate support for their own position, while underestimating support for an opposite position (Marks & Miller 1924). As a result of overestimating support for a position, a manager is led to believe there is greater similarity between her/him and others than actually exists. This misperception leads to justification for continued dysfunctional behavior. Given the incorrect assessment of others' behavior, the manager bases his or her choice on a faulty premise that his or her ethical behavior is representative of the majority of other managers.

For example, consider an organization that is dumping toxic chemicals through its wastewater into a local river. The manager of this organization may perceive most other

organizations also dump toxic chemical waste, but may not be aware his/her perceptions are an overestimation. In other words, most others are not dumping chemical waste—at least not as much as the manager believes. Nonetheless, the organization may continue to dump chemical waste, as the manager is convinced that such behavior is justified given the (misperceived) similar behavior of others.

As Figure 1 suggests, false consensus can serve either a functional or dysfunctional role in terms of ethical decision-making. The example above illustrates the dysfunctional influence of false consensus, where the overestimation refers to unethical behavior. On the other hand, a manager could overestimate the likelihood of ethical behavior, leading the manager to reaffirm his or her commitment to ethical behavior. Executives, through the development of an ethical culture, can help encourage employees and managers to think about their ethical behavior as consistent with the norms in the organization. Such thinking, even if it is the result of false consensus, can increase the likelihood of ethical behavior.

*I'm ethical, but most others are not: pluralistic ignorance.* A more pervasive error of social comparison, pluralistic ignorance, occurs when managers mistakenly believe they are alone (or in minority) in their perceptions in terms of the ethical assessment of the situation. The opening quote illustrates such a misperception. While she did not think fudging numbers was ethical, she mistakenly believed that most others thought it was an acceptable and ethical form of behavior.

Research exploring pluralistic ignorance in ethical standards of organizations can be linked back to work in the 1960's. In a survey of executives, Baumhart reported most American business executives perceived themselves as ethical, while perceiving that most other business executives were unethical (Baumhart 1961). Buckley, Harvey, and Wiese argued that one mechanism leading to such prevalent overestimation of unethical behavior stems from the media's heavy coverage of the unethical behavior by the minority of business executives (Buckley, Harvey & Wiese 2004). On the one hand, stories of executive unethical behavior have been nearly inescapable to anyone who regularly watches national or local news sources, particularly those interested in business-related news. On the other hand, it is rare to hear about stories commending the model examples of executive ethical behavior and corporate social responsibility. This can lead to an overestimation of the prevalence of unethical behavior on the part of executives, setting up an inaccurate social comparison situation.

These findings of pervasive self-enhancement appear to beg the question: if every manager is really ethical, then why do unethical behaviors occur? The key to answering this question may be in examining the behavior that results from pluralistic ignorance. A number of researchers suggested when people experience pluralistic ignorance, they adjust their behavior to fit with the perceived group norm, rather than realizing they are mistaken about how others feel (Halbesleben & Buckley forthcoming). Mapped on to the employee level, pluralistic ignorance may lead to the development of barriers against employee attempts to stop unethical behavior of managers. While there are certainly many factors involved in decisions to report unethical behavior (i.e., whistle-blowing), errors in social comparison can be influential. In context of the first opening quote in this paper, the group norm perception regarding fudging numbers gave the employee justification for unethical behavior. However, if an employee observes behavior believed to be unethical, but mistakenly believes that others support the unethical behavior, the employee will be far less likely to report offenders. Effectively, the person might perceive that others support the offender's behavior; therefore, blowing the whistle would not have an impact on the unethical behavior and could lead to negative consequences for him or her individually.

## How Can Executives Address Issues of Social Comparison to Promote Ethical Behavior in Organizations?

Given the potential for problems associated with social comparison in ethical contexts, it is important for executives in organizations to initiate programs to address these concerns. In this section, we offer recommendations for executives to address social comparison problems in ethical context by devising programs that are based on the previous discussion and grounded in established theory and research. We begin by discussing solutions for identifying social comparison problems in ethical contexts, using Figure 2 to provide a visual depiction of the key components involved in understanding and addressing social comparisons in ethical contexts for managers. These components can be used as building blocks of an appropriate program to address social comparisons issues.

