Experienced New Hires, Employment Insecurity, and the Foreshadowing of the Precariat Workforce

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Abstract

Organizations commonly depend on new hire orientation programs to socialize new hires into their corporate culture. Through such programs, it is expected that newcomers will effectively adjust to their new surroundings and develop organizational commitment, job satisfaction, effective job performance, and ultimately a preference to remain with the organization. In addition to these practices, the literature suggests that organizational commitment is best developed through *newcomer adjustment*, which is dependent on the new hire, i.e., the newcomer, being socially accepted and included into their new environment.

How do experienced, new employees achieve newcomer adjustment? The ensuing research seeks to present a compelling description of how an experienced newcomer, who has been out of the work for at least 6 months, seeks to integrate into his/her new corporate surroundings: learning his/her job, understanding the culture, and ultimately creating their own community within the work place, resulting in their own effective newcomer adjustment. Intrinsic case study methodology was used to uncover “how” newcomers created community and “what” they did to do so.

The study revealed common strategies used by the study participants to create community at work. These strategies focused on building relationships with immediate team members and leaders, and proving task proficiency early in the newcomers’ tenure. Most study participants were experiencing employment insecurity, which proved the main motivator behind their decisions to build relationships and demonstrate task competency. The research supported the development of the theory that those who are experiencing employment insecurity cannot also experience a psychological sense of community at work.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Returning to the corporate world when one has been absent for an extended period of time can be stressful (Louis, 1980; Oreg, 2003; Yu, 2009). Much research has been done on new college graduates entering the workforce for the first time (Klein &Weaver, 2000; Polach, 2004), but little research has been conducted on experienced workers who have left the corporate world and are now returning. This population is likely to experience re-entry into the corporate world differently from the way a recent college graduate experiences their first corporate job. The main goal of my study is to close this knowledge gap and to develop an understanding of the experiences of career professionals when returning to the corporate world after an extended time away. I am especially interested in how they create a sense of community for themselves in their new work location. What was it like for them to come back to work after being away for so long? What were their concerns or fears about re-entry? Did they leverage any previous knowledge that helped their re-entry? What action did they take to develop their own community with new team members and across the organization? Did they leverage the employee resource groups or other networking opportunities? My research explored these questions.

In order to achieve this goal, I have used intrinsic case study methodology to seek to understand the personal experience of those who have recently re-entered the corporate world after at least 6 months absent. The research was conducted through one-on-one interviews with new hires, i.e. newcomers, those who are new to an employment situation. I also examined corporate documents on employee on-boarding and employee development. I analyzed the interview transcripts for themes related to how newcomers create a sense of community for themselves. I studied the corporate documents to determine if the organization's on-boarding efforts had any effect on the newcomers' sense of community.

I conducted a literature review to discover ways in which newcomers are proactive in their own organization socialization process. The review uncovered more than 150 journal articles written over the last 50 years, focused on the themes of organization socialization and a Psychological Sense of Community at Work (PSCW). The majority of the organization socialization studies were quantitative studies, leveraging surveys that recorded the number of occurrences of specific incidences, versus the personal experiences of the subjects. The literature implies a structure to organization socialization that is completely managed by the organization, with little to no influence by the newcomer. At the same time, some of the literature indicates that the greatest indicator of successful organization socialization is the social acceptance and inclusion of the newcomer into the organization (Polach, 2004; Rollag, 2004). Social acceptance and inclusion is a very personal and intimate experience; an experience that is most likely driven by the newcomer, not by the organization, with the goal of creating a sense of community. The literature on community in the workplace articulated the ways in which employees experience community at work, but did not express the ways employees find or create community at work.

My overall conclusion from the literature review is that the research methods most often used to measure the ways newcomers adjust to their organizations, and processes used by organizations to socialize newcomers, were too technical in their attempts to create categories and typologies to effectively capture the experience of the newcomer when being socialized, or when driving their own socialization. In addition, the literature is light on empirical evidence that describes the experience of a newcomer in adjusting into their organization, and integrating into communities at work in order to become socially accepted and included.

Statement of the Problem

When an employee joins a corporation, the corporation typically engages the employee in some form of new employee orientation (NEO) where the employee is exposed to the corporation's norms, values, mission, and history. Employee orientations tend to be tactical and transactional in nature, last 1-5 days, and begin soon after the employee has joined the corporation. Developed to meet the needs of large and diverse groups, the content is not specific to a role, particular to one's previous experience in the corporate world, nor is it focused on training for job performance. The intent is simply to introduce the new employee to the corporation and to gain their loyalty (Choa, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein & Gardner, 1994; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Klein & Weaver 2000; Rolla, 2004; Wesson & Gogus, 2005). The attendance at new employee orientation is a passive act for the new employee. They neither initiate the program, nor do they provide input into its content. They simply attend and participate. Based on this common and typically singular process of organization socialization through new employee orientation programs, the conclusion can be made that corporations lack discernible knowledge on how and why experienced new employees leverage organizational resources when proactively driving their own organization socialization and thus create community.

Two assumptions can be made with regard to returning newcomers. The first is that returning newcomers have a greater sense of the orientation processes, described above, and therefore proactively leverage it and other resources in different ways than those who are entering the corporate world for the first time. The second is that someone who has been away from the corporate world for an extended period of time will have developed some new life-habits that will need to be reconciled as they re-integrate into a structured work environment. While the first assumption is a net positive, the second assumption, if not recognized, can be potentially negative to the success of the newcomers' adjustment. Human nature leads to reluctance to give up old habits, which is a common characteristic of resistance to change, known as *routine seeking* (Oreg, 2003). "When individuals encounter new stimuli, familiar responses may be incompatible with the situation, thus producing stress" (Oreg, 2003, p.681). According to Lazarus and Folkman (as cited in Yu, 2009), stress (workplace or other), transpires when an individual evaluates a situation and perceives it as threatening to his or her way of life or current comfort level. Chronic stress can lead to burnout, which is characterized by the following: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Yu, 2009).

Reduced personal accomplishment is linked to turnover. Louis (1980) concluded that among college graduates in their first corporate job, voluntary turnover increases during the first 18 months, resulting from "disillusionment." When employees are not producing at expected levels, newcomer or not, they may be asked to leave the organization, or choose to leave. According to Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg (2003) "This early turnover will be costly because employees are departing after investments have been made into recruitment, selection, and training but before the organization has been able to realize returns on these investments in the form of performance, [therefore] understanding organizational entry is of critical importance" (p. 779).

If human resource development professionals can identify the unique needs of returning newcomers, intentional integration support can be developed and deployed to the population in question, thus limiting the amount of workplace stress, burnout and subsequent turnover, and improving performance of the individual and the organization as a whole.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose for this study originated from an off-handed comment made by my husband during a lament about his career progression. He was frustrated by his inability to secure full-time instructor status at one of the two colleges for which he taught. He postulated that stay-at-home-dads, due to their "not-working" status, probably had a harder time re-entering the work force than stay-at-home-moms, a more socially accepted "not-working" status.

My study is not about stay-at-home-dads. However, his comment made me stop and think about his experience as a stay-at-home-dad trying to acquire fulltime employment. At the time of this research, my husband was an adjunct college instructor, and our two children were in early grade school. His adjunct employment afforded him part time work during some semesters and no work during other semesters, in which case he was home full-time with our kids.

My husband, as the primary care-giver, began seeking community with other primary care-givers. There was a mother's-group on our block in which he was not allowed membership due to his gender. I also was not allowed membership due to my full-time worker status. He found a dads-group and began creating community with other stay-at-home-dads. I began to think about this concept of community within the context of my initial negative reaction to being denied membership into the mother's-group. I realized that they were purposefully seeking community with like-experienced individuals. I was not a stay-at-home-mom, and therefore I would not have a like-experience. My husband was not allowed membership because he was a Dad, not a Mom, again, the experience for him is different from the moms' experience.

This concept of community intrigued me. Humans are social beings, and we tend to seek opportunities to connect with others who have similar interests or similar experiences (Mashek, Cannaday & Tangney, 2007; McMillan, 1996). My professional interests are in the area of workplace inclusion and high performance teams, leading to employee engagement and organizational commitment. Each of these constructs implies the existence or creation of some kind of workplace community. For example:

workplaces that are inclusive demonstrate fair access to information, decision-making influence and job security for all employees through a focus on *knowing* the employee (Ryan & Kossek, 2008). High performance teams are defined by their intrapersonal connectivity through personal investment in coworkers' successes (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). The success of inclusive workplaces and high performance teams is dependent on a sense of community.

My husband's frustration in gaining full time employment was possibly a common feeling experienced by others trying to re-enter the workforce. His aggravation caused me to ask the question: what is it like for a person to re-enter the workforce after they have been absent for an extended period of time, regardless of the reason behind the absence? How do they create their own community while re-entering? What is the experience of the individual? What effort would they put forth, what desire would they demonstrate, to create community for themselves in their new corporate surroundings?

This interest has led me to deepen my understanding of organization socialization which leads to employee engagement, organizational commitment and, ultimately a reduction in turnover (Feldman, 1981; Peterson, 2004), which are all linked to a sense of community at work.

Recognizing and understanding the needs of unique and diverse populations during the re-entry process can lead Human Resource Development (HRD) practitioners to more intentionally and effectively design and deploy employee-focused programs to support workers re-entering the workforce. Supporting the employee in this fashion has the potential to increase the probability of the employee creating or finding community, and thus successfully integrating into corporate culture.

In summary, the purpose of this study is to better understand how experienced newcomers adjust (*newcomer adjustment*), personally and professionally, when re-entering the corporate world after an extended absence. In other words, *what* did they do, and *how* did they do it to effectively adjust to their new work environment, and hopefully, find a feeling of community for themselves?

Research Question

The general research purpose described in the previous section caused me to ask: How do experienced newcomers proactively drive their own organizational socialization? What previous knowledge and experience do they leverage to guide them through their journey? The research indicates the greatest predictor of newcomer effective adjustment is social and professional inclusion into the work group or team **(**Gonzalez & Denisi, 2009; Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Klein & Weaver, 2000; Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski & Erez, 2001). Therefore, how does the experienced newcomer find or create their community at work that allows them to be included into the work group or team, and ultimately, the organization? In order to develop a better understanding of these issues, the central research question is: How do experienced newcomers find or create their own community when re-entering the corporate world after at least 6 months absent?

Need for the Study and Significance

Understanding what experienced newcomers do to create their own sense of community when re-entering the workforce will contribute to the broadening of HRD's professional understanding of (1) the unique needs of experienced newcomers during the re-entry /re-integration process, and (2) the methods proactively employed by the experienced newcomer during re-entry/re-integration process.

This study will provide the basis for both professional discourse on the effectiveness of popularized new employee orientation tactics and provide guidance on new techniques. In order to increase the diversity, intentionality and effectiveness of current corporate newcomer integration programs and resources, the data also could identify new or underutilized ways corporations can support the identification and creation of community in the workplace. In short, this study will benefit organizations by supporting them in making their organization socialization process more efficient and effective.

The results of this study will benefit business organizations as it uncovers best practices for helping experienced newcomers adjust to the corporate world faster, delineating ways experienced newcomers create community in order to drive their social inclusion efforts. Businesses that respond to these themes will likely see a decrease in employee turnover resulting in a cost savings (Feldman, 1981). HRD departments can use the information to support experienced newcomers in leveraging social resources to decrease their time-to-job-competence, thus increasing the corporate return on investment (ROI) on the employee. And finally, this study provides information that supports better understanding on how to translate the theories of effective organization socialization to the practical application of effective organization socialization.

Definitions

Employee Embeddedness as defined by Mitchell et al. has 3 critical aspects. They are: Fit, Links, and Sacrifice (2001). In short, ‘Fit’ refers to the extent to which an employee’s skills and interests match the requirements of their job and the organization, as well as within their extended (non-work) community. ‘Links’ refer to the ties employees have to people and / or activities both at work and in their respective (non-work) communities. ‘Sacrifice’ refers to the benefits (relationships, pension, salary, community) they would lose if they left their organization (Mitchell et al, 2001; Ng & Feldman, 2009).

Employee Engagement is defined as “an individual employee’s cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed toward desired organizational outcomes” (Shuck & Wollard, 2010, p. 103). It results in “a positive, fulfilling, and work-related state of mind that consists of vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Bakker and Xanthopoulou , 2009, p. 1562).

Employment Insecurity is the emotional response of an employee when they anticipate involuntary loss of employment (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Sverke & Hellgren, 2002; Pugh, Skarlicki and Passell, 2003; Kim and Choi, 2010).

Intrinsic Case Study is an empirical inquiry (Yin, 2009) that studies the “particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (Stake, 1995. p. xi), and includes the researcher's innate interest in the case itself.

Newcomer is a new employee in their first year of employment with their current employer, often referred to as a new hire (Boswell, Shipp, Payne & Culbertson, 2009).

Newcomer Adjustment is the outcome of organization socialization. It is characterized by the newcomer's ultimate social inclusion and acceptance by their work group or team (Feldman, 1981). Newcomer adjustment is defined as the period in which a new employee adjusts to their new surroundings, an undertaking by which one gains insight into their task-related responsibilities and social position (Bauer, et al., 2007).

Organizational Commitment is defined as the strength of one's identification with, and belief in the goals and values of their organization, and is demonstrated through increased job involvement, role orientation and a desire to sustain employment (Gonzalez & Denisi, 2009; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Klein & Weaver, 2000).

Organization Socialization is the process by which newcomers integrate into their new organization (Van Maanen, 1978) and is the main vehicle for supporting *newcomer adjustment.* It is characterized by the newcomer understanding the organization's mission and culture, and their place in it (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo & Tucker 2007; Chao et al., 1994; Dirksen, 2005; Feldman, 1976, 1981; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg 2003; Klein &Weaver, 2000; Louis, 1980; Morrison, 2002; Polach, 2004; Van Maanen, 1978; Wesson & Gogus, 2005; Yu, 2009).

A *Psychological Sense of Community at Work (PSCW)* is defined as the way in which a person experiences a community environment in their place of employment that may explain reasons for putting the collective above self, and meeting needs of identity, meaning and achieving supportive relationships (Burroughs & Eby, 1998).

This author is defining *passive participation* as participation in organizationally initiated program, such as: new employee orientation program, on the job training (OJT), peer mentoring and organizationally sponsored and initiated mentoring programs.

This author is defining *active participation* as participation in activities initiated by the newcomer, such as: entrance into networking groups, seeking mentoring relationships, and information seeking (asking questions) from peers and supervisors.

Summary

This chapter introduced the research question: How experienced new-hires create their own community-at-work? It identified the need for the study as well as the significance to Human Resource Development professionals and corporations alike. It provided the background thought behind the study, and defined important terms.

In the ensuing chapters, recent and relevant supporting literature will be discussed to lay the foundation for this study. Case study methodology will be reviewed as well as the reasons behind its choice for this research. Themes from the data will be shared and discussed via case narratives, cross-case analysis and a look into unanticipated results. A theory resulting from the study will be articulated regarding the strategies used by experience newcomers when re-entering work, and recommendations for further study will be offered.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

In this chapter, the three main literature streams are discussed: (a) The process organizations employ (organization socialization) to drive newcomer adjustment, (b) the concepts of how newcomers are passive and proactive in their own adjustment, and (c) ways newcomers find or create community within the corporate culture.

This literature review also will untangle the sometimes confusing and competing definitions of organization commitment, employee embeddedness, employee engagement and inclusion. Understanding the differences between these concepts leads to understanding Community at Work and its importance to the experienced newcomer.

Specific attention has been paid to locating research that addresses the experience of an experienced newcomer returning to work after a prolonged absence. The absence may be the result of a job loss, personal time off, military deployment or other. Close attention was paid to literature addressing the process by which a newcomer is proactive in leveraging the resources available to them to effectively and efficiently re-integrate into corporate life. Gaps in the knowledge base and literature were also observed.