**FIGURE 2**

### *RECOMMENDED EXECUTIVE ACTIONS TO MANAGE SOCIAL COMPARISON TO PROMOTE ETHICAL CORPORATE BEHAVIOR*

- **Identify Ethical Settings Leading to Dysfunctional Social Comparison**
  - Identify the settings where of frequent dysfunctional social comparison errors occur
  - Develop managerial awareness of social comparison process and the associated errors through training
- **Develop a Pervasive Ethical Culture of Managerial Accountability**
  - Develop ethical guidelines addressing social comparison issues
  - Nurture a culture of managerial accountability in social comparison
- **Recognize the Influence of Social Comparison Referents**
  - Minimize the number of ethical dilemmas that influential managers raise
  - Manage social comparison referent points by decision context
- **Manage Informal Communication Channels**
  - Identify and dispel inaccurate rumors regarding unethical behavior
  - Manage communication about social comparison in group decision-making settings

### **Identify Ethical Settings Leading to Dysfunctional Social Comparison**

To address issues of social comparison by managers in business ethics contexts, executives must be able to identify when these problems are occurring or might occur. Indeed, Rest has suggested that awareness of moral/ethical situations is the first step in moving toward moral action (Rest 1986). Given the pervasiveness of managerial use of social comparison in organizations, this can be daunting, but a necessary task nonetheless.

A key to detecting problems with social comparison is relating the corporate code of ethics to the settings in the work environment within which the decision-making process occurs. If the environment is ambiguous in terms of interpreting the applicability of the code of ethics across some work settings (a seemingly omnipresent situation in many today's organizations experiencing radical and frequent changes), it may lead managers to engage primarily in social comparison processes. Identification of such settings is facilitated by regular communication between employees. Identifying those settings where the major issues the managers are facing occur, particularly those related to business ethics, is important for understanding the uncertainty under which they are functioning.

Another way to detect problems with social comparison is to identify the settings in which frequent changes of managerial behavior and decisions occur and those decisions appear to go forward with minimal scrutiny in the organization. Particularly important is to notice settings in which managers who once supported the decision later appear to not support it (or vice versa). This may be a sign that they exhibited the original support because of a mistaken belief that others supported it, too. The bottom line in this case is that executives need to develop a systematic approach to identifying and monitoring the settings conducive to social comparison in which managers' decision-making relative to ethical issues may undergo changes. It is important that organizations concentrate on developing programs that ensure the corporate norms of conduct are appropriately interpreted across these settings.

An important step to manage social comparison, following identification, is to initiate a formal training program for managers and executives intended to increase their awareness of the potential problems that might accompany social comparison. This training should particularly address ethical problems associated with pluralistic ignorance and false consensus. Researchers in false consensus and pluralistic ignorance have suggested that simply exposing managers to the notion of errors in social comparison and the influence it has on their decision-making can be effective in creating more accurate social comparisons and better ethical decision-making (Halbesleben & Buckley 2004).

This type of training should be concerned with asking managers to consider how they engage in social comparison in situations that involve ethical decision-making. The training should primarily focus on situation-specific examples of how social comparison can lead to, or has resulted in, inappropriate ethical decisions. A critical component of these training programs is open discussion concerning the impact of dysfunctional social comparison errors. The goal of this type of training is to turn dysfunctional social comparison errors into functional comparison information (see Figure 1).

### **Develop a Pervasive Ethical Culture of Managerial Accountability**

A key step in developing an ethical culture of managerial accountability is to demonstrate the sponsorship of top management. When ethical guidelines are supported by top management and well communicated within organizations, they can be quite effective in facilitating ethical culture. However, they can only set the stage for members of senior management, particularly top management, to adhere and be role models for the ethical principles they condone. This role modeling will facilitate others to follow, because others will likely use top management members as their social referents for ethical behavior, as discussed above.

In conjunction with sponsorship and role modeling by top management, ethical guidelines address issues of social comparison in two ways. First, they may minimize the ambiguity that can spawn ethical dilemmas. If a manager clearly understands how the senior management of an organization expects him or her to act in a given situation, less opportunity for ambiguity occurs and there is less need to turn to referent others as a guide for appropriate ethical behavior.

Second, if the members of the top management team exhibit ethical conduct by following the guidelines, they become the primary positive referents in terms of ethical behavior for both line and staff managers. Ethical guidelines emphasize the relevance of top management as a useful referent for ethical behavior, by reinforcing the political and motivational connection between ethical behavior and social ties to higher levels in the organization. Whenever managers encounter a situation that remains ambiguous despite the guidelines, he or she will engage in social comparison with top managers as their referent others. This will go a long way in suggesting that all managers should do the same.