Literature Review Method

Before conducting the literature review, all possible resources a returning newcomer may use, or try to use, as s/he reintegrates into corporate life, were brainstormed and searched. These areas included: On-boarding processes, networking, membership in employee resource groups or affinity groups, membership in professional societies, use of employee assistance programs, involvement in volunteering opportunities, and the use of peer mentors.

Academic publications were searched for key words such as: on-boarding, newcomer, proactive, diversity, inclusion, organization commitment, corporate socialization, networking, professional associations, new hire, experienced hire, employee assistance, enculturation, acculturation, re-employment, employee engagement, training, community, and personal change management.

Literature uncovered was written between 1961 and 2012. The majority of relevant articles were found in the following journals: *Academy of Management Journal, Academy of Management Review, Advances in Developing Human Resources, Cultural Anthropology, Field Methods, Human Resource Management, Human Resource Development International, Human Resource Development Quarterly, Human Resource Development Review, Journal of Applied Psychology, Journal of Business and Psychology, Journal of Career Development, Journal of Community Psychology, Journal of Management, Journal of Managerial Psychology, Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, Journal of Organizational Behavior, Management Communication Quarterly, Personnel Psychology, Social Science Research, Western Journal of Nursing Research* and *Work & Stress.*

The literature search uncovered more than 150 articles, which were organized into 12 sub-topics: On-boarding, enculturation/acculturation, employee commitment, speed of re-engagement, employee embeddedness, stages of employee development, employee networking, personal change management, re-entry, employee assistance programs, a Psychological Sense of Community at Work (PSCW), and miscellaneous.

Organization Socialization

Over the last fifty plus years, researchers have been working to identify frameworks for usage in measuring effectiveness of newcomer adjustment. Van Maanen's breakthrough work in 1975, followed by his collaboration with Schein in 1979, developed the basis for the research that followed. Feldman's additions in 1976 and 1981 created a holistic view of newcomer socialization, and the term newcomer adjustment was used to describe his model. Newcomer adjustment is defined as the period in which a new employee adjusts to their new surroundings, an undertaking by which one gains insight into their task-related responsibilities and social position (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo & Tucker, 2007).

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) define organizational socialization as the process by which one *learns* to become a member of a group: appreciating the values, acquiring the attitudes, behaviors, knowledge and skills needed to effectively adjust to, and participate as a productive member of the organization. It refers to the transition of an outsider into an insider, where the organization tries to influence the employee, and the employee searches for his/her acceptable role within the organization. Chao, et al. (1994) state that "organizational socialization is often identified as the primary process by which people adapt to new jobs and organizational roles (p. 730)." Organizational socialization is simply about learning how to be a member of the organization.

Socialization performs two functions: training one to assume their role, status and responsibilities in the society, and training one on how to behave (regulating emotional and cognitive needs) in the society. The first focuses on the social structure, while the later focuses on the person (Lebra, 1990). The purpose behind organizational socialization is to support a new employees' navigation through their first few months. The result is increased commitment to the organization's values and mission, with a clear and productive understanding of one's job and place in the organization. Commitment to the organization, it is argued, leads to long term and increased personal satisfaction with employment (Polach, 2004).

Van Maanen and Schein's 1979 research and subsequent theory is the most widely accepted framework for understanding, and therefore studying, organization socialization. Van Maanen and Schein identified and defined three stages of organization socialization: 1) anticipatory, 2) entry, and 3) integration.

The anticipatory stage takes place before the newcomer enters the organization. S/he gathers information about the organization and creates expectations about both their new role within the organization and the organization itself. Entry into the organization is the second stage. The newcomer learns what the work setting and job responsibilities really are. This stage may create a "surprise" or "reality shock" (Louis, 1980). This is a stressful stage, where the employee must quickly assess their new surroundings, make adjustments to their understandings and begin to perform their role. It is during this stage that stress may result in employee turnover. The third and ultimate stage is integration; characterized by the employee learning his/her role, the culture of the organization and fitting into the social structure of the organization. Once this stage has effectively been reached, the newcomer has achieved *newcomer adjustment*. The literature implies that social acceptance (inclusion) is a requirement for effective newcomer adjustment: "in order to gain full membership recruits must integrate themselves into the organization's network of social relationships" (Rollag, 2004, p. 857).

This third stage, per Van Maanen and Schein (1979) is divided into two categories: (1) controlled by the organization, and (2) not controlled by the organization. Each category has six socialization tactics, each with an opposing alternative in the contrasting category. The first tactic: *collective*, has as the opposing alternative *individual*. In this tactic, the organization either orients newcomers collectively (controlled by the organization) or individually (not controlled by the organization). Each tactic follows suit: Formal vs. Informal, Sequential vs. Random, Fixed vs. Variable, Serial vs. Disjunctive, and Investiture vs. Divestiture. Jones (1996) argues that divestiture should be considered controlled by the organization and investiture should be considered not controlled, and postulates this as a modification to the model. It is this model that has been the basis for all newcomer studies since 1979 (see Table I).

Table I
Van Maanen and Schein's Six Socialization Tactics

Controlled by the organization	Not Controlled by the organization
Collective: grouping newcomers and putting them through similar orientation	*Individual:* each newcomer, alone, experiences a unique orientation
Formal: segregating newcomers during the socialization period	*Informal:* not segregating newcomers during the socialization period
Sequential: OJT that is planned and programmed	*Random:* no planned or programmed OJT, learn as you go
Fixed: timetable for socialization	*Variable:* no timetable for socialization
Serial: peer mentor or role model provided	*Disjunctive:* no peer mentor or role model provided
Divestiture:* denying the newcomers' identify and requiring assimilation	*Investiture*:* maintains the incoming identity of the newcomer and allows for variance

* Jones' (1986) modification represented

Whether the researchers were developing tools to measure socialization, or discovering how one is proactive in their socialization, they leveraged this model on which to build their hypotheses.

Of the many ways subsequent researchers have utilized Van Maanen and Schein's work, the most common has been to organize the stages into consumable frameworks for practical application. Polach (2004), in her study of recent college graduates entering their first job, notably used Van Maanen and Schein's work by calling out the third stage, integration. She indicated newcomers need to learn three domains of organizational life: the functional domains (departments such as finance, marketing, etc.), the hierarchal domains (who reports to whom, flat organization or a multilayered organization), and the inclusionary domains, or culture, of the organization, i.e.; “the way things get done around here.”

Bauer et al. (2007) followed suit and further enhanced Feldman’s 1981 work on newcomer adjustment, and classified three aspects of this adjustment (role clarity, self-efficacy, and social acceptance):

> *“Role clarity/resolution of role demands:* Understanding the tasks to perform for the job and understanding task priorities and time allocation; *Self-efficacy/task mastery:* Learning the tasks of the new job and gaining confidence in the role; *Social acceptance/adjustment to group:* Coming to feel liked and trusted by peers” (Bauer, et al. 2007, p.708).

Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992) focused their research on the process of *learning* as a newcomer socializes into an organization. Newcomers develop new knowledge in four areas: Task domain (understanding task duties, how to use equipment, assignments, etc.); Role domain (employee boundaries of authority and decision making, including the expected behavior of one in a specific role); Group domain (coworker interaction, how groups work together, how groups are structured); and Organizational domain (politics, power, mission, leadership style, and special jargon).

Similar to Ostroff and Kozlowski, Chao et al. (1994) identified and developed six dimensions of organizational socialization:

1. Performance Proficiency: What needs to be learned and mastered
2. People: The development of satisfying work relationships; acceptance of the newcomer by the group
3. Politics: Knowledge regarding how to gain information, and where the power is
4. Language: Both job-specific technical jargon and organizationally specific

jargon and language patterns and uses

5. Organizational Goals and Values: How the culture works together, what are the written and unwritten rules; How culture links the individual to the organization
6. History: The traditions, customs and rituals that pass on organizational knowledge and belief and ultimately transfers these ideals to newcomers

These similar yet different classifications of socializing a newcomer during stage three can be synthesized into four categories: Task Proficiency (mastery and performance of job-related tasks); Role Expectations (knowledge of one's role and limitations within the organization); Cultural Understanding (knowledge or organization's mission, values, hierarchies, politics, leadership styles and so forth); and Social Acceptance / Inclusion (one's ultimate acceptance by peers and the organization as a whole) (see Table II. *Common elements of newcomer adjustment / organizational socialization characteristic*).

TABLE II
Common elements of newcomer adjustment/organizational socialization characteristic

Newcomer Adjustment Strategies	Feldman (1976) Newcomer Adjustment	Van Maanen and Schein (1979) Organizational Socialization	Jones (1986) Organizational socialization tactics	Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992) Organizational Socialization	Choa et al. (1994) Six Dimensions of Organizational Socialization	Bauer et al. (1998) Newcomer Adjustment	Morrison (2002) Organizational Socialization through learning	Myers & Oetzel (2003) Six Dimensions of Organizational Assimilation
Task Proficiency	Self-efficacy / task mastery		Context tactics	Task demands	(1) Performance proficiency	Role Clarity	Job learning	(5) Job competency
Role Expectations	Role clarity/ resolution of role demands		Content tactics	Role attributes		Role Clarity	Role information learning	(3) Recognition; understanding one's value to the org, and being recognized (6) Role negotiation
Cultural Understanding		Functional Hierarchal		Organizational climate & culture	(4) Language (6) History (3) Politics (5) Organizational Goals & Values		Organizational learning	(2) Organizational acculturation
Social Acceptance / Inclusion	Social acceptance/ adjustment to group	Inclusionary	Social tactics	Work group norms	(2) People	Self-Efficacy Social Acceptance		(1) Getting to know coworkers and stakeholders (4) Involvement

“Organizations typically want new members to quickly learn company norms, values, and routines and become productive, loyal contributors” (Rollag, 2004, p.855). Therefore, they engage in developing and deploying new employee orientation programs. These programs tend to be tactical and transactional in nature. Three of the four categories delineated above express more about the role of the organization and less about the role of the newcomer in effective socialization. Newcomers participate in these methods passively, by attending new employee orientation programs and though the On-the-Job Training (OJT).

Wesson & Gogus (2005) advise distinguishing between socialization and orientation. Orientation tends to be a program, lasting a week at most, and occurring soon after the employee is hired. Orientations are developed to meet the overarching needs of all new employees. Designed with acculturation in mind, they tend to provide newcomers with important information about the organization, such as its mission, values, and history. Human resources information such as benefits registration and payroll processing is also shared during the orientation. These programs tend to introduce newcomers to important people in the organization, such as CEOs and VPs, their respective organizations, and their roles within the organization. The programs typically state a goal of helping new employees feel more a part of the organization. It helps the newcomer better understand the workplace principles and practices (Choa et al., 1994; Klein & Weaver, 2000; Rollag, 2004).

Orientation programs do not train employees on the specifics of their work tasks, team processes or departmental politics. Nor do orientation programs help newcomers uncover the political or the informal structure of the organization. This knowledge is critical to understanding how things really work, who is important and how things operate (Klein & Weaver, 2000).

Orientation programs focus on teaching newcomers the organization's goals and values, and an expected outcome of a program is an employees' acceptance and adoption of the organization's norms and values, a critical component of newcomer adjustment (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). Effective orientation programs should facilitate this acceptance, systematically and persuasively (Klein & Weaver, 2000). Successful facilitation of an employee's adoption of the organization's values and norms is reported to result in organizational commitment.

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is defined as the strength of one's identification with, and belief in the goals and values of their organization, and is demonstrated through increased job involvement, role orientation and a desire to sustain employment (Gonzalez & Denisi, 2009; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Klein & Weaver, 2000). It tends to be more dependent on job tasks and outcomes than on personal reasoning, signifying that it is more about extrinsic circumstances and has little to do with an employee's intrinsic motivation (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006). An employee experiences organizational commitment when they have personally created a bond with the organization's values and mission, and show that commitment through job performance.

Organizational commitment is different from employee embeddedness. Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski and Erez (2001) developed employee embeddedness as a construct in 2001. Identifying three aspects of it, they focused on those things which are extrinsic in nature, yet are a result of ones preference to seek routine. The critical aspects of employee embeddedness, as defined by Mitchell et al. are: Fit, Links, and Sacrifice (2001). ‘Fit’ refers to the extent to which an employee’s skills and interests match the requirements of their job and the organization, as well as within their extended (non-work) community. ‘Links’ refer to the ties employees have to people and / or activities both at work and in their respective (non-work) communities. ‘Sacrifice’ refers to the benefits (relationships, pension, salary, community) they would lose if they left their organization (Mitchell et al, 2001; Ng, & Feldman, 2009). Although employee embeddedness implies those who have good ‘fit’ with their jobs will perform at productive levels, the research is not conclusive that employee embeddedness creates high performing employees, only employees who wish to stay (Ng & Feldman, 2009; Sekiguchi, Burton & Sablynski, 2008). However, researchers do agree that employee embeddedness is a stronger negative indicator of turnover, concluding that those who are embedded, tend to stay (Halbesleben & Wheller, 2008; Mitchell et al., 2001; Ng & Feldman, 2009; Sekiguchi et al., 2008;). In summary, employee embeddedness is the effect of employee inertia: it is easier to stay than to leave.

Employee Engagement

Employee embeddedness is not employee engagement. Employee engagement is of interest to scholars and practitioners alike as it has been identified as a predictor of high performing teams, customer loyalty, and organizational success, as measured by the financial health of the organization (Saks, 2006). Yet practitioners and scholars alike have struggled to settle on a comprehensive definition of employee engagement that can be transferred into action at the work site (Kahn, 1990; Saks 2006; Shuck & Reio, 2011; Shuck & Wollard, 2010).

Kahn (1990) developed theory on both engagement and disengagement, and postulated that engagement was evident when workers felt safe enough in their environment to express their true self and simultaneously develop relationships with their coworkers. On the contrary, disengagement is characterized by the employee not feeling safe enough to show their true self, and not building relationships with others. Instead, the disengaged employees will withdraw in an attempt to protect themselves. Kahn identified three domains of employee engagement: Meaningfulness of the job itself, Safety to be ones true self, and Availability of psychological, emotional and physical resources to perform the job.

Inspired by Khan's early theory, other scholars sought to understand engagement from the organization level as well as the employee experience (Shuck, Rocco & Albornoz, 2001). Shuck and Wollard (2010) conducted a detailed review of past scholarly research in the quest to develop a definition of employee engagement. They found 6 similar definitions. They synthesized these definitions to produce one which they believed captured the essence of the phenomenon. Their definition of employee engagement recognizes that employees adapt to their organizations in order to produce results. They define employee engagement as "an individual employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed toward desired organizational outcomes" (p.103).

A common misunderstanding of employee engagement is that engagement can be developed and controlled by the organization. Shuck and Wollard (2010) argue that organizations that focus engagement efforts at the organization level are planning too broadly for success. Employee engagement starts at the employee level. According to Macey and Schneider (2008), each employee experience affects the level of engagement for that employee. The phenomenon is not controlled by the organization, but instead is determined by the employee. It is personal and cannot be produced in the employee by organizational interventions. This support the thought that employee engagement is more stable than, and should not be confused with organizational commitment, as it is more intrinsically focused and personal in nature, and not impacted by efforts asserted buy the organizing. (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006; Shuck & Wollard, 2010).

Bakker and Xanthopoulou (2009) researched employee engagement from the perspective of the transference of engagement from one employee to another. They termed this phenomenon as "crossover engagement" where one employee's enthusiasm and engrossment in their work had a powerful and positive effect on his/her peers. From this work, they defined employee engagement as "a positive, fulfilling, and work-related state of mind that consists of vigor, dedication, and absorption" (p. 1562).

Bakker and Xanthopoulou define crossover as "the process that occurs when the psychological well-being experienced by one person affects the level of well-being of another person" *(*p. 1563). Their study indicated that one employee's engagement level influenced another's when there was frequent communication between the two. This frequent communication produced a measurable improvement in the employee's self-reported performance effectiveness. The concept of engagement crossover has implications to Feldman's early postulations that for newcomers to adjust, they need to become included by their work teams. Their conclusions indicate that deep social ties at work create the opportunity for employees to transfer engagement to one another. In a sense, their work highlights the most positive effects of social inclusion at work: transfer of emotions related to love of work. Crossover engagement is passive as well, as it is dependent on the other, more engaged person.

Inclusion

Where employee engagement comes from one experiencing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state that results in a deep sense of dedication and vigor toward their work, it is not dependent on an individual having strong social networks. Bakker and Xanthopoulou's (2009) study did identify a connection between two people and an increase in engagement and self-reported work performance, but it did not overtly conclude that employee engagement is dependent on social acceptance. Employees can be very engaged, and very solitary. Some work tasks require solitary performance, and one who thrives on "alone time" can be quite engaged and not social at all. Personal – Need factors, as defined by Cummings & Worley (2005), fall into two types: Social needs and growth needs. One who has low social needs will more likely than not be content working alone, and therefore may experience employee engagement unconnected to work-place social ties. Low social needs does not mean "no personal relationships needed." Employees need satisfactory relationships, and the literature indicates that the need for social acceptance and interaction at work is high.

In Polach's study of new college graduates entering the work force, she uncovered the theme of Friendship:

> "Three themes related to the participants' experience with making friends: discovery of how different it was to make friends at work, realizing that friendship is critical to feeling settled and belonging, and moving in the city to find a better sense of belonging (the incidental theme). Friendship, finding friends, making friends, and forming relationships with others who are similar in age and experience are at the center of the first-year experience" (Polach, 2004, p.14).

Making friends at work allows newcomers to feel included. Choa et al. (1994) express the importance of "People" in one's socialization, and Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992) postulated the group domain, focusing on an individual's need for inclusion in their work team. The literature ties performance and tenure to newcomers feeling included and socially accepted, i.e. adjusted, but the methods in use do not provide for a newcomer to easily tap into social resources. Per the literature, for a newcomer's organizational socialization process to be considered a success, s/he needs to feel both included by his/her work team and feel personal affection toward the organization.

Ryan and Kossek (2008) define an inclusive workplace as "one that values differences within its workforce and uses the full potential of all employees." Inclusive workplaces demonstrate fair access to information, decision-making influence and job security for all employees through a focus on "employee involvement and integration" (p. 296).

Other components of an inclusive work environment, stated by Ryan and Kossek (2008) include: A workplace that values differences in prioritization between work and personal life; a workplace that supports difference in how employees blend personal and work-life demands; a workplace that does not identify personal care-giving responsibilities (i.e. children, elder-care) as barriers to promotion or achieving ones potential, and, a work place that promotes involvement of all employees.

Inclusion is much more personal than commitment, embeddedness and engagement. It is the result of the organization knowing about, and understanding, the employee at the most personal, and perhaps intimate, level. To build this kind of relationships, employees must feel safe in their work teams and ultimately their organizations. They must believe they can bring their “whole-self” to work. “Evidence suggests that employees’ relationships with one another—their mutual knowledge regarding others’ information, practices, assumptions, biases, trustworthiness, and willingness to help one another—can foster better organizational performance” (Pearce & Randel, 2004, p. 85). Inclusion, therefore, is the result of true *acceptance* of employees and their integration into the workforce. Newcomer adjustment is dependent on social acceptance, and is seen as a key driver to effective socialization to create organizational commitment.

Mentoring

One way organizations can contribute to the passive participation of newcomer’s adjustments is through initiating mentoring relationships. The research on mentoring has revealed that mentoring relationship, formal or informal, benefit an employee’s social experience. Hegstad’s work (1999) identified two main categories of benefits for employees in mentoring relationships: career-related (such as increased exposure and more opportunities) and psychosocial (increased self-image and confidence). Employees benefit from effective mentoring in terms organizational socialization: professional growth, job satisfaction, career mobility and recognition (Brooks & Clunis, 2007). Organizations also benefit from effective mentoring programs; individuals experience greater career satisfaction, improved peer satisfaction, improved retention, improved performance and organizational commitment (Hegstad, 1999; Thurston, D'Abate & Eddy, 2012).

Peer mentoring, typically aligned with socializing newcomers and building job-related knowledge, provides newcomers with social support, answers to questions, and immediate performance feedback that is non-threatening. Peer mentoring relationships tend to have longer shelf-lives as these relationships lack the hierarchical distance formal mentoring relationships often have (Thomas, Hu, Gewin, Bingham & Yanchus, 2005). In Fisher's 1985 study, she found that newcomers rated their frequent contact with more senior peers and having a buddy or mentor relationship most helpful, closely followed by frequent contact with one's supervisors, on the job training and orientation programs as socialization techniques were rated last.

One could argue that newcomers cannot be passive and be included into their new surroundings that they must engage in proactive behaviors to build relationships and gain entrance into the social fabric of the organization. Inclusion and mentoring do cross that informal line, as intentional activity by both parties is needed for successful outcomes. An organization needs to be inclusionary, as defined by Ryan and Kossek (2008), and Pearce and Randel (2004), in order for a newcomer to bridge the relationship gap. Mentoring; peer or other, is only successful if both parties are active participants.

Proactive Participation in Newcomer Adjustment

So far this review has focused on tangible aspects of newcomer adjustment: employee orientation programs and their intent to create organizational commitment (personal bond with the organization), employee embeddedness (preference to stay), and employee engagement (additional effort applied to performance). The literature presented implies that social acceptance (inclusion) is a requirement for effective newcomer adjustment (Rollag, 2004). Mentoring (peer and professional) supports inclusion and is a method that supports successful integration of newcomers. Peer mentoring programs may support *collective learning*, as peer mentors gain from these experiences as well.

Cross and Armstrong (2008) defined the term collective learning as "involving social interaction, relational synergies, a strong sense of belonging, and the development of shared understanding and meaning, resulting in outcomes that are both explicit and implicit in nature" (p. 601). Collective learning, which implies learning as a group, is dissimilar to knowing-in-action, which is a personal process, yet both methods seek to explore the different ways a newcomer can actively participate in their socialization.

Collective learning and knowing-in-action imply an active process for seeking information to learn one's job better, to learn about the organization more thoroughly, and to establish oneself as a member of the organization. The recent research indicates that newcomers gain more information and understanding from active means, than from passive means. When newcomers engage in knowing-in-action, or information seeking in the immediate, versus planning period, they gain quicker and more effective solutions for their immediate problems (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007). Reichers' (1987) study investigated the impact a newcomers' activeness during the entry stage (organizational socialization stage 2) had on their rate of adjustment. Reichers' study demonstrated a faster learning rate for active newcomers than for passive newcomers. Ashford and Black (1996) also postulated the more active a newcomer is in their own socialization process, the faster they will adapt, and with more effective outcomes, such as organizational commitment, intentions to remain, etc. Their conclusions also showed a faster rate of job and workplace knowledge. Both studies stopped short of stating newcomers adjusted more effectively when active, than when passive.

Ashford and Taylor's four-step model of adaptation (1990) articulated the cognitive process in which a newcomer engages during Van Maanen and Shein's stages 2 and 3 of organizational socialization. Ashford and Taylor's stages are derived from the assumption that "individuals will be motivated to adapt because of the likelihood that a failure to adopt will cause them to be selected against" (p. 7).

The first step of this model is learning and sense making of the task-at-hand. The second step is decision-making and negotiation of the task. The third step is action-regulation and the fourth step is stress management.

First, individuals access information about their new environment and / or role and realize they must adapt. The information presented to them may not match their anticipation (Van Maanen and Shein's stage 1) and they experience shock (Louis, 1980). They seek and evaluate options and determine how they will adapt. Second, newcomers make decisions about whether they will make the necessary adaptations. They move to either step 3, or step 4. Step 3 consists of taking the required steps to modify expectations and manage the stress of shock. Step 4 refers to the newcomers engaging in negotiating; the newcomer's attempts at changing the organizations expectations of how the role should be performed. This process requires the newcomer to be intentional and active in their socialization process. Per the above information, the newcomer is active during all three stages, especially stage 2, whereas the literature on orientation programs and passive socialization tend to indicate stage 2 is a passive stage.

Three leading typologies have emerged from the research regarding newcomer proactivity in the socialization process, knowing-in-action. Miller & Jablin (1991) indicate newcomers may use up to seven different information-seeking tactics. These information-seeking tactics are compatible with Ashford and Taylor's Step 3 of their adaptation model. These information-seeing tactics are: (1) overt questioning, (2) indirect questioning, usually used if a newcomer is uncomfortable in seeking information, (3) third parties, asking someone with whom the newcomer is more comfortable, or using secondary sources of information, (4) testing limits, or "breaking rules" to see what will really happen, (5) disguising conversation, joking or 'I have a friend who…' in order to raise issues (6) observation, and (7) surveillance, which may also include eavesdropping. (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007). Miller and Jablin's seven information seeking tactics are focused on learning: learning rules, learning how-to and learning about the organization. These seven information seeking tactics are tempered by the life-stage of the newcomer (Finkelstein, Kulas & Dages, 2003; Myers, 2005). Older workers may be less comfortable seeking information as they may perceive themselves to be subject to negative stereotypes about older workers. If one seeks too much information, they may "prove" the stereotype that older workers are slow and cannot learn new skills. Or, if they are benefiting from a positive stereotype that older workers are experts, seeking information may negatively impact the halo effect currently being enjoyed. Younger workers are more likely to seek information, as they perceive they have less to lose and more to gain (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007; Finkelstein, Kulas & Dages, 2003; Myers, 2005;). Job change negotiation is compatible with step four of Ashford and Taylor's four-step adaptation model.

Ashford and Black (1996) studied a newcomers' desire for control during the socialization process and the impact this desire had on adjustment. The higher the personal need for control (in order to diminish uncertainty) the more active the newcomer was in their socialization process. The behavior tactics identified in their study were: (1) information-seeking (learning about how the organization works), (2) feedback-seeking (gaining information about ones performance from supervisors and peers), (3) relationship-building (building positive relationships with peers and supervisors), (4) general socializing (participation in social events), (5) networking (socializing with those outside of their work group), (6) job-change negotiation (attempting to alter ones job tasks or role, or the expectation of such), and (7) positive framing (staying optimistic). Information-seeking and feedback-seeking are arguably a composite of Miller and Jablin's seven information seeking tactics (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007).

The third leading typology is self-regulation. Focused on guiding one's own goal-directed activities over time, self-regulation is seen as a typology because it encompasses an employee's personal motivation to be active in their engagement with their work and workplace. Ashforth and Saks (1996) cataloged six self-management techniques following a study of new accountants: (1) self-goal-setting (setting direction for one's self), (2) self-observation (examining one's behavior), (3) cueing strategies (using triggers as mnemonic devices), (4) self-reward, (5) self-punishment, and (6) rehearsal. Self-regulation, although congruent with the typology, seems to be a stand-alone. It assumes subjects were aware of themselves as they used their self-regulating tactics. The research does not distinguish between immediate knowledge of use of self-regulating tactics, and hind-sight understanding of use of self-regulating tactics.

These three typologies for active information seeking are intrapersonal and are dependent on the newcomer's self-awareness and recognition of what they know and do not know. These are a tall order for a newcomer, especially a younger newcomer. The literature assumes newcomers, regardless of age or experience, have a highly-developed sense of self-awareness. Importantly, while the majority of the researchers acknowledged a negative aspect of their research was self-reporting on surveys, and the dangers of respondents not having the maturity or experience to recognize reality, subsequent studies did not control for this dilemma (Ashford & Black, 1996; Major et al., 1995; Morrison, 2002).

A support mechanism for these three information-seeking typologies is socially supportive relationships, such a peer mentors career mentors, or networks, social and professional. Morrison (2002) reminds us that "commitment [to the organization] may be stronger if an individual has a set of friendship contacts that is somewhat diverse. That is, newcomers with friendship ties that span organizational units and levels, as opposed to those with ties only within a single unit and only with peers at the same level, will have a stronger attachment to their overall organizations" (p. 1151-1152). In addition to supporting organizational commitment, Morrison recognizes that network relationships are important to newcomer learning and adjustment. Insiders support newcomers by helping acquire information and learn the subtleties of the organization, thus navigating more effectively through their first year or so. She also found that the more integrated a newcomer was into formal and informal networks, the higher they rated their knowledge of the organization, their ability to perform their job and the more socially integrated they felt. Reichers (1987) maintained that frequency of interaction between newcomers and tenured employees increased the sense of social acceptance.

Morrison (2002) studied the impact two types of newcomer-formed networks, friendship and informational, have on the social acceptance of the newcomer. She defined a newcomer friendship network as a close-knit support group that creates and provides a sense of belonging and identity to the work group. Informational networks are made up of supervisors, peers and subject matter experts (SMEs), i.e. those who have in-depth knowledge in the job and tasks, and to whom questions can be directed. Newcomers tend to have a high level of confidence in the accuracy of the answers to their questions when provided by their informational network. The informational network plays a large role in the creation of organization and task-related knowledge, whereas the friendship network impacts the attitude and sense of attachment to the organization. "A newcomer needs an informational network for acquiring various types of information, and she or he needs a friendship network for feeling integrated into the organization" (Morrison, 2002, p. 1158). Morrison's work reemphasizes that newcomers recognize the need to seek out information, and construct applicable networks that support their social and performance-based integration and acceptance into the organization.

Unlike orientation programs and on-the-job-training (OJT), efforts to achieve social inclusion appear to be solely in the control of the newcomer. Early in a newcomer's tenure, they concentrate on learning about their job and performance expectations, they clarify their role within the organization, and they strive to understand the culture. To accomplish this, newcomers rely on many resources, both non-interpersonal and interpersonal. "Among the interpersonal sources of information, supervisors, coworkers, and mentors have been shown to play an important role in the learning process" (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992, p.851). Networking is different from mentoring, in that networking relationships are typically characterized by less intense and personal relationships as compared to mentoring relationships (Forret & Dougherty, 2004).

In addition to friendship and informational networks, newcomers may search for a professional network. Forret and Dougherty (2004) define networking behaviors as one's "attempts to develop and maintain relationships with others who have the potential to assist them in their work or career" (p. 419). This definition describes networking as a proactive behavior, focusing on networks for the purpose of career progressions through professional relationships. They go on to state that networking as a proactive behavior includes activities such as joining "professional associations, seeking high-visibility assignments, and participating in social functions" (p.419).

The brief summary of the prevailing research on organization socialization shows high agreement regarding how organizations conduct their socialization process, and how newcomers are active in their socialization. However, research does not make a connection to the concept of communities at work. This lack of congruence in the research is of interest to me, as the definition of newcomer adjustment is aligned with the definition of community at work.

A Psychological Sense of Community of Work

Sarason (1974) wrote that a sense of community is achieved through perceptions of similarity to others, acknowledged interdependence, a willingness to maintain interdependence, and, *a feeling that one is part of a larger, dependable, stable structure.* This definition of community is closely aligned with the definition of social acceptance and inclusion, which are the two leading indicators of effective newcomer adjustment as well as negative indicators of turnover. I am not the first researcher to make this connection.

McMillan and Chavis (as cited in McMillan, 1996), built on Sarason's initial definition of community and applied it directly to the work place. They defined a sense of community *at work* as consisting of four elements: (1) membership, meaning belonging and / or relatedness, (2) influence, or a sense that individuals matter and make a difference to the group, and the group makes a difference to the members; (3) integration and fulfillments of needs, those reinforcements a group provides its members to motivate their involvement in the group; 4) shared emotional connection, or the belief that members have a shared, and will continue to have a shared, experience. Klein and D'Aunno (1986) further define community in the workplace as an employee's sense of membership participation and identification with some work or work-related group.