## **Recognize the Influence of Social Comparison Referents**

In line with the above discussion, it is important to understand not only how managers choose their referents but also what influence those referents can have on the ethical decision-making by managers. Of particular importance are those referents that are important vocal minorities and whose actions can have disproportionate impact on other managers. This requires careful observation and regular communication between executives and managers in order to determine which managers have emerged as influential opinion leaders of the organization (as they often tend to increase the set of ethical dilemmas for other managers in the organization).

Executive understanding of minority influence also underscores the need to allow other managers to express their opinions and concerns, particularly in group contexts. All should be encouraged to share their opinion and be assigned the role of critical evaluator of their own and other opinions. Minority influence becomes significant only when members of the silent majority do not express their opinions, thus leading to the perception that the minority has more support than is actually the case. Supporting more open communication that candidly challenges ideas can suppress the influence of vocal minorities, and therefore reduce the number of ethical dilemmas and facilitate ethical decision-making.

Managers sometimes cannot match the external ethical culture in the environment and the internal ethical culture of the organization when making ethical decisions, and therefore need to turn to various referent others. However, when the external environmental change accelerates, the risk of making an unethical decision increases if managers rely on a closed circle of referent others. In response, managers tend to expand the number of their referent focal groups to make social comparisons. For example, if the manager is to make a decision that is related to the company's branding strategy of local, national, international or global scope, he or she might make a social comparison with other marketing managers referring to them as individuals, members of a professional group, members of national association, or members of a national culture. Therefore, we recommend that executives better understand the norms of focal groups that managers may use in their social comparisons. Moreover, it is important that executives encourage managers to articulate explicitly the ethical norms of different referent foci so that they fit with the decision environment within which the manager is working.

## **Manage Informal Communication Channels**

A critical factor in the managing of social comparison issues is an understanding of how managers arrive at the comparison information they utilize. Social comparison information can be gained either by direct observation of another manager's behavior or by hearing about another manager's actions. While observation effects should be managed by influencing individual managers directly, the hearsay effects should be managed, to some degree, by influencing informal communication channels in the organization. This means that executives must be vigilant about clarifying ethical issues in organizations, setting up a clear expectation for ethical behavior, and identifying/dispelling inaccurate rumors regarding unethical behavior in their organizations. Executives have to take the lead in reducing the amount of ambiguous and inaccurate informal information about ethical issues within the organization by serving as the spokesperson for ethical issues in the organization.

The management of communication is underscored when considering the influence of social comparison errors in group decision-making contexts. While our focus to this point has been on how social comparison (particularly errors) can influence behavior of individual managers, it is also important to recognize that there are numerous potential negative implications from social comparison (and especially pluralistic ignorance) in groups of managers (i.e., management teams). For example, pluralistic ignorance has been often tied to poor group decision-making. Consider the following scenario: An influential manager in the marketing

department announces at the management team meeting his/her support for a course of action for promoting the company's new product, although such a campaign may be controversial (e.g., marketing cigarettes to minorities or lower socioeconomic status individuals). While other management group members may believe individually that the action would be unethical, they may also (mis)perceive that everyone in the management group supports that action. Acting consistently with the perceived group norm, they are likely to announce their support for the proposed campaign. As the process develops, there is an apparent group support for the action that none of the managers (with the possible exception of the manager who supported the course of action in the first place) in the department actually support individually.<sup>18</sup> In this case, problems with social comparison by individual managers led to poor group decision-making and the potentially negative outcomes (in the eyes of general public) for the marketing department.

Executives must seek to manage communication in group decision-making settings such that groups do not fall prey to poor decisions based on pluralistic ignorance. This is done through techniques, such as the nominal group technique, whereby individual group members individually (and privately) develop potential decision outcomes and then share them in a group setting. Prior to engaging in the final group decision, the decision outcomes are evaluated privately. Such a technique allows people to anonymously voice their concerns about group actions. This, when combined with the social comparison error training described above, will promote ethical outcomes of group decision-making.