Burroughs & Eby (1998) overtly connected the amount of time individuals spend at their place of work with their personal needs of finding sources of meaning, identity and support. They stated that employees used to find sources to meet these needs of acceptance and identity in their neighborhoods and their places of worship, but that there has been a shift in behavior toward filling these needs by creating community at work.

Burroughs & Eby (1998) focused on community creation and membership at work, which they refer to as a Psychological Sense of Community at Work (PSCW), and developed the PSCW model. PSCW is comprised of six constructs: (1) Sense of belonging, trust and security (members are well-known to each other and willing to help each other, and feel accepted by the group); (2) Coworker support (provides opportunities for the worker to collaborate with others, participate in decision-making, and express own ideas); (3) Team Orientation (members show concern for social support and demonstrate recognition for contributions). In team orientation individuals fully believe the activities of the group are critical and therefore worthy of their individual and collective effort; (4) Emotional Safety (addresses the quality of the relationships within the group); (5) Truth-telling (members of the community openly and honesty communicate feelings, concerns and disagreements; members have the permission and ability to say what needs to be said, versus what they think others want to hear); (6) Spiritual Bond (members leverage guiding principles, usually rooted in shared ethics and values, to inform their activities and decisions).

Love (2007), and Pretty & McCarthy (1991) use Burroughs and Eby's model to conduct their own studies to find ways employees create PSCW. Love (2007) studied ways employees find security at work, specifically though building connections with peers, and developing PSCW, when experiencing employment insecurity. She looked for connections between personality preference toward individualism and preferences toward collectivism. Those who preferred collectivism tended to report higher levels of PSCW and lesser feelings of insecurity.

Love's research (2007) supports the assumption that experiencing a psychological sense of community at work helps diminish the stressors and challenges of one's work (Boyd & Angelique, 2002). Burroughs & Eby's (1998) construct of PSCW easily supports, and illustrates, the concept that effective newcomer adjustment is achieved though social acceptance and inclusion. The definition of PSCW is, in fact, a deep dive into what social acceptance and inclusion look like.

Gaps in the Literature

The literature review thus far has uncovered significant contributions to the field on effective organizational socialization, proactive newcomer adjustment, and the psychological sense of community at work. The research review indicated overwhelming agreement on Van Maanen and Schein's framework of newcomer stages, and newcomer adjustment. The researchers have built models and tools to measure and validate the theoretical assumptions, and have demonstrated a strong case for the need for both active and passive participation on the part of the newcomer when effectively socializing into their new organization.

The literature on organization socialization, although in great agreement on frameworks and typologies, lacked information on the tactics used by an experienced newcomer, versus the inexperienced newcomer, during the socialization process to create community at work, which would lead to acceptance and inclusion. Furthermore, no research was found on four additional resources available to a newcomer: network groups, diversity networking programs, professional association networks (PANs) and employee assistance programs (EAPs). Forret and Dougherty (2004) briefly touched on the usage of PANs in networking, but not as a resource for newcomer adjustment.

The term network-group, also called social-function network, “refers to an organized group of people who identify with a common characteristic such as race, ethnicity, or gender” (Brooks & Clunis, 2007, p. 243). In addition, networking groups may be organized by religious affinity, and by specialized role; such as all women in sales or all Hispanics in accounting. Network groups provide access to mentors and provide social support to employees (newcomers and old-timers alike). Employees join network groups for reasons more closely aligned with meeting social identity needs and enhancing their career, than for reasons resulting from dissatisfaction with the organization (Brooks & Clunis, 2007). Research on how experienced newcomers utilize networking groups in their socialization process would benefit the current knowledge base by helping practitioners understand effective methods for supporting diverse newcomers through their adjustment period.

Diversity networking programs, those programs developed by corporate diversity departments, were also missing from the literature on newcomer adjustment. Kalev, Kelly and Dobbin (2006), describe diversity networking programs as ranging from brown-bag lunch meetings to national conferences. The organization or the employees themselves can initiate the diversity program. Regardless of who initiates, they afford the opportunity for members to meet and share information and career advice. Diversity networking programs may provide career networking opportunities and access to mentors from outside one's community as those who are interested in diversity networking programs may have joined as a member of a diverse community, or joined as a way to meet others outside of their community.

The literature also appears to be lacking discussions on the use of professional association networks (PANs), such as SWEnet (Society of Women Engineers Network) or NBMBAA (National Black MBA Association), as vehicles for newcomer's integration into an organization. During the anticipatory stage, a newcomer may be forging relationships via a PAN, or may already have relationships with employees via a PAN. The PAN may, in fact, be the vehicle through which the newcomer networked to gain access to the organization, and ultimately the job. PANs may be part of an organization's diversity department or the newcomer may access a PAN outside the workplace. Either way, PANS provide networking opportunities focused on one's profession and areas of special interest.

The literature was missing research that connected a newcomer's use of Employee Resource/Assistance Programs (ERPs/EAPs) to more effectively integrate, reduce re-entry stress, or help with work-life balance issues. EAPs are employer funded resources designed to support employees by providing counseling and consulting services that concentrate on supporting employees and their families through personal problems, by offering preventive or remedial services (Kirk & Brown, 2003; Yu, 2009).

EAPs are the main vehicles for helping employees manage occupational stress. Per Kirk & Brown (2003) EAPs are broadening their influence from one-on-one support on personal problems, to include “individual counseling, stress management, critical incident stress debriefing (CISD), trauma debriefing, wellness programs, mediation, change management and managerial coaching” (p.138). Re-entry into the corporate world would create occupational stress for some, and one might expect to see research on the topic of usage of EAPs during re-entry.

EAP staffers tend to be trained in psychology and social work or counseling (Kirk & Brown, 2003) and therefore have customarily used traditional counseling techniques and focused their support on the individual. This process has generally resulted in overlooking the employee- organization connection. Recently, there has been recognition that EAPs need to become more organizationally perceptive, and develop an ‘organizational orientation,’ thus not simply duplicating mental health services, but connecting their unique skills and services with the overarching needs of the organization. Per the literature, the majority of EAP staffers have not had training in organizational structure or organizational change, (Kirk & Brown, 2003). It may be this last statement that reveals why there was a lack of literature regarding the usage of EAPs as an integrated aspect of an organization’s orientation program for newcomers. Could it be the linkage between predictable re-entry stress and the solutions provided by EAPs has not yet been made?

In addition to the above discussion on topics not covered, opportunities for additional research center on studying a different population, as, per Klein and Weaver (2000), we have a “tendency to rely on a homogeneous sample [of] recent college graduates going into professional occupations” (p.61).

The majority of the studies conducted, and subsequently reviewed for this article, studied recent college graduates entering their first job (e.g., Polach (2004), Choa et al. (1994), Ostroff & Kozlowski (1992), and Meyer & Allen (1988)). Bauer and Green (1994) studied new PhD students. This author finds this problematic, since findings from this population may not be generalizable to all newcomers. Recent college graduates who are entering their first post-college job will experience newcomer adjustment differently from an experienced worker entering a new organization. Van Maanen simply stated “people acquire the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume a particular job in an organization differently not only because people are different, but, more critically, because techniques or strategies of people processing differ” (Van Maanen, 1978, p. 19).

This review also uncovered a gap in the research on those who have been out of the work force for a prolonged amount of time and are now returning. Newcomers who have been out of work, taken personal time off, retired and need to work again, or deployed due to military obligations, are likely to have additional needs as newcomers, and may be re-active or proactive in new and difference ways than the post-college population that has so often been the subject of newcomer studies. Studying the information –seeking and networking behaviors of these distinct populations may prove there is no difference between post college newcomers and experienced returning-to-work newcomers, or it may uncover new knowledge useful to HRD practitioners and scholars alike.

The literature was insufficient in its discussion of the “personal”, those things that matter most to the study participant. The majority of researchers utilized surveys and regression analysis to derive their conclusions regarding the stages or steps or processes a newcomer leverages. None of the studies asked the subjects about their personal motivation. None asked about past corporate experiences that may have provided them with a level of knowledge or understanding that allowed them greater access to resources, or a better understanding of how to utilize available resources. None of the literature indicated that those being studied agreed that they had reached an acceptable level of newcomer adjustment. Many of the subjects may not have perceived that they were experiencing social inclusion and acceptance. These questions were not asked, and therefore, those assumptions were not validated.

The organization socialization –focused literature, while clearly defining the process the corporation uses to socialize newcomers, failed to make the connection between organization socialization and the creation of community at work. In addition, it did not articulate the personal experience of experienced newcomers when re-entering the corporate world.

Evidence for this research need is not hard to notice. The current (2008-2014) United States of America (US) economic and unemployment situation is creating an environment where experienced workers are finding themselves jobless for an extended period of time. It is also creating difficulties for those who have left their jobs by choice, to come back into either their same profession or return to their former employer. The US has seen large job losses, while enrollment in colleges and universities has increased as displaced workers leverage education as a way to prepare themselves for a new career or make themselves more marketable in an increasingly competitive job-hunting environment (msnbc.com). These statistics, coupled with MSNBC's prediction that it will take 5 years to return our unemployment statistics to 'normal' causes this researcher to suspect we will see a large population of returning newcomers to the corporate world after an extended leave.

The recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan also provide cause for more research. The specialized population of military personal, returning to civilian work after a military deployment, is worthy of further research. As a specialized population, their re-entry needs and proactivity would most likely be different from for those who took time off for personal reasons.

If human resource development professionals can identify the unique needs of returning, experienced newcomers, better and more intentional integration support can be developed and deployed to the population in question, thus limiting the amount of workplace stress, burnout and subsequent turnover, and improving performance of the individual and the organization as a whole.

The research has focused on tangible methods of newcomer active socialization, and referred to it as proactive, which in itself implies a sense of pre-knowledge and an ability to strategically fill ones needs. This concept seems more applicable to an experienced newcomer, someone who has had work experience and is carrying past organizational successes and experience with them to their new work, and drawing from those experiences to create their new experience. One might expect an experienced newcomer to be truly *pro*-active, versus a recent college graduate who would likely be less *pro*-active, and more *re*-active, that is, responding to the shock of entry and mustering resources in the moment to support their adjustment, versus having pre-knowledge and leveraging that to be plan-full and strategic in their adjustment process. Additional research is needed to compare the experiences of these two separate populations in their newcomer adjustment journey. Ashford and Black (1996) encourage researchers to consider future studies on "the ways in which individuals are cognitively and emotionally active during entry, not just behaviorally active" (p. 212). A comparison between experienced newcomers and inexperienced newcomers may begin to fill this knowledge gap. If newcomer adjustment is defined by true integration (an employee is accepted and included by their work group), and true integration is the definition of a psychological sense of community at work (PSCW), how does the experienced newcomer achieve this? Understanding how individuals create community at work improves our comprehension of the experience of work and its effects on the workers themselves (Love 2007).

Lastly, the conundrum of theory to practice cannot be overlooked. The research reviewed was overwhelmingly conducted by scholars. The lack of research done by active practitioners, i.e. non-scholars, raises a separate opportunity. The studies reviewed made two similar assumptions: 1) organizations are complex beings that spend time and money deeply considering their organizational socialization processes and expected outcomes and strategize which aspects of their socialization processes will be controlled by the organization, and which ones will not; and 2) that those who develop and execute on organizational socialization are learned HRD practitioners. In this author's experience, organizations spend little time strategizing their organizational socialization processes. They neither contextualize that which needs to be controlled and that which does not need control. Instead, organizations develop 2-5 day programs to on-board newcomers, and then, sans any training required to do the job, leave the newcomer to their own devices for effective adjustment. In addition, many of those tasked with the responsibility to execute on orientation program are not HRD practitioners with extensive education in the area of employee development and socialization, but are, instead, employees who have learned the ropes on the job. It is this gap in the literature, theory to practice, that provides the greatest opportunity for knowledge creation. What taxonomies, frameworks and theories are practitioners actually utilizing to socialize their newcomers? Who better to participate in these studies, if not conduct them, then those who are in the field, doing the work presently?

In summary, research on how organizations socialize their newcomers (through passive participation), and on how newcomers are active in their socialization process has demonstrated that one cannot be socialized without both active and passive participation. However, more research is needed to understand what tactics experienced newcomers, returning to work after a significant absence, use when creating a psychological sense of community at work.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Method

The purpose of this study was to understand how experienced newcomers create their own Psychological Sense of Community at Work (PSCW). The central research question is: How do experienced newcomers find or create their own community when re-entering the corporate world after at least six months away?

This study was conducted using case study methodology to uncover the personal experience of the study participants. Case study was chosen as the method in order to leverage its focus on "empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in the context of its real life" (Ellinger, Watkins & Marsick, 2005, p.329). It allows the researcher to do an in-depth investigation of a single phenomenon using interviews, observations and other data collection techniques such as document investigation and artifact examination (Weiten, 2007; Yin, 2009).

Case studies can be conducted both quantitatively and qualitatively. I completed a qualitative, i.e. interpretive case study, and more specifically, an intrinsic study. Stake (1995) defines the intrinsic case study in terms of the researcher "*need*[*ing*] to learn about a particular case" [italics added] (p.3). The researcher has an intrinsic interest in the case itself.

My interest in understanding what newcomers do to create their own sense of community when re-entering the workforce after a significant time away was best researched using case study method. This method allowed me to leverage multiple data collection methods to uncover meaning, and develop a theoretical model. Per Tellis (1997) it is the "ideal methodology when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed."

(p.1). Tellis goes on to say that case studies, by design, "bring out details from the viewpoint of the participants by using multiple sources of data" (p.1).

Case study research is often used to achieve one or all of the following three goals: provide description, test theory, or, generate theory (Edwards, 1998, 2004; Eisenhardt, 1989). I had the interest in generating theory as a result of interviewing study participants, and analyzing organizational documents such as new employee orientation records and the company's semi-annual employee satisfaction survey.

Case study also supports the closure of the empirical evidence gap regarding what experienced newcomers do to drive their own socialization process to gain entrance into communities at work. The existing research has studied ways in which newcomers are proactive in their socialization through the use of surveys. These surveys have uncovered themes and confirmed typologies, but due to the nature of surveys, the participants have had to choose from a list provided by the researcher, and therefore the research has not uncovered the organic actions newcomers take when entering an organization and building their community.

Case study also allows the researcher to be open to the data leading them along an unexpected path (Silbey, 2003). Maintaining a sense of openness and curiosity to the story told by the data allows the researcher to follow the unexpected data to uncover important content and themes. Yet the researcher must be capable of watching for, and uncovering the unexpected emergent data. The use of a structured interview (as in my study) allows the researcher to conduct the case with some idea of the data they will gather, and the themes that will result. During the data collection, the researcher may discover their assumptions were wrong, yet benefit from this outcome. Staying open to the emergence of the data and unexpected themes allows the researcher to change course mid-study, and follow the data (Smith, 2003). This method assures the same data is gathered for each case, yet allows the researcher to follow their data into an unplanned course of study.

The many strengths of the case study methodology have been discussed above. However, there are potential limitations as well. Among the challenges often expressed is the perceived inability to generalize the study to a broader population, challenge the rigor of the study, and concerns regarding the reliability and validity of the study (Edwards, 1998; Stall-Meadows & Hyle, 2010; Yin, 2009). Researchers can manage the criticism of the reliability and validity of case study methodology by using field journals throughout the study to capture the decision-making process of the researcher (Eisenhardt, 1989). Researches also can use this to their advantage, preferring to focus instead on an emerging outcome or differing viewpoint (Silbey, 2003; Smith; 2003).

Even when following a well-articulated case study research model such as Yin or Stake's, and taking care to assure reliability and validity, the researcher must be skilled in the case study process in order to assure the study is well organized and executed. Poor case study skills will significantly compromise both the results of the study, and the integrity of the study. Skilled case study researchers should be good listeners and capable of asking good questions. They need to be comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity, have a firm grasp of issues, and know how to avoid bias during the data analysis process (Edwards, 1998; Stake, 1994; Stall-Meadows & Hyle, 2010; Yin, 2009).