### **The Challenge of Social Comparison for Global Managers**

We have argued that by understanding and managing social comparison, executives can help to address the problems associated with unethical behavior of managers in their organizations. Unethical behaviors of managers that are based on social comparison are seldom the result of explicit, conscious attempts to harm. As Harvey and his colleagues (Harvey & Novicevic 1999) have pointed out, managerial ignorance of false consensus and pluralistic ignorance may be a significant problem in those organizations that undergo dynamic change. In an attempt to understand an ambiguous situation and unaware of what they do not know, managers examining various referent groups might pick the "wrong" focal group and, unfortunately, engage unconsciously in behavior that is not optimal in terms of ethics. This is consistent with reports made by other researchers, including Bazerman and his colleagues (Bazerman, Loewenstein & Moore 2002), who have argued that unethical action is not always intentionally committed, but can be the result of more implicit biases.

In summary, attention to the dysfunctional social comparisons that might jeopardize the ethical culture of an organization can lead to substantial benefits. Buckley and his colleagues (Buckley et al 1996) have suggested a capability to preserve ethical culture on a sustained basis can lead to a competitive advantage for organizations, as it facilitates greater accountability, and thus may improve firm valuation and performance, owing in part to increased occurrence of organizational citizenship behavior. In contrast, an unethical culture can result in cynicism on the part of employees, destructive political behavior on the part of managers, and may even engender workplace aggression and violence. It has become clear that organizations can benefit from their programs to support ethical behaviors of their managers and employees, and that such benefits eventually far outweigh costs associated with facilitating these behaviors (Hosmer 1994).

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## **Perceptions Regarding the Impact of Workplace Attire on Workplace Outcomes**

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*Abstract: The purpose of this study was to examine employee perceptions regarding the impact of workplace attire on workplace outcomes and how one is viewed by others. Results from a sample of MBA students indicate that today's workers do see workplace attire as impacting workplace outcomes and how one is viewed by others. This is somewhat influenced by one's gender and the value one places on attire. These results and directions for future research are discussed.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Corporate attire has traditionally been rather formal, consisting of suits for both men and women, but the internet business boom in the 1990s inspired a shift toward a more casual or dress-down style that remains popular in many organizations today (Parnes 2001). A recent poll of employers showed that about 60% have a "dress casual" day of the week and 50% allow employees to wear casual attire on a regular basis (Hunsberger 2005). In permitting such attire, many organizations argue that employees prefer casual dress and that it results in increased satisfaction and productivity. For example, a survey of human resource managers indicated that organizations' use of "business casual" and/or "casual dress" increased employee morale, was perceived by employees as an added benefit, and improved productivity (Alonzo 1996). Similarly, Walter (1996) cites examples of companies, such as Sandoz Pharmaceuticals Corporation and Kaiser Permanente Medical Care, which use such attire as a means of boosting employee morale.

There has also been an explosion of books in the popular press providing advice on how one should dress to be successful in the workplace. Pioneered by *John T. Molloy's New Dress for Success Book* (1996;1988), others have followed suit with such titles as *How to Gain the Professional Edge: Achieve the Personal and Professional Image You Want* (Morem 1997), *The New Professional Image: From Business Casual to the Ultimate Power Look* (Bixler 1997), *Your Executive Image: The Art of Self-Packaging for Men and Women* (Seitz 2000) and *Beyond Business Casual: What to Wear to Work to Get Ahead* (Sabath 2000). A common theme in these books is that clothing decisions can make a difference in how one is perceived by others and that one's image is critical to success in the workplace. While casual attire might be popular, these books warn of the risks associated with appearing unprofessional.

The result is that employees are receiving somewhat mixed signals. This is particularly problematic for women who, at the same time, are often trying to determine the appropriate amount of femininity in their dress so that they are taken seriously in their professional role (Ogle & Damhorst 1999). This situation raises questions as to how employees view the importance of clothing in the workplace today. Given the shift towards casual attire, do today's workers see value in workplace clothing? Do they believe that clothing has an impact on how one is perceived by others? Does workplace attire influence workplace outcomes such as promotions

and raises? Is this different for men and women? The purpose of this paper is to provide an empirical investigation of employee perceptions regarding the impact of workplace attire on workplace outcomes and how one is viewed by others, and whether this differs by gender.