Interviewers must be capable of interpretation and ‘reading between the lines’ during the interview without projecting their own pre-understanding and experiences into the interview. Experienced interviewers are proficient in language and are able to understand the linguistic colloquialisms of the study participants, as difficulties in communication style between the researcher and study participant have been identified. Most importantly, a skilled interviewer is capable of helping a study participant uncover their story (Koivisto, Janhonen & Väisänen, 2002; Kvale, 1996; Yin, 2009). My professional experience has provided me with the opportunity to become skilled in interviewing subjects with the intent of helping them uncover meaning and solve work-related problems, and / or develop plans for on-going achievement and promotion. In my own development journey I was taught by a development coach who once shared with me her cardinal rule of thumb: Take a genuine interest in your clients, and you will always do what is right by them. This guidance has proven very effective. Interviewees, regardless of the reason for the interview, can sense when the person interviewing them is not interested in either the person, or the subject. Developing a genuine interest in the person allows the interviewer to get past the barriers one may create, and get inside the interviewees experience.

Laverty (2003) indicates a researcher must have a bond with their subject matter. I have not only a genuine interest in my subject matter, but also a genuine interest in my study participants. My skills as an interviewer supported my ability to execute the methodology.

The writing capability of the researcher can be a limitation to this method. A well written case study report needs to be well organized and absent of unnecessary material. Researchers need to take care to develop the necessary writing skills to produce rich description that engages the reader in the study itself. Case study authors often fall prey to the notion that their report should read like a story. Stake (1994) suggests to stay away from story-telling and to assure a compressive and competent written report.

As stated earlier, researchers and scholars alike have yet to agree on a standard case study method. That being said, there is agreement that case study allows a researcher to leverage many methods within their design to uncover the data they seek (Edwards, 1998). In conducting this case study, I followed a basic design amalgamated from the writings of Edwards (1998, 2004), Eisenhardt (1989), Gersick (1988), Marsick and Watkins (1997), Stall-Meadows & Hyle (2010), Stake (1994), Tellis (1997) and Yin (2009).

Research Design

For this research, the case study design followed the seven components suggested for an effective study: Plan, Design, Prepare, Conduct, Data Analysis, Develop Conclusions, and Report (Yin, 2009).

In the Planning stage the researcher identifies the purpose for the study, identifies their problem statement and determines the rationale for using case study methodology. The researcher develops the research question and articulates the strengths and limitations of the method (Yin, 2009).

The Design stage is characterized by the development of the case study protocol, defining the unit of analysis and the case or cases to be studied. The researcher determines guiding theories, study propositions, and identifies and predicts underlying issues. It is in this stage that the researcher develops a true understanding of their own suppositions and theories that ultimately guide their study. They identify *what is to be explored*. A study proposition points the researcher to what they should study. The study proposition for this research is "experienced newcomers will purposefully and intentionally do things to create their own psychological sense of community at work." Therefore, this case study studied *what* experienced newcomers *did* to create their own community at work (Yin, 2009).

The Design stage also includes choosing the specific design of the case study: is this an exploratory, explanatory, intrinsic, or theory development study? As mentioned before, this study is an intrinsic case study, and will aid in the development of a theory regarding the strategies used by the experienced newcomers when re-entering the world of work, and the motivations behind those strategies. (Edwards, 1998; Eisenhardt, 1989; Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2009).

It is in the Design stage where the researcher develops specific questions, typically interview questions, to gather information on the nature of the phenomenon. Decisions are made regarding what documents to investigate and additional data gathering activities are determined. For this case study, multiple resources were used: interviews, corporate documents and a field journal (Edwards, 1998; Eisenhardt, 1989; Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2009).

In the Prepare stage the researcher assures they have the skills and knowledge to conduct the study. And lastly, this is the stage where the researcher gains approval to conduct the case and demonstrates appropriate human subjects protection (Yin, 2009).

In the Conduct stage, the researcher follows the case study protocol closely, gathers data from multiple resources, creates a case study database, and maintains their chain of evidence. Interviews, corporate documents and field journals were used to gather the data and maintain the chain of evidence (Yin, 2009).

Data Analysis, the next stage, was performed with the intention of identifying themes that lead to a theory of what experienced newcomers employed as strategies when re-entering the world of work, and the motivations behind those strategies. Yin (2009) counsels the researcher to define priorities regarding what to analyze. The original proposition that guides the study is useful in determining the prioritization. Some choices for the researcher include developing thick description and interpretation (Stake, 1995), using grounded qualitative meta-analysis (Stall-Meadows & Hyle, 2010), building a case history (Gersick, 1988) or developing a case database, and exploring rival propositions. Yin (2009) encourages the inclusion of a case or cases that can be considered rival propositions. Investigations of the rival propositions help to bolster the overall case study. A case which does not match the pattern provides a valuable juxtaposition to the other results. I developed a case database to develop my theory, and compared it to one rival proposition.

The process employed for this research allowed theory-building, and leveraged the works of Edwards (1998, 2004), Eisenhardt (1989), Gersick (1988), Stall-Meadows &

Hyle (2010) and to develop a framework that identified the main relationships, activities, and experiences, that represent the phenomenon, derive theory and validate the theory through the application to other cases.

The result of the data analysis, and therefore the theory building, is the *Conclusion* of the study, *Recommendations* for HRD professionals and organizations and *Implications* for future studies.

Once the researcher has developed his or her Conclusions, Recommendations and Implications, the researcher is ready to write their Report and prepare it for public viewing (Yin, 2009). At this stage, the researcher creates both text and visual materials to express the outcomes of the case.

Population and Study participants

In an intrinsic case study, where the unit of analysis is a person or persons, the researcher positions the study participant as the most important element of the study. The search for their story, their meaning, their experience, drives the design of the study (Yin, 2009).

My participants are white-collar workers (employees who perform any office work, versus manual labor) working in a Fortune 500 corporation that manufactures medical devices (referred to as “the Company,”) located in multiple cities in the United States of America, who can participate in a face-to-face interview process.

My study participants are those who have re-entered the work force after at least 6 months away and, at the time of the original interview, were employed in the role in which they re-entered. I have chosen 6 months as the minimum period in order to assure those being studied have had a sufficient amount of time away from work resulting in the experience of returning to work to be a significant change from their normal routine. Based on the allowed time for Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), a person may take up to 12 weeks of unpaid time away from their job to care for an immediate family member. 12 weeks away from work, which this researcher has experienced twice in the form of maternity leave, is not enough time away to have significantly removed oneself from the "world of work." Similarly, someone who has left one employer for another, and has either taken no time between jobs, or a short break between jobs, also would not have been out long enough to experience the stress of re-entry after a new "not-working" routine has become in place. I chose 6 months to focus attention on those who have been away from work for a significant period of time, and who will likely have developed a non-work routine which will be interrupted by re-turning to work. This is significant to the study in that I expected that the longer time away from work would come into play for how the employees found or created their own sense of community at work.

Study participants were chosen from volunteers who matched the following description: (1) Participants must have held at least one corporate job in their lifetime, prior to their current employment. (2) Participants had to have been out of a corporate job for at least 6 months, within the most recent 12-18 months. (3) Participants had to have returned to a corporate job with a corporation for which they had never worked, or at least not worked in the last 10 years (the assumption is the corporation will have changed enough over 10 years that it will be "new" to the study participant). (4) Participants had to have been employed by their new employer for at least 6 months at the time they first volunteer for the study (6 months allows the newcomer time to have created community at work, yet the experience and memories will still be fresh. Too soon after hire and the participant may not have had ample opportunity to create community, too long after hire and they may not remember enough of the experience) (5) Participants were willing and able to participate in face-to-face, English language, audio-recorded interviews.

Gender, job skills, education, age, reason for being out of the work force, and other demographic descriptors not listed above were not significant to selection for this study. The following demographic data was gathered post selection as it classified the participant more completely, and was used as an additional resource during the coding stage of the study: (1) Age, (2) Gender, (3) Family / marital status, (4) Ethnicity and country of origin (foreign nationals are eligible for the study), (5) Education level, (6) Length of time out of the corporate world, (7) Reason for being out of the corporate world, (8) Description of type of work formerly employed to perform, (9) Description of type of work currently employed to perform.

Study participants were recruited through an internal, company-specific classified ad posted by this researcher. The post included the selection criteria only, as the demographic data was not used to select the participants. Seven (7) volunteers met the criteria and were chosen for the study. One volunteer, who did not meet all the criteria, also was interviewed to see if there were any remarkable differences in his account of creating community. This one study participant provided interesting data, which was important in refuting rival propositions. Overall, eight (8) individuals were studied.

The selection process assumed all participants were legally employed and able to work in the USA, per the Immigration and Reform Control Act of 1986, stipulating that employers are required to complete form I-9 to verify the identity and employment eligibility of all new employees hired on or after November 6, 1986.

IRB protection for the participants was accomplished by: (1) Cleary defined and articulated research proposal (2) Clearly defined and articulated study participant selection criteria, (3) Advertisements and / or open invitations to recruit the participants were submitted to the IRB, and included the required information (a) Name of researcher and the U of MN, (b) Purpose of the research, (c) Eligibility and selection criteria, (d) Benefits to the participant. (4) Appropriate consent process: (a) Pre-study participation discussions, (b) Signed consent forms, (c) Certificate of confidentiality to assure the volunteers that their personal information and interview transcripts will not be shared with their employer or any former employers, (d) Well-kept research records (University of Minnesota IRB publication, 2004).

Participant demographics

Of the eight interviewees, six were married with child(ren), two were not married with child(ren), and one was not married and had no children. The ages of the participants ranged from 31 to 57. Five participants were women, three were men. One participant self-identified as African American and one as Asian. One participant was born in South Africa, the rest were born in the United States.

The education of the participants was diverse; one had a high school diploma, and one a high school diploma with some college. Six had bachelor degrees, one had a Master's degree.

The study participants reported different reasons for being out of work, yet an early theme emerged as five had been laid off. One had been deployed to Iraq two times, one took a long medical leave, but was unable immediately to find a job. One did not experience a time away from work. Excluding the one who did not meet all criteria, the minimum time away from work was 6 months and the longest was 5.5 years.

At the time of the interviews, all were employed by the same corporation. Four had been hired on as a contractor (not a permanent employee) at first. Two from this group had already obtained permanent status, two were waiting to hear if their contracts were going to be converted to permanent status. None of the contractors, or former contractors, indicated that they had entered their contractor role with the expectation that their role would be converted to permanent within a defined period. Each was aware that there was the possibility of conversion to a permanent role, yet none indicated there was an expectation. The other four participants where hired on a permanent employees at the beginning (See Table III for details).

Table III
Study Participant demographics

Name	Current job	Age range	Sex	Family/ marital status	Race / cntry of origin	Edu level	Length of time out of work	Reason away from work	Type of prior work	NEO	Mission	Plan OJT	IDP	ERG PAN	Vlntrs	Mentor assig
Kelly	Docmnt Mngr	50s	F	married, 4 kids, 1 grandchild	white / USA	BA	>5 yrs	laid off	Docut Mngr	no	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes
Jean	Admin Assist	30s	F	single, 2 kids	white / USA	High School, some colleg	< 2 yrs	laid off	Admin Assist	not yet	not yet	no	no	yes	no	no
Liam	Engr	50s	M	married w/ kids	white / USA	BA	<1 yr	Iraq deployment	Engr	no	no	no	no	no	no	no
Nicky	Admin Assist	30s	F	divorced, 1 child	African-Am/ USA	BA	<1 yr	Med leave	Admin Assist	yes	yes	no	no	yes	no	yes
Marcie	Data Entry Clerk	50s	F	married w/ 1 child	white / USA	high school	<1 yr	laid off	Data Entry Clerk	yes	yes	no	no	no	yes	no
Frank	Sales Rep	40s	M	married, 3 kids	white / USA	BA	<1 yr	laid off	Sales Rep	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	yes
Lucy	Mngr	40s	F	Married, 2 kids	white / USA	MA	< 2 yrs	laid off	Event Planner	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	no
Lee	IT Analyst	30s	M	not married, no kids	Asian / South Africa	BA	2 weeks	changed jobs	IT Analyst	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	yes

Data Collection Procedures

In the Conduct stage of case study methodology, the researcher gathers data that will later be analyzed. In this study the data were gathered in three distinct areas and were used to develop my theory of how experienced newcomers create community when returning to work after an extended absence.

The first of the three areas was addressed through structured, in-depth, face-to-face, audio-recorded interviews. The following questions were asked of the 8 participants:

1. What was it like to come back to work after being away for so long (describes the subject's state of mind)
    a. (Follow-up) What were your concerns (fears?)
    b. (Follow-up) What were you excited about?
2. What previous knowledge and experience did you leverage to guide you through your journey as you built relationships with your team, and an understanding of your new job?
    a. (Follow-up) Tell me what you did to (do that)
3. What actions did you take to get to know others when you first started in your new job?
4. How did your new team welcome you?
    a. (Follow-up) How did your new team not welcome you?
5. When did you start to feel comfortable and part of your team in your new job?
    a. (Follow-up) What had happened or what was different that caused you to feel comfortable and part of your team?
6. What or who provided the most support or guidance to you as you came to understand your new job and company?
7. Are you aware of Medtronic's employee resource groups and professional associate networks?
8. Did you take advantage of any of the employee resource groups or professional association networks, volunteering activities or other social groups?
    a. If so, please indicate which one(s)
9. Were you assigned a peer mentor or buddy (please identify the individual).

The second area of data collection involved the investigation of corporate documents. These documents provided additional information regarding how the

Company actively supported the on-boarding of the newcomer, and, perhaps, helped or hindered the ability of the newcomer to create community. The documents used in this study were at both the overarching corporate level, which applied to all employees in the study, and at the business-sector level, which were different depending on the employee in the study.

The following documents were studied:

At the Corporate Level

- New Employee Orientation process, agendas and attendance records
- Company Mission and Charm attendance records (this is an organizational commitment event for new employees)

At the Business Sector and / or departmental level

- On-the-job-training; including timing, sequencing pass/fail rates
- Use of recognition programs; frequency of usage, usage for study participants
- Development planning: % of employees with plans, % of newcomers with plans, % of study participants with plans
- Employee Satisfaction Survey; compare department level to business sector to corporate.

The third area of data collection was the usage of my field journal. Conroy (2003) discussed the use of journals as a way to preserve the intent of the researcher-as-reflector during the interview process, as journaling allows one to uncover his or her own assumptions, pre-understandings and prejudices. Journaling also provides for clear recollections of incidences not captured by audio-tape; body language displayed by the participant; feelings occurring in the researcher, as examples. Incidents such as interview cancelations and reasons for interruptions can also be journaled to help make sense of breaks in the tape or other. Journaling also allows the researcher to record dates, milestones, *ah-ha* moments and to track the progress of the study. Gadamer (as cited in

Koch, 2006) suggests the following six sections for one's field journal: access, setting, experiences, issues, participant as co-researcher and prejudice. Field journals also track the researcher's decision trail. Koch (2006) proposes that the rigor of a study is only as good as the ability of the reader to follow the process the researcher took when interpreting the results of their data. She punctuates this supposition with the assertion that readers should be able to audit the path the researcher took ("the events, influences and actions of the researcher" (Koch, 2006, p. 91)), and that a field journal accomplishes this challenge for the qualitative researcher.

These three areas of data collection are called data triangulation. When a researcher uses triangulation they are leveraging one of the major strengths of case study; the ability to use multiple sources of data for the study. The purpose behind data triangulation is the confirmation of the data between the sources (Yin, 2009).

Data Analysis

The data analysis process for this study focused on developing a theory that describes how experienced newcomers create community when returning to work. The basic framework for the data analysis has been borrowed from the works of Edwards (1998), Eisenhardt (1989), Gersick (1988) and Stall-Meadows & Hyle (2010) and includes the following actions: transcribe interviews, integrate field journal notes, develop case histories and search for themes by identifying main points. Grounded qualitative meta-analysis was used to guide the identification of themes. Stall-Meadows and Hyle (2010) define grounded qualitative meta-analysis as a process that "[extracts] major themes and commonalities that emerge from, or are 'grounded' in the data." They go on to say grounded qualitative meta-analysis "synthesizes qualifying qualitative research and contributes to the development of hypotheses grounded in data" (p. 413).

McLellan, MacQueen & Neidig's (2003) instructions on data preparation and transcriptions was used to guide the transcription of the interviews. They encourage researches to determine if the audio-taped interview needs to be transcribed in its entirety, or if they can pass over some data, due to the inclusion of the data in their field journal. I had made the commitment to transcribe the interviews verbatim, yet recognized that some of the interviews had personal, non-relevant information. This information was purposefully redacted from the transcripts. .

Effective and consistent transcription was accomplished by following their guidelines for structure around text formatting, labeling, acknowledging tape changes, documenting inaudible sections, time stamping for reference to the original recording, redacting non-relevant information, and ending the interview. These instructions proved helpful when family and friends offered to help with the transcription. A format was in place and all were able to follow it, resulting in clean data that was easy to review for accuracy, code and study.

Gersick's (1988) process begins by transcribing interviews and integrating field journal notes in order to develop case histories. Researchers compare these case histories in order to identify general patterns that suggest a theory. This theory is "tested" by comparing additional cases to the theory described. Edwards (1998) advocates for a similar process: develop the theory, then test the theory by comparing the outcomes of future cases to the findings. In order to accomplish the above in this study, the transcribed interviews, respective field journal notes and company documents were integrated to create each case. The study participants were individually studied, and a theory hypothesized. Each subsequent case was used to support the development of theory, or repudiate it. Similar themes repeated in each case were used to develop the final theory of how experienced newcomers create community.

Theme identification proved to be more challenging than first expected. Ryan & Bernard (2003) discuss this challenge to the researcher. They recognize that agreement on how to recognize themes is still under discussion. By teasing apart the on-going discussion, they provide the researcher with some simple guidance about theme identification. First, they remind the researcher that their first pass at theme identification comes from the researchers own "prior theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study (an a priori approach)" (p. 88). A priori themes are developed from commonly understood and agreed on social constructions, literature, and personal experiences, among other things. The researcher starts the theming process when they decide what they are to study. This leads to the interview questions, which are the first pass at the themes themselves.

It is fair to say that the interview questions I wrote for my study did generate the first pass as themes. I was interested in their responses to those questions, which then developed into the first set of themes themselves.

Ryan and Bernard (2003) also indicate that a researcher can be reasonably confident they have uncovered a theme when they can answer the question "what is this expression an example of?" (p.87). An *expression* is the way the subject conveys the data; words, feelings, body language, movement, art work, etc. When one can answer that question, one knows they have identified a theme.

Once one thinks s/he has uncovered a theme, Ryan and Bernard (2003) provide ways to validate the discovery. Looking for repetition is one way, as is linking the expression to a cultural domain, or a colloquialism. They suggest looking for metaphors and analogies that may be culturally specific. Plus, researches need to look for the missing data. Those things that are left unsaid, or actively avoided, may be just as important to the study as those things expressed.

Since I had created the first pass at theming by writing the interview questions, I found coding the responses easy, as well as theming them. Repetition was an easy method for validation as was looking for cultural colloquialisms. Since all of my subjects were employed at the same company, corporate jargon (cultural colloquialisms) made its way into the interview and subsequent themes emerged.

The coding process I employed followed the framework created by Stall-Meadows and Hyle (2010) and the step-by-step instructions taught by Taylor and Gibbs (2010). Stall-Meadows and Hyle propose steps for researchers to use to examine case study data to find themes and patterns that can be used to develop theory. Their steps have been developed from the works of Strauss & Corbin, and Hossler & Scalese-Love. Their framework focuses on *open*, *axial* and *selective coding* as the levers used for grounded qualitative meta-analysis.

Open coding is defined by Strauss and Corbin as “the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (Stall-Meadows & Hyle, 2010, p. 414). The process requires that similar data is grouped and counted. Items are listed only once, but the frequency of the occurrence is recorded. Broad themes emerge from the open coding, and these broad themes are further categorized during axial coding.

To achieve open coding, I followed the Taylor and Gibb's (2010) steps. Focused on providing researchers with practical "how-to" instructions (both in writing and via on-line videos), their method was simple and straight forward. They began by reiterating that researchers should be aware of what they want to code (a priori) as well as stay open to coding those things they did not expect to see. This combination of "look for" and "stay open" created some early decision making challenges for me. Initially I tried to code *everything,* which meant every single line of the transcript was highlighted and marked up to the point that I could not see any themes.

After consultation with my advisor and reviewing Taylor and Gibbs, I settled into a simple pattern of open coding: I began by identifying themes based on the interview questions. My next step involved theming according to items repeated, but not necessarily the expected answers to the interview questions (some tangents taken by one subject proved to be taken by other subjects as well). This led me to recognize what was important to my subjects. And finally I looked for the "missing data." These three classifications of themes provided the foundation for axil coding.

Axial coding allows the researcher to make connections between the broad themes, creating sub-categories and looking at the next layer of data. Axial coding, in effect, "peels back the onion" and reveals information at a more complex level than open coding does alone. These sub-categories create layers of data that are connected to each other. The following model, developed by Strauss and Corbin (described by Stall-Meadows & Hyle, 2010), helps the researcher peel back these "layers of the onion" in order to identify and understand the relationships between the layers. The six layers are: (a) Causal conditions (those things that lead to the phenomenon under study), (b) Phenomenon (the articulation of the phenomenon itself), (c) Context (the condition in which the phenomenon occurred), (d) Intervening condition (external influences on the situation), (e) Action/Interactional strategies (how the study participants responded to, or directed, the phenomena), and (f) Consequences (the outcomes of the actions taken by the study participant).

Kendall (1999) draws our attention to *emergence* in the data. Emergence allows the data itself to generate the codes and categories. As stated above, much theming begins with the development of the interview questions and the intention of the interviewer (a priori). Emergence is the process of the data itself identifying the theme.

Where open coding separates the data into consumable categories, axial coding reconstructs the data in a new form, making connections between the categories. The resulting data from axial coding is further dissected and communicated through *selective coding*. Selective coding requires the researcher to move from tangible coding to more abstract, comprehensive coding. Selective coding uncovers the storyline of the case itself. It is the final step before the researcher develops their Conclusions, Recommendations and Implications, and sets the stage for the Report of the study (Stall-Meadows & Hyle, 2010).

Selective coding has 5 main steps: (1) describing the story line; (2) confirming relationship between categories and sub-categories; (3) developing the hypothesis; (4) re-writing the story line, moving from a technical perspective to a narrative perspective; and (5) developing the final hypothesis. It is the selective coding that helped me discover and articulate my theory.

The coding process ultimately helps the researcher develop their hypothesis. Stall-Meadows & Hyle (2010) suggest the following format for the development of a hypothesis: “Under these conditions, this happens; whereas, under these conditions, this happens” (p.416). The hypothesis developed from the coding process is then “tested” against the second set of data (Edwards, 1998). The theory resulting from the coding process allows the researcher to develop their own conclusions and prepare to convey those conclusions through the final report document. The following chapters will uncover and discuss my conclusions.

Summary

This chapter described the case study research methodology and the ways I employed that method to conduct my research. I provided detail on how different researchers (e.g., Edwards (1998), Stake (1994), Stall-Meadows & Hyle (2010), Tellis (1997), and Yin (2009)), understand and use case study methodology. I chose case study as, per Tellis it is the “ideal methodology when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed.” (p. 1). I discussed the strengths and limitations of case study methodology and identified how I controlled for the limitations.

I reviewed my case study plan (drawn from the resources mentioned above) and employed the following process:

- Plan: identify the purpose for the study; problem statement and rationale.
- Design: develop the case study protocol
- Prepare: verify the researcher has the skills necessary to carry out the research. Determine criteria for selection of study participants, write interview questions, identify corporate documents to examine.
- Conduct: follow the case study protocol; identify study participants, conduct interview questions, study corporate documents and keep a field journal.
- Data Analysis: using coding to identify themes, investigate corporate documents, keep a field journal.
- Develop Conclusions: use open, axial and selective coding to support theory development
- Report: write the report in a manner ready for publication.

I provided detail on the population studied as well as the interview questions. Methods for excellence in data preparation and transcription were also discussed, as was an overview on the methods best used identifying themes and coding.

Chapter 4: Case Narratives

As stated in chapter 3, the process the data analysis underwent involved the usage of developing case histories and coding the subsequent themes. This chapter focuses on each case, a compilation of transcribed interviews, field journal notes and relevant company documents, and provides a brief description of each case as well as identifies major themes. All names have been changed to protect the identity of the participants.

Case #1

"Kelly" is a white female in her 50s, who was born in the USA. She is married, has four children and one grandchild. She is friendly and outgoing. She is positive and happy about her role and employment at the Company. She did not volunteer anything negative during the interview.

Kelly had spent the night before our interview at the emergency room with her granddaughter. She had not slept, yet wanted to be at the 8:00 am interview, and not reschedule, so as to not disappoint me. This was the personality of Kelly I saw through the entire interview; a focus on others and a desire to help. Yet, under her exuberant exterior, she provided hints of some feelings of insecurity.

At the time of the interviews, Kelly had been working in the corporate world on and off (mostly on) for 19 years, and had recently finished her bachelor's degree. Kelly was laid off from her previous job 5 ½ years earlier. She used that time to start her own business, volunteer, finish her 4-year degree, and have both of her knees replaced. She expected re-entry into the world of work would be fast and easy. She was surprised that it took her nearly 2 years to get a new job. She admitted her timing was poor, as just as she was ready to re-enter, the national economy changed drastically, and work was hard to find.

Kelly was very excited to be employed. She had good feeling about the Company and was ecstatic that her new job was only about 15 minutes from her home. She said she had never worked so close to home before, and this was wonderful. She also had a friend in the department, who had referred her for the position.

Coming back also was scary for Kelly. She felt she had been away too long, and was insecure about her computer skills. She took a contactor role that was almost exactly the same as the role she had vacated some 5 ½ years earlier.

Kelly brought with her an attitude of “large or small, the job needs to be done.” She reported a desire to do well and do well quickly, yet she also reported a sense of low confidence in her ability to learn new things. “It was scary because I felt like I’d been out of the loop in some respects, and it was like, you know, things change along the way, like, computer access and the different things. I got some of that at school but it’s still not quite the same as when you are in the work environment.”

She did not want to make mistakes. This was a new feeling for her and was a result of being out of the work force for so long. “The one thing that I noticed, I’m usually a very confident person, but my confidence level in learning the new process was, it wasn’t high, which was really interesting to me.” Therefore, she took actions to control for this feeling of fear; she built a trusting relationship with her manager.

Kelly understood she was over qualified for some aspects of her new job. This allowed her to leveraged past knowledge of the position, and bring ideas and solutions to her manager before she implemented them. The strategy allowed her to ‘test’ her knowledge and assumptions, as well as share with her manager what she did know, and what she did not know, in a safe environment. “I did a lot in terms of ‘what can I do here’ and ‘what if I do this?’ We had it set up, every morning we have a meeting, we still have it on my schedule. I would have a list of things that we would go through that I had questions about.” Her manager appreciated this process and would either approve the solution, or guide Kelly in the right direction. Kelly shared her experience when she made one very large, corporate impacting mistake. Kelly thought for sure she would be let go. However, her manager’s response was “no, no, it’ll be fine.”

Even after an experience where the worst did not happen, Kelly continued to express concern in her abilities, and fears of making mistakes. Thirteen months into her role, she was still worried she was not secure in the job. The company had just announced another round of layoffs and Kelly expressed concern that these layoffs would keep her from obtaining permanent work.

Conversely, she also demonstrated a keen sense of self-awareness, recognizing that she did bring knowledge and skills to her role and, she knew what she did not know. This allowed her to develop more and more confidence in being able to do her job, and required less and less one-on-one time with her manager. During the interview, she went back and forth between feeling good about how things were going, to expressing concerns she was not learning things fast enough.

When developing into her new job, Kelly worked with one person consistently (her manager) and two others only some. She did not have a defined training plan to guide her as she learned the role. She was very qualified but the business was different, and she had not worked in a company that was overseen by the FDA in her past. There were some nuances to her job that she needed to learn.

Kelly also shared her experience in developing relationships with her team members. She indicated it was hard to meet people on the job. Her manager initiated the majority of the opportunities to meet others by organizing potlucks, birthday celebrations and other such events. She actively participated and even helped with the set up and clean-up of many of these events. Kelly stated the manager made sure those who were contractors were always invited to all the employee events. There was not a distinction between the two groups (permanent employees and contractors) in her area. The only time the two groups were separated was when the company announced layoffs. Only employees were invited to that meeting. She also said people were very friendly and always said "hi." "A small town feel."

Kelly indicated she began to feel comfortable with her new team almost immediately. Her sixth week on the job week they threw her a birthday party. Her boss gave her a little gift as well. "It just made me feel really accepted and welcome." Almost right away, she participated in a team-building event in which the team volunteered for a non-profit. Kelly attended, and involved herself by taking pictures at the event.

Kelly was proactive in both her acquisition of knowledge about her new role and building relationships with her team members. In addition to attending birthday celebrations and potlucks, Kelly looked for opportunities to volunteer. She and her son volunteered at the Christmas party the company throws for children. She regularly read the daily corporate newsletter that was e-mailed to all workers. This newsletter provided information for her on ERGs and other opportunities. She joined groups such as Weight Watchers, the Christian employee resource group (CERG) and the Parenting group.

"I will get out of it what I put into it. Taking the opportunities that come up and yes, some of the networking, I am thrilled to meet and do different things. I am happy to be able to volunteer in this capacity, it makes me feel good, but it also makes me feel good that Company is letting us to do this. It is all part of my Company experience. So it is not compartmentalized at all, it's all together."

In summary, Kelly took proactive steps to assure she could meet the demands of her job. She was excited to be back at work "in the real world" again. She also was afraid; afraid she would not be able to do the work. Kelly also brought extensive experience with her to her job, in the form of having done records management in the past, as well as problem solving skills and relationship building skills. Her manager was her primary resource for her OJT and mentored her. Others answered her questions as well. That being said, the extended team did reach out to her and help her feel welcome. She immediately engaged herself in ERGs and volunteering activities.

Case #2

"Jean" is a single mother of two in her 30s. She has a high school diploma and has been doing administrative support work her entire career. She had been laid off from her previous role 2 years before, was hired as a contractor first and then brought on permanently at Company.

Jean has a matter-of-fact style and shows little emotion during the interview. She was open about her answers and willing to discuss her experience.

During the time Jean was out of work she job hunted and spent time with her children. She indicated that even though not being employed was stressful, having the gift of spending time with her sons was wonderful.

Reentering the work force was “way different than starting any other job in the past. I was lot more gun-shy” regarding how long the employment would last. Her awareness of the job market, the fact that the organization that just hired her had been going through layoffs, and her sense of personal accountability caused her to push “harder to be that much better” at her job. This worked out for her because they did bring her on as a permanent employee. Looking back, Jean thinks she has always had a good work ethic, but this time she was more concerned that she really had to prove herself right away. She indicated she pushed herself harder at this job than she had at any other.

Jean was initially fearful coming into the role regarding her ability to do the job. She wondered if she would be good enough, and if she could she learn the material fast enough? She felt comfortable very quickly as her new team was very patient and good at teaching her the role.

She had to learn a new software program that had a reputation for being very difficult to work with. She was surprised at how quickly she picked up the processes, yet believed her quick understanding of the software was because of her new team and how they supported her.