### **Workplace Attire and Its Impact on Role Execution**

According to the organizational dress framework proposed by Rafaeli and Pratt (1993), what employees wear to work can have a substantial impact on how they operate within their work defined role. These authors suggest that individuals hold many roles, (i.e., employee, parent, spouse, student), and situational cues such as one's workplace attire, help make an individual more aware of his or her current role. Thus, in wearing workplace attire or organizational dress, a person is reminded that he or she is now an employee. Evidence suggests that wearing "appropriate" workplace attire facilitates effective role execution. For example, Solomon and Schloper (1982) found that individuals' sense of clothing appropriateness for a particular role influenced their perceptions as to the quality of their performance in that role. This belief was significantly stronger for women than it was for men. Similarly, Rafaeli, Dutton, Harquail, and Mackie-Lewis (1997) found that, when wearing organizationally approved attire, female administrative employees were able to temporarily shed their non-organizational roles (e.g., parent, student) and adopt the role of employee.

More recent research has examined how specific styles of clothing influence employee behavior. For example, the results of a 1999 survey conducted by national employment law firm Jackson Lewis, showed that 44% of their respondents (over 1,000 human resource executives) reported an increase in tardiness and absenteeism, and 30% reported a rise in flirtatious behavior after the implementation of dress-down policies (c.f., Boehle, Dobbs, Goldwasser, Gordon, & Stamps 2000). These findings suggest that casual dress may lead to a casual work ethic. Says one popular press writer, "Once workers started thinking of the office as a place where they could dress in a frivolous, lighthearted fashion, they started thinking of their jobs in a frivolous, lighthearted way. Simply introducing Casual Fridays sends a message to the work force that it's all right to take off one day a week and clown around" (Queenan 1996, p. 15). A similar statement was made by Kaplan-Leiserson (2000, p. 39), "The way you look directly affects the way you think, feel, and act . . . When you dress down, you sit down—the couch potato trend. Manners break down, you begin to feel down, and you're not as effective."

Studies have also shown that there are individual differences in the value and importance placed on workplace clothing. For example, Rucker, Anderson, and Kangas (1999) found differences between members of ethnic minority groups in how they viewed the symbolic use of clothing for personal advancement and influencing others. Similarly, females have been found to show a stronger interest in clothing and placed greater importance on attire for accomplishing their roles when compared to males (Solomon & Scholper 1982). Thus, it would appear that those who place a high value on clothing (men or women) see clothing as important and would be more likely to believe that it impacts work-related outcomes and others' perceptions.

### **Impact of Attire on Other's Perceptions and Workplace Outcomes**

Research has examined the extent to which individuals use their attire to accomplish certain objectives in their interactions with others. For example, Solomon and Scholper (1982) found that both males and females responded favorably when asked whether they believed that their attire influenced others' impressions of them. This belief was significantly stronger for women than it was for men. Other more recent studies have found that individuals have used specific styles of clothing to accomplish workplace objectives with "formal business attire" being used to enhance status and respect (Rucker, Anderson, & Kangas 1999) and more casual dress to develop connections with others (Rafaeli, Dutton, Harquail, & Mackie-Lewis 1997).

For women, this presents a challenge. John T. Molloy (1996) claims that women are not taken seriously when dressed casually. Many professional women resist casual attire because they feel it lowers their credibility and “they can’t afford to be taken less seriously than a casually dressed man” (Busey (1997, p. 20). An early study of the impact of gender and dress style on performance evaluations supports this. Galin & Benoliel (1990) found that formally dressed women had a better chance of getting higher performance reviews than informally dressed women. Kwon (1998) argues that society expects a generally more formal appearance from a working woman than from a working man. This is particularly true in the United States where women are socialized more than men to dress appropriately. This suggests that women might be more likely than men to believe that workplace attire has an impact on work-related outcomes and others’ impressions.

Based on the literature reported above, we make the following predictions:

- H1: Respondents will report that workplace attire has a stronger impact on how a woman is perceived by others than how a man is perceived by others.
- H2: Respondents will report that workplace attire has a stronger impact on women’s workplace outcomes (e.g., raises, promotions) than men’s.
- H3: Female respondents will be more likely than male respondents to report that workplace attire has an impact on the perceptions of others.
- H4: Female respondents will be more likely than male respondents to report that workplace attire has an impact on workplace outcomes.
- H5: Those who value workplace attire will be more likely than those who do not to report that workplace attire has an impact on workplace outcomes and the perceptions of others.