Jean also brought self-awareness to her role. She recalled an earlier job where she thought she knew it all, until she realized she did not know so much. She took action at the job and learned software programs that ultimately helped her get this job at Company. She also believed her soft skills helped her get the job.

She shared that her team made the transition easy. She worked with mostly older women who, in her words, were not "cliquey or anything like that." This helped her integrate into the team easily. Her teammates were curious about her and asked her many questions. Jean decided to open up and share herself with them. She said that made it easy to ask questions about her job; they already had a friendly relationship, now they were willing to help her.

Jean also instigated getting to know others. If someone said to her "let's have lunch", she would go ahead and schedule the lunch. She learned where everyone lived, and found out they all lived near each other, and all had kids. These commonalties made it easy for her to build relationships.

An awkward experience happened early in Jean's tenure. She was asked to implement some process changes that had already been rejected by her teammates. Looking back, she assessed the situation as her boss using her, the new person, to bring up the changes again. Jean did not feel she had been successful in implementing the change, as the entire team was against them. The situation had not yet gone away, yet Jean sees the glass half full. The situation created a lot more work for her, which she said she sees as "job security."

Expounding on this, Jean spoke of the opportunity she recognizes she has. She once left a job because the commute was too long. She had been at a good company, in a role she really liked, but was driving 50 miles each direction every day. She quit, took a job really close to home, and then was laid off. Gaining employment at Company was an opportunity, and she was going to make the most of it. She still drives further than she would like to (25 miles each direction), but will not complain. She also is close enough to attend school events, and she is easily reachable if one of her boys needs her.

Reality based, she indicates she is still a bit gun-shy. Even though she has a permanent position in an area of growth at Company, she recognizes that someone else better might come along, or she might not perform to the expectations of her boss. This continues to push her “to be more proactive and work as hard as I can possibly work at all times. But almost to the extreme that it feels like it’s a lot of pressure and stress.”

When Jean first joined her group, she did not sit with her team, she was not assigned a mentor and did not have a training plan. Another administrative assistant, who sat near her, was identified as the person she should ask if she had a question. Realizing one person, who was not a member of her immediate team, was not going to be able to help her; she built relationships with four of her teammates. Since she did not have a training plan from which to work, she requested training as things came up, as well as accepted direction from her boss. Some days her boss had “a list of things that I needed to learn.”

As part of her orientation, Jean was introduced to the ERGs and the volunteer opportunities at Company. She joined two of the ERGs. One was a network for administrative assistants (FOCUS). This ERG provided her with additional support, both job-related and emotional support. Attending the meetings allowed her to develop additional skills she was not already acquiring on her job. She also used the Learning Management System (LMS) at the Company to do on-line courses in her field.

She had not been volunteering and felt she did not have the time. As the sole provider for her family, she stated she needed to be at work, or at home.

Jean's attitude of "this is an opportunity" spilled over into her willingness to take on extra work. She shared that in previous jobs she rarely took work home with her. However, at Company, she is very willing to bring work home.

At the end of the interview, Jean repeated her feelings of stress: "I feel like if I don't perform, they are going to find somebody better." She reports to be a very positive person: "When people complain I think, 'What are you complaining about?' I think some people don't know how good they have it because they've been here so long. They are just frustrated that they are having an issue. I'm just happy that there is a solution." Yet she continues to repeat her fear of the organization finding "someone better" and shares the stress of this fear.

In summary, Jean shared that starting this job was harder than any other before it. She had fear she was not going to be good enough for the role, and concerned the job would not last. She used this fear to motivate her to learn the work quickly, and build relationships. She was intentional about leveraging past knowledge to help her get up to speed in her new role. She had an individual assigned to her for training, but that person did not seem interested in helping, so Jean found support through others; the FOCUS ERG and her teammates on other floor.

She felt welcomed by the team, and quickly shared information about herself to build trusting relationships. This made it easier for her to ask for help when she needed it.

Case #3

"Liam" is a fifty-something, married, father of two, veteran of the two Iraqi wars, with a college degree in engineering. He is white and born in the US, and indicated he has a PhD in "the school of hard knocks." Having fought in both Iraqi wars (Operation Desert Storm in 1991 and the Invasion of Iraq 2003-2013) he has experienced re-entering the work force more than once. After his latest deployment, he spent 7 months looking for work, found a temporary role that lasted for 6 months, and after another 6 months out of work, he landed a contractor position at Company. He has done quality engineering for the majority of his career, including the work before Company as well as at his current role.

Liam shared that starting this job was no different from all the other jobs he has started. He was neither really excited, nor concerned about the role. He had done the job in the past, and was confident in his abilities. He leveraged knowledge and experience from his past to get up to speed quickly; he is an engineer by trade, which helped him learn his role, and he focused considerable time on building relationships across the department.

He reflected on the many times he has re-entered the work force and indicated it is both different and the same each time "Most every time, when starting a new job, you are starting to learn whose who, who to talk to, what are their skill sets." In his role as a quality engineer, he had to learn how Company did things, versus how previous employers had. "Getting to know who's who helps with knowing how to get things done." Quality engineers need to get their work signed-off-on by someone in power. Figuring out the process for this takes time in a larger corporation like Company. "[Company] is lot more cumbersome because it is so big. And stuff that every tech needs to do at another place would take two phone calls but here it takes two months and 14 meetings, so you get to meet a lot of people but you don't interact with them very much." This interaction Liam experienced early in his role was very focused on work-related tasks and he reported it was difficult to build relationships. Therefore, he was intentional in getting to know people by learning about their hobbies and families. He worked at finding community and building relationships. "Most of the time I try to wander around and look at people's cubicles art work and if I see something interesting I'll comment on it and ask, 'where was that taken' and learn something about them. Even the gal who cleans the bathroom, she' from Germany, and just talk to them a little bit and smile and get to know them." Liam also easily approached people he did not know. For example, if he sees someone sitting alone in the cafeteria, he will ask if he can sit with him or her and then ask him or her about himself or herself. He usually asks questions along the lines of sports or summer vacation plans.

Liam's purposefulness in getting to know others and build relationship did not have the effect he was hoping it would have. While he spent time trying to get to know others, he was aware that they were not reciprocating. Eager to share information about themselves, they rarely asked him about himself. "You try to build a relationship sometimes. It's better to do that, then they think you're a great guy and that's all they care about, they got their own worries to worry about."

Even when asked, Liam did not reveal any stories of how others helped him feel welcome. On the contrary, he felt his forays into getting to know others were not reciprocated. While he gained comfort on the job itself in about 6 months, he did not feel the same way with the people in his department.

When expressing what he was concerned about when re-entering, he stated it was skill-related fears. "I also have concerns about not doing a good job especially since I'm a contractor and [maybe] not doing what needs to be done." It took him about 2 to 3 months to feel comfortable in the job and the task expectations.

He was not assigned a peer buddy or mentor. He did not have one person he could go to, to learn the role. There were roughly three people he would ask when he needed help, but he did not do that much. He found out early that there were not many processes in place, than that he would get too many different answers to the same question.

Liam does not meet with his boss very much. "I've had longer conversations with you now than I have had with him since I've started. But then I've worked for him at [another company]."

He also reported he was too busy to take part in any ERGs. He was aware of Toast Masters, but did not participate, even though he wanted to. He did not participate in any of the volunteering opportunities or organizations associated with Company. He complained that he could not participate in ERGs or volunteer when they keep giving him more work and do not remove anything from his plate. "…added another 10-12 hours' worth of meetings a week and didn't take any other work from me…but still, like I say, I get no exposure for doing all the extra work and being the backup except I got no time to interact with other people."

He was open about his continuous insecurity about long-term employment. Having been a contractor for more than the 12 months expected, he knows that if he is not hired on permanently, he will have to take a 60-day furlough before he can come back into another contractor role. The pressure this had put on him is palatable in the conversation. His lack of confidence that his contract would be renewed makes itself known in how he talks about other team members and his boss.

"The fact that they don't know me, don't know my capabilities. Don't know if they ever see anything with my name on it. For example: Had one problem where I sat with a guy that's supposed to be really well known for solving problems. And we worked with the project had to meet with Dr. Owens on what the implications where so I wrote up the meeting minute notes and stuff and sent them on to him to review and [he] sent them on as his own."

In the end Liam never expressed a sense that he had been embraced by his teammates, in fact, he did not perceive he truly had a team. He also did not express a sense of comfort with his job. He did feel confident in his ability to perform the tasks associated with his job, but beyond that, he was not truly comfortable. There was a shadow of fear that he was not going to be employed for much longer. He remarked that he keeps ‘good job’ e-mails for use at job interviews, and worries his resume makes it look like he cannot hold down a job since he has bounced around a lot in contractor roles. He is confident in his skill set, but he does not receive lots of recognition. He lacks the network for recognition and promotion.

When reading the transcript for Liam, one might imagine the participant is a friendly outgoing positive person, interested in others and building good relationships, yet experiencing some employment insecurity. However, when one listens to his voice, his sarcasm towards, and lack of confident in, the system comes through. He has done what he thinks he needs to do to create a community, a network, a name for himself at Company, yet it has not worked out for him. He knows they do not know who he is, what he can do, and how much work he is doing. In fact, he seems resigned to be almost invisible and insignificant. He is both sad and angry with the situation at the same time. He can see the promise of both Company and himself, yet the future appears to be dark, not light. The tenor of the interview becomes much more negative towards the end. “Now the people are working trying to get the spot. It’s one thing to know you're not qualified. It’s another thing to not be even considered for a spot...Well I see a lot of people coasting... A LIFER is Lazy Ignorant Fool Expecting Retirement.”

Case #4

“Nicky” is an African –American divorced woman in her 30s, with one child. She possesses a BA and was out of the work force for 6 months the most recent time, and 12 months the first time. In previous jobs she was an administrative assistant to executives, her current role also is administrative assisting.

Nicky is currently a permanent employee, she attended the Mission ceremony, NEO and had participated in the employee satisfaction survey process. She also has a loud and infections laugh which she demonstrated numerous times throughout the interview.

In Nicky’s former job, which was a temporary assignment, her supervisor left her feeling very inadequate. She had been receiving positive feedback all through her assignment, and on her last day, her supervisor gave her devastating feedback about her performance. She was leaving the role because she needed to go on medical leave, not because her performance was poor. She indicated this feedback left her afraid of being able to recover medically, as well as fearful of re-entering the work force.

In addition to being out of work to heal from her medical procedure, she ended up losing her home and moving in with a friend. She was on public assistance, trying to get better and working hard to keep her child in school and leading a “normal” life. The level of stress was quite high, yet her focus on her child kept her centered, and she thought if she took one day at a time, she could get through this chapter of her life. She also was in the middle of divorce and custody proceedings.

Nicky's focus on her child had the result she had intended. She said her child came through this very stressful time in her mother's life very well. She never missed school, kept up her grades and maintained her friendships. Nicky also survived. Into her sixth month of unemployment, she landed a contracting position at Company.

Re-entry was hard. The negative feedback from her former supervisor still echoed in her head. This time her new job was in her field, yet she was uncertain of her skills. She shared her concerns: would she be able to remember Excel and Word? Was there new software she had not yet learned due to her time out of work?

She also was still healing from her medical procedure, so had numerous doctor appointments to attend. She was going through her divorce and custody proceedings, which also took her away from work. Nicky also did not drive, and was dependent on public transportation. All of these variables contributed to her feelings of concern and inadequacy regarding her employment situation. She was worried her need to miss work to attend medical appointments, divorce and custody hearings, and assure her child made it to and from school each day, would affect her new team's trust in her. She wondered, would she appear to be committed to her job in their minds? Could she hold down this job? She was afraid to talk about all the things going on in her personal life.

While she had reasonable doubts concerning her ability to perform the job, she also was very excited. This job was in her field of study. When she interviewed for the position, her boss told her it was a role in which she could develop. There was opportunity at Company and Nicky wanted to grow. She was determined to succeed.

She did tell her boss about her doctor appointments during the interview process, but not the reasons for them. She also stayed quiet regarding her divorce and custody hearings. Eventually, she needed to tell her boss about her medical condition, as she was aware some of her behavior (a need to leave her desk frequently) could be sending the wrong message. She also took this time to tell her about the divorce and custody hearings.

Her boss opened up to her about her own divorce and custody battle. Nicky learned quickly that all of the women on her team had gone through a divorce; some amicable, and some not so amicable. This shared experience brought the team together. The team jumped in to help her make sure she could get all her work done so she could attend court hearings and doctor appointments. They supported her more than she expected they would.

Nicky learned her new role very quickly. She did not have trouble learning the tasks or getting the work done well. When she started the role she had been told she was succeeding another contracted administrative assistant who had to take the required 60-day furlough. Nicky thought that meant she (Nicky) was in the role for only 60 days and the previous contractor would return. However, she was doing so well at the role, and the department had the funding to make the role permanent, that her boss asked her to apply for the permanent position.

Nicky sensed tension in the department so she talked with the previous contractor about being invited to apply. At first she supported Nicky, but when Nicky was hired on permanently, she stopped talking to her.

Even though she had proven herself and earned the permanent position, Nicky was haunted by past feedback and comments made to her by past employers and past coworkers. She was aware she was one of two minorities on the team. She also was concerned her coworkers would have stereotypes. She said she was afraid they were thinking, “Well here we go…she’s not going to do well.” She indicated in the past she has been told people have low expectations of her. “So I felt like I had to really work hard to prove myself. I mean, I already had over 12 years of experience doing this line of work, but I felt, ‘Here I go again, I have to prove myself, I’ve got to gain their trust.’ You know, ‘Are they going to like me? Am I going to like them? Are they going to talk down to me?’ I had all of these fears. I was concerned, just in general because in every position I’ve had, I’ve had that kind of treatment in one form or another and I have to look at every situation. I don’t want to go into every situation assuming oh that’s going to happen but in the back of my mind I thought if it does, be prepared. Don’t break down and don’t lose it.”

Nicky took control of her situation and built a network of people who could help her learn her job, as well as navigate the organization. She was not assigned a peer buddy or mentor to train her in her role, yet she developed relationships which resulted in several people she could contact for help and answers. These relationships allowed her to follow-through on tasks quickly. She used her ‘down-time’ to refresh skills she was worried had lagged. She also knew that most bosses like follow-through, so she made of point of letting people know where she was on their project or task. This was one of her past experiences she brought to this job, and felt that this practice was one of the qualities of her work product that enabled her to gain permanent employment. “The team I support now said: ‘Boy, we’re not used to this [follow-through].’ And ‘You really take good initiative which is good!’”

When Nicky first joined the team, she made a point to get to know her teammates and the workers she supported. She scheduled one-on-ones with everyone and asked them what they expected of her. She received very positive feedback from her immediate peers and those she supported about these one-on-ones. She saw this as the way to build trust. She asked them to tell her what had gone well with administrative assistants in the past, and what had not gone well. She learned a lot about what not to do through these one-on-ones.

Nicky began to feel comfortable and welcomed by those whom she supported when she began to receive praise from them. They would say hi to her when they saw her, and invite her to meetings. They told her she was a part of the team, and they wanted her to participate in meetings. She reported they gave her flowers and took her out to lunch.

When Nicky found a new place to live and moved out of her friend’s place, they asked her if they could help her move, and if she needed anything to furnish her new apartment. They offered her rides, and someone helped connect her to the ERG CERG (Christian Employee Resource Group). CERG also looked for ways to help her furnish her apartment.

There was one person who did not make Nicky feel welcome. This one person had held Nicky’s job in the past. When Nicky asked her for help, she always behaved as though Nicky was interrupting her. Nicky did not feel she was not approachable, therefore she tried not to go to her for answers, and when she had to it “took everything of me to ask.”

In addition to CERG, Nicky joined other ERGs; FOCUS (Administrative Assistants ERG), MECCA (focused on African-American employees) and EXCEL (focused on African-American employees in sales roles). She was the most involved with CERG and FOCUS.