## METHOD

### Sample

This study utilized a sample of graduate students enrolled in MBA programs at three medium-sized universities, two located in the Midwest and the other located in the southeastern part of the United States. Because we were primarily interested in the responses from current employees, we removed from the data analysis 12 respondents who were working less than 20 hours per week. Thus, 176 surveys were submitted for data analysis. About half of the respondents (49%) were female. Although respondents ranged in age from 22 to 58, the mean age was 29 years. The average hours worked per week was 41.8 (SD= 9.21). With regard to position, 32% of the sample consisted of management or executive personnel and the mean number of years of full-time work experience was 6.6 years (SD = 7.4). About 17% of the sample was currently working in banking or finance institutions, 16% in manufacturing, 24% in education, and the remaining portion in healthcare, government or non-profit organizations. In terms of organizational size, 56% worked in mid-to large sized organizations (with over 500 employees) and 24% worked in small businesses (100 employees or less).

### Survey Instrument

The survey instrument consisted of two sections: (1) demographic information and (2) workplace attire. Demographic information was tapped through several single item questions, including gender, age, position level, years of full-time work experience, tenure in current department, size of organization, and hours worked per week. The workplace attire section consisted of two subsections: value of workplace attire, beliefs regarding workplace attire.

The *value of workplace attire* was measured with five items, assessing the extent to which one values others’ perceptions of one’s attire. Sample items include: “I value what others think

of my workplace attire”, and “I enjoy the comments or praise that I receive from others on my workplace attire”.

The *beliefs regarding workplace attire* consisted of two sections, one measuring respondent’s perceptions of the impact of workplace attire on men and the other, their perceptions of the impact of workplace attire on women. For example, in the first section, respondents were given the following stem “A man’s workplace attire can have an impact on. . .” In the second section, respondents were given the same stem except “woman’s workplace attire” was used instead of “man’s workplace attire”. Both stems were followed by nine items. Five items measured workplace outcomes: (1) his promotions, (2) his productivity, (3) his career success, (4) his pay/compensation, and (5) special perks or opportunities he receives at work. An additional four items measured the perceptions or views of others: (1) his ability to influence others, (2) the way co-workers view him, (3) the way customers view him, (4) the way supervisors view him. For the second section, “she” or “her” was substituted for the words “he” or “him”. For each item, respondents used the following 5-point rating scale (1=strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

## RESULTS

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations among gender, value of workplace attire, and the perceived impact of workplace attire on workplace outcomes and others’ perceptions of men and women. These results show that respondents placed a moderate value on workplace attire ( $M=3.74$ ,  $SD=.46$ ) and generally agreed that workplace attire affected others’ perceptions of men ( $M=3.88$ ,  $SD=.57$ ) and women ( $M=3.93$ ,  $SD=.50$ ). Respondents were rather neutral in their beliefs regarding the impact of workplace attire on men’s outcomes ( $M=3.23$ ,  $SD=.69$ ) and women’s outcomes ( $M=3.33$ ,  $SD=.69$ ).

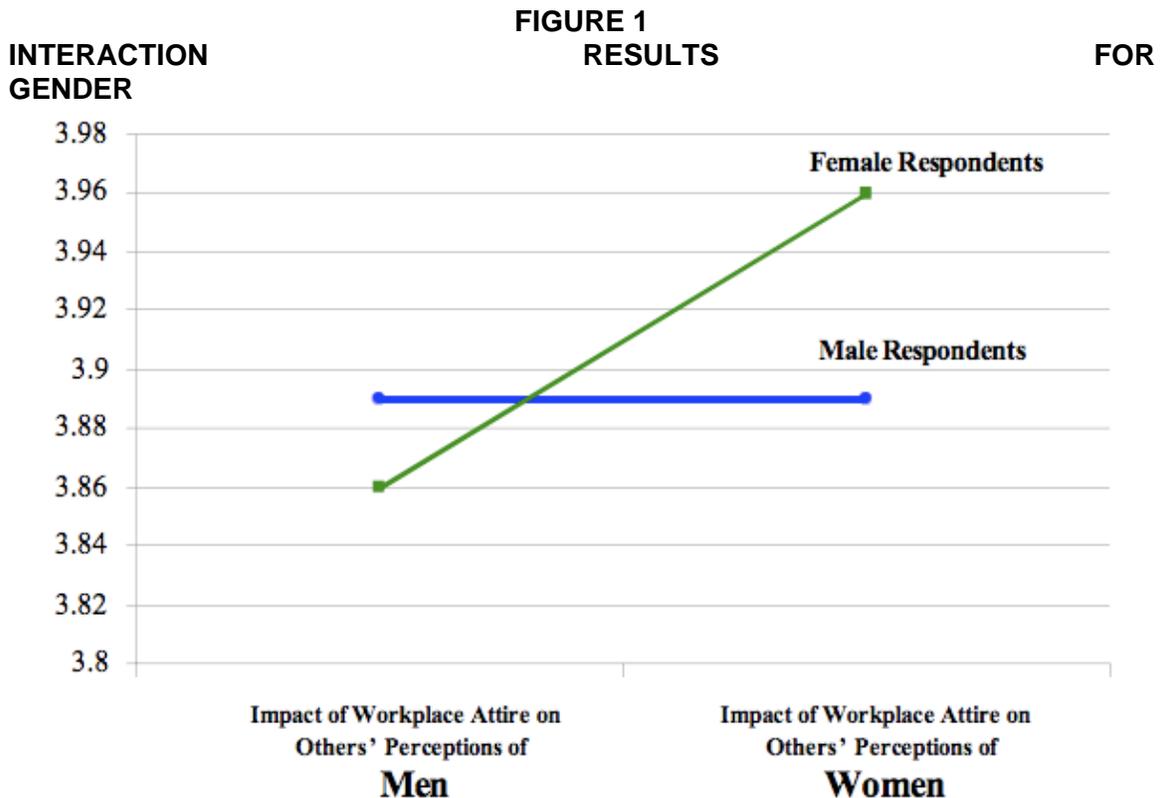
**TABLE 1**  
**DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF VARIABLES IN THE STUDY**

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Gender	1.49	.50	---					
2. Value of Attire	3.74	.46	.05	(.70)				
3. Impact of attire on men’s outcomes	3.23	.70	-.11	.15*	(.83)			
4. Impact of attire on others’ perceptions of men	3.88	.57	-.03	.08	.49 ***	(.88)		
5. Impact of attire on women’s outcomes	3.33	.69	-.05	.23**	.73 ***	.43***	(.82)	
6. Impact of attire on others’ perceptions of women	3.93	.46	.07	.14	.33 ***	.82***	.56***	(.86)

Note: Gender was coded 1 = male and 2 = female. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

To test the first four hypotheses, we conducted two ANOVAs with repeated measures. In the first analysis, the impact of workplace attire on others’ perceptions of men and women was entered as the within subjects variable and gender was entered as the between subjects variable. We found a significant main effect [ $F(1, 172) = 4.61$ ,  $p < .05$ ] such that workplace attire was believed to have a stronger impact on others’ perceptions of women ( $M=3.92$ ,  $SD=.5$ ) than their perceptions of men ( $M=3.88$ ,  $SD=.57$ ). Thus, hypothesis 1 was supported. The main effect for respondent’s gender was not significant [ $F(1, 172) = .05$ ,  $p = n.s.$ ]. However, we found a significant interaction [ $F(1, 172) = 4.13$ ,  $p < .05$ ] such that women were more likely than men to

believe that workplace attire had a stronger impact on others' perceptions of women than their perceptions of men (see Figure 1). Thus, hypothesis 3 was only partially supported.



In the second analysis, the impact of workplace attire on outcomes for men and women was entered as the within subjects variable and gender was entered as the between subjects variable. Once again, we found a significant main effect [ $F(1, 171) = 7.41, p < .01$ ] such that workplace attire was believed to have a greater impact on women's workplace outcomes ( $M = 3.33, SD = .69$ ) than men's ( $M = 3.22, SD = .69$ ). Thus, hypothesis 2 was supported. Neither the main effect for respondent's gender [ $F(1, 171) = 1.18, p = n.s.$ ], nor the interaction between respondent's gender and outcomes was significant [ $F(1, 171) = 1.53, p = n.s.$ ]. That is, both male and female respondents were equally likely to believe that workplace attire has a greater impact on women's workplace outcomes than men's. Thus, hypothesis 4 was not supported.

In hypothesis 5, we predicted that the value placed on workplace attire would be positively rated to respondent's perceptions regarding the impact of workplace attire on others' perceptions and workplace outcomes. An examination of the correlations presented in Table 1 show that value of attire was significantly related to respondent's beliefs regarding the impact of workplace attire on outcomes for men and women, but not on others' perceptions of men or women. Thus, hypothesis 5 was only partially supported.

## DISCUSSION

This study has provided empirical evidence that today's workers do see workplace attire as impacting workplace outcomes and how one is viewed by others. This is somewhat influenced by one's gender and the value one places on attire. In general, both men and women indicated that workplace attire has a greater impact on women's workplace outcomes (e.g., pay, promotions, perks, career success, productivity) than men's. This is consistent with previous

research and shows that both genders see women's clothing as playing a critical role in her workplace success. With regard to the impact of clothing on other's perceptions, it was only the women in our sample who indicated that workplace attire has a greater impact on others' perceptions of women than their perceptions of men. Given the heightened awareness that women have about their appearance and clothing in the workplace, it is not surprising that they would see this as having a greater impact on how women are perceived as opposed to men.

The value placed on workplace attire also had some influence on our results. We found that those who value their workplace attire are more likely to believe that attire can positively impact workplace outcomes for both men and women. These are individuals who place importance on wearing appropriate workplace attire and want to be seen by others as one who dresses appropriately at work. It is interesting, however, that the value or importance of workplace attire was not related to our respondents' beliefs regarding the impact of attire on how men and women are viewed by others. Perhaps this is because everyone believes that their attire can have an impact on the perceptions of others, but only those who value attire believe it actually affects workplace outcomes. It is also possible that the reason they value workplace attire is because they believe it will impact workplace outcomes.

While our research findings provide some interesting insights into individual beliefs regarding the impact of workplace attire on outcomes and others' perceptions, we are faced with just as many puzzling questions. Why do some individuals value workplace attire more than others? Is it because they feel it will have an impact on desired outcomes, or is it due to some other underlying personality trait such as self-monitoring or self-consciousness? Are there other factors, not measured in this study, that influence individual perceptions of the importance of one's workplace attire? For example, it is possible that individual beliefs regarding the importance of workplace attire might be influenced by the organization's culture. Organizational dress is often an artifact of organizational culture and given the variety of industries in our sample, it is likely that this may explain the variation in responses.

It is also possible that individual differences in attractiveness, height or obesity might influence the perceived importance of workplace attire. Recent literature suggests that there is a "beauty premium" and a "plainness penalty" whereby those with above-average looks earn more than those with below-average looks (Hamermesh & Biddle 1994). Likewise, obese women have been found to earn 17 percent lower wages on average than women within their recommended Body Mass Index (Averett & Korenman 1996). Another study showed that there was a height premium for white men in the United States (Persico, Postlewaite, & Silverman 2004). Thus, an interesting question is whether less attractive, overweight, or shorter (male) individuals perceive their workplace attire as being more or less important than attractive, physically fit, and taller (male) individuals. Similarly, it would be interesting to examine whether individuals perceive workplace attire as having a greater or lesser impact on workplace outcomes for less attractive, overweight, or shorter (male) individuals.

Finally, an additional avenue for future research would be to examine the relationship between employee preferences for various modes of workplace attire (i.e., formal, business casual, casual) and their perceptions regarding the impact of workplace attire on workplace outcomes. For example, are employees who prefer casual attire less likely than those who prefer formal attire to believe that it influences workplace outcomes? Or, do employees, regardless of their dress preferences, use their attire to impress others because they believe it will impact work-related outcomes?

While we believe that that this study has made a contribution to our understanding of how today's employees view the role of workplace attire in influencing outcomes and other's perceptions, we acknowledge that our study is not without limitations. In our effort to extend previous research by examining men and women in current business settings, we utilized a sample of MBA students. However, this was a convenience sample and therefore the beliefs of our respondents may not be representative of those in most workplaces. Future research needs to

broaden the scope, targeting a larger more experienced sample from a broad range of occupations and positions. Second, many of the measures we used were created specifically for this study. Additional studies are needed to ascertain the validity of these measures.

To conclude, we believe that this study has made an important contribution to the literature regarding attire in the workplace. Specifically, it has provided an empirical investigation of the beliefs of current employees regarding the impact of workplace attire. Our findings with regard to gender differences make a particularly unique contribution.

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