At the end of the interview, Nicky reflected on the current situation at Company. She expressed her relief in having full-time permanent employment, yet also expressed her concern that it would not last. She admitted to looking for other work “just in case” this job was affected by the impending layoffs. She said her honeymoon was over. She continues to be concerned she is not doing enough to keep her position.

Nicky’s positivity declined at the end of the interview. She commented that even though she has a 4-year degree in the area she supports, she is not interested in moving up the ladder. She said she is afraid to share this information with her boss. They keep encouraging her, but she is not interested in that particular promotion as she sees it as stressful “and I don’t like to be under stress. I like to enjoy what I do; to be comfortable at what I do. And I don’t want surprises, and they deal with surprises all the time and I can’t deal with that level of dynamic. So no, they don’t know it yet but I don’t want to be [in their role]. I really don’t [laughs].”

In Summary, Nicky was excited to be employed when she started at Company, yet fearful she was not good enough. She knew a successful performance would help her to achieve full time permanent role, and she wanted to grow her career. She took proactive steps to assure herself she could do the job: she learned new computer skills, had one-on-ones with everyone she supported, and opened up to her team about her personal issues. She built relationship by being honest and approachable.

Nicky was assigned a peer buddy, but realized quickly they were not a good match. She instead used others who were more friendly to her as well as the ERG FOCUS to assure she had the right processes for her work.

Case #5

"Marcie" is in her 50s and married with one adult child. She is white and born in the U.S.A. Marcie was laid off from her previous job 10 months before obtaining permanent employment at Company. She had been at the company that laid her off since 1998.

Marcie works in a role very similar to her previous work; she is a senior data entry clerk. She processes orders that come in and makes sure all the account numbers and financial statements are correct. Marcie is the only female on a team of 34, and while she says she does not want to be known as the "den mother" or "school marm" she finds herself taking care of "her boys." She likes it.

Company is a new experience for Marcie. She had never worked in a large, global organization. She expressed early concerns with getting lost, and not knowing anyone. "I was a little nervous about coming and parking and getting lost but I mean you know I'm down stairs in [building]. I don't know if you're in this building very often but you can go down 3 or 4 different ways too. So I tried a different way every day so that I wasn't stuck into where I was. Someone took me another way to go, ‘Hi, I want you to meet this person’ or ran something up to shipping, and I thought, ‘god, how am I going to get back?’ So I had to get the lay of the land.”

She also expressed concerns about her ability to do the job. “Oh my god, wait a minute, is everything going to be so hard, this is Company! Do you know what I mean? Is it going to be so hard? How can it be so hard, I mean anybody can learn anything ya know but I guess that was more like, ‘Oh my god, these professional scientists.’ Ya know what I mean? I guess you don't know what to expect, not being from this background and all either. You think everybody's going to be, I guess I pictured them all like these scientists, ya know what I mean?...like it’s all going to be like that and you're not going to understand the language. “

Marcie brought previous knowledge to her role; she knew the purchasing ordering software used by Company, and she know how purchasing worked at her old employer. She had been the first purchasing agent at her former employer, and, as she said, “created the job.” This time around, she was replacing someone who had retired. She was uncertain she could fill her predecessor’s shoes. Her biggest concern: who was going to teach her the job?

She was not assigned a peer buddy, a mentor, or given a training plan. Instead, many people helped her. Everyone knew a little bit about her job. She began piecing the tasks and processes together. Her knowledge of the software helped her make sense of things quickly as well. One person helped her get her desk and computer set up, another helped her with her phone. She was assigned some on-line training, and received help getting into the LMS. Other than that she learned her role more piece meal than in order.

Marcie also possessed good prioritization and problem solving skills. She was able to make sense of things quickly by figuring out her top two priorities. She also is comfortable jumping from one task to another, and changing priorities when needed. This flexibility and easy-goingness of Marcie's helped her gain the trust of the 33 men with whom she worked. She laughed as she said she never gave them "the face" and then made a face that communicated, "leave me alone!" She was approachable and willing to help when needed. "At first I probably didn't have enough to do. I think they were more, 'Oh you're done?!? - Oh you don't mind doing them?!?' and I was like, 'No I love doing them, they're fine.'"

When asked how her team welcomed her, Marcie paused. "But you know it was totally different in the way that I had 33 guys and no gals that would 'Like to go to lunch?' the first day. Ya know, I mean they showed me around and 'Oh go ahead and do this and oh you see the lunchroom's here…' and the hours of everything and showed me where 'fridges were. I mean more than took me for walks around and showed me things." Eventually, the director of the business unit took her to lunch and let her know she was doing great, and that her teammates really liked her.

Marcie hypothesized that her team was more reserved in welcoming her because they were a group of older men. "80% of them have worked together for 30 some years." Yet they also enthusiastically included her in team events, such as when someone celebrated an anniversary. "They were more than, 'C'mon, c'mon! We're going out here.

We're gonna have lunch.' Ya know what I mean, there were a couple big events the first month or two…but they're more than…'C'mon, come sit with me.'…and ya know? For guys I am pretty impressed with that [laughs] I was very impressed. I don't mean that mean, but I was very impressed with them. I don't know if their wives told them to be nice to me or what, but they raised them right. Somebody raised them right."

Early on, Marcie found commonalties with her male coworkers that helped her get to know them, and they her. "A few of us have a lot in common, kind of all growing up in the same area and, 'Oh wow, where did you go to school? Oh, I went to Anoka…blah blah blah.' A lot of us have cabins, 'Oh where you going this weekend?' 'Oh we've got a cabin.' 'Oh we do too, where are you?' Ya know, we all started a little bond right away."

Marcie had trouble identifying ways her coworkers made her feel unwelcomed. She shared that she had hoped they would go out to lunch as a group, or order pizza, but she soon learned the team simply did not do that. She was relieved that she was not being left out, they just did not do that sort of thing. She shared that she would go home and tell her husband "I love it! They're so nice!"

Women were scarce not only in Marcie's unit, but in the units near her work area. When asked if she purposefully looked for female companionship, she said "No. I don't know anyone here except for "Dawn" (who had worked with her at her former company). I still don't know any [laughs], except for the lunch lady and the janitor lady. But now the gal that's in equipment support, which is next to us, she was gone on maternity leave. I kind a met her and now she was gone and she's back now. No. I came from all guys, it was normal to me. It really was. You know I worked, I was the gal in the shop office before for 12 years besides leaving to go work in HR where it was just girls, but that's where you get…. Oh My God…. you take lunch once a week and we take turns bringing things, but I got totally out of that again, cause you do! Girls do different things."

Marcie stated she felt she had a community with 'her guys.' They do not do much together outside of work, but some of them have gone to baseball games and some have gone hunting together. She referred to the gentleman who sits next to her as her 'work husband.' "I feel comfortable. I'm ok being the only girl, it's almost kind of nice, you know? Girls can be catty."

When asked about ERGs and volunteering opportunities, Marie indicated she was not interested in the ERGs. She knew about them, but did not intend on joining any. Volunteering was on her list of things to do. Recently she had signed up to be on the National Bone Marrow register. Company was sponsoring an event on campus for Be The Match.

Marcie ended our interview by repeating her affection for 'her guys.' She feels she is in the right role for her, and that she will stay in that job until she retires. She said getting laid off was painful for her, and the interview process was scary, but she knew she had had a good interview, and she knew she was doing very well in her job. Unlike the others in the study she did not express a heightened desire to prove herself in her role quickly to avoid being let go again. Her flexile style and easy-goingness that helped her learn her job and integrate with her team so nicely has helped her feel secure in her employment.

She was more concerned about getting lost and working for such a large corporation than she was about her ability to do the job. She was excited to be employed, and after getting to know 'her guys,' excited to work with them. Her team made her feel welcome when they encouraged her to accompany them to modest team celebrations. She liked that they talked about some personal things, like owning a cabin up north and hunting.

Case #6

"Frank" is a member of the sales team at Company. He was hired as a full-time permanent employee, and attended NEO, Mission ceremony and has a defined training plan. Frank is a white male in his 40s, and married with three children. He was born in the U.S.A. and possesses a bachelor's degree. He was out of work for 6 months due to his former organization going out of business. A sales manager previously, he was left without his last paycheck or any severance pay one might get if one was laid off. He had to pay his assistant out of his own savings since she also was left without a paycheck. In-between jobs, he tried to do some ad hoc consulting work, but was unable to make enough money to pay his bills.

Frank was excited and eager to join Company in a role in which he had considerable experience. He also was nervous: "Having lost a job and being laid off for what I would say is an extended period of time makes you a little gun-shy to get back to work. You feel like you are kinda under the gun to do extremely well. So there was a sense of fear but a sense of motivation to really outperform everyone else."

As stated above, Frank had experience in sales and knew the types of personalities he was going to work with; sales people “are very quirky and extremely protective of their territory.” This “insider knowledge” helped Frank develop a plan for his integration into both his immediate team, and the extended sales team within the company. He was purposeful about building relationships with the other sales representatives who covered the same territory, and maybe even the same customers. While the products they sold were different, the existing sales representatives were not always open to allowing another sales representative to develop a relationship with their customers. Because of this, Frank assured he openly communicated his plans with the other sales representatives before he approached any potential customers. He focused on developing trust, and when this paid off, he found he could enter territories without needing to forecast his presence, as he had been accepted as part of the team.

This was not true of all of his territories. He still had fellow sales representatives (again, selling different products) who did not want him in the same area. There was a strange sense that even though they all worked for the same company, yet selling different products that addressed different medical conditions; they were somehow in competition with each other. “Mentally…I understand the dynamics of [other sales team], and so my team in each individual account is the [other sales team] Reps that call on these accounts, so I approach it in that respect. So if I know I’m going to see [individual’s name], I let his rep know what I’m doing and then I’ll go through him to let him know what he needs to know what we’re doing.”

Frank also reflected on mistakes he had made in the past, and used those learnings as he integrated into his new role and new company. He had learned the best ways to approach the customer. He also knew the best way to work with all the sales representatives at Company. Transferring this knowledge to his new role helped him build relationships quickly. He articulated that he had, in fact, two teams; one was the Company sales representative in his territory, (those who called on the same customers, but sold different products), and the other team was his immediate team and boss.

His first week on the job, Frank began calling the sales managers of the sales representatives who shared his territory. He wanted them to know who he was, why he was calling, what his product was, and learn about the territory he had been hired to cover. By doing this, he reported he “gained solid relationships and respect from the [other sales team] managers and I had active permission to call on all of these reps so that I wouldn’t disturb their business, but make it appropriate for me to meet with them on their [time]… . And quite honestly it has been, I would say, 99% successful.”

He also spent considerable time building relationships with his immediate sales team and manager. Due to the nature of sales, the team was geographically dispersed. Frank did not physically work in the same area as his immediate team members or boss. His opportunity to build relationships with his immediate team members took place even before he was hired into the role.

Sales representatives are characteristically excellent networkers. Frank was no exception. Knowing the company was hiring sales representatives; he reached out to his network and asked for letters of recommendation. Some, who wrote letters on his behalf, were already employed by the company, and already members of his soon-to-be team. He, in turn, provided the same service for others who were applying for positions after he had been hired on permanently.

Team members reached out to welcome Frank when they handed over accounts. Some were happy to pass on accounts to the new hire, while others were angry at being re-assigned to new territory. One teammate "sent me a couple file folders of the accounts that I was taking over, but he was more upset at losing his legacy accounts. It was part of the common conversation that he and I had …."

The trainers and marketing team, which worked closely with the sales team, did most of the reaching out to Frank. Recognizing that their role was to assure he was ready to sell the product, they were overt in their offers to support him and teach him.

One sales team member was not so welcoming. Frank reached out to him on many occasions but he never called or e-mailed back. Others shared with Frank that this salesman behaved the same way to everyone, except the VP of sales. "In my eyes he's not a team player and I'm just surprised that [Company] has not caught on. Every other [sales] rep and I would say I work in total with about 25-30 associates…Everyone has been helpful and every one stellar, and I mean stellar, but this one is not built from the same set of parts. It is what it is."

In addition to developing relationships, Frank worked hard to learn his new job; the medical issue his product helped treat and how to use the product to treat the medical issue. "And I made it a point to learn as much as I could in as little a time as I could and I did very well on my tests averaging maybe about a 95 to 96 throughout all the testing."

When asked who or what he turned to, to help him navigate through his new role, he indicated he reached out to those with whom he attended training, as well as the director of training. “You know the guys in your class, or the gals in your class, tend to be the people you migrate to cause you’ve kind of been in the trenches with them. I like [the director of training]. I call [him] if I want the honest scoop on things. He’s really good at that. He’s by the book and he’s easy to talk to, from my standpoint at least.”

Frank reported he was not aware of any ERGs nor did he participate in any volunteering activities. He attended NEO and the Mission ceremony. He did not have a mentor or peer buddy assigned to him, yet he had a robust training plan and therefore felt he had many peer buddies shepherding him through the learning phase. The training team assigned to his new-hire class acted as peer buddies for all of the new hires.

For Frank, his experience in re-integrating into work was a relief; yet laden with the underlying fear that he could lose his job again. He worked hard to build relationship with both his immediate sales team, and his extended sales team (those in his territory, calling on the same customer, yet selling different Company products). He built relationships with the trainers, and excelled at his training regime.

Except for behavior of one or two individuals, Frank felt welcomed by both his immediate sales team and extended sales team. He believes his effort in building non-threatening and trusting relationships was the key to his success.

Frank was the only study participant who was hired into a role that had a defined training plan which he was expected to not only complete, but complete with passing grades and evidence of competency. This robust training plan and complex curriculum provided him guidance and support. The training team was active in supporting and helping him, along with his peers in the new-hire class, through the training program.

Case #7

"Lucy" is a white woman in her early 40s, born in U.S.A., and married with two young children. She has a Master's Degree in Industrial Organizational Psychology and manages a large team of educators. She was laid off from her former employer and spent 18 months out of work. During that time she did teach a course at a local for-profit college, at two separate campuses, and did contract work for another company. Before she was hired in her management role, she was an event planner/education coordinator for a sales organization. While her management role is a step –up organizationally, she is paid less in this role than she was at her former employer.

Lucy described feeling excited in her new role. She was very relieved to have one job, and one place to go to every day. "I come to one place, I'm getting a pay check, oh my god I have vacation, I have benefits!" She was attracted to the role because it was a management position leading educators. She states how much she enjoys working in education, referencing a past role at a college. However, she shows her cards when she start to talk about her feelings: "I feel useful again. People actually come to me for help {laughs}. You know, I felt… to be working again and to have colleagues again and…the comfort and stability of it was exciting too."

She admitted to missing the flexibly of adjunct –teaching and contractor work: "It was also sort of a letdown because it was sorta nice to do laundry during the day {Laughs}." But when asked to share any fears she had when re-entering the work force, she began to talk very quickly: “oh God, is it [being laid off] going to happen again? Am I now gonna get fired? Will I be able to get unemployment again? Should I have tried harder at [former employer]? Should I….Am I good enough? Can I do this job? You know it was overwhelming. My job is really [pause] *really* demanding.”

Lucy manages many educators, some full-time, and some part- time. While management is new to Lucy, she did bring a lot of knowledge and work experience to the role. Having lead educational programs (which included planning and organizing both educational and celebratory events for sales organizations), she also was well read in theories of leadership development. She purposefully leveraged this knowledge to guide her in her own on-boarding. Therefore, she recognized the importance of initiating contact with her new direct reports. She scheduled one-on-ones with as many employees, clients, peers and leaders she possibly could. “I made it a point to go talk to everybody, I mean, you, seriously, you walk around this place, everybody, *everybody* knows me, *everybody*. I implemented MBWA; management by walking around. I do that all the time. That’s not done here, but I walk around all the time. I made it a rule, just, that’s what I do. I reach out to people.” She also did a survey to find out the thoughts of her new team. She looked for their thoughts on what they wanted her to change, what they wanted her to keep doing (similar to her predecessor) and what they needed her to know.

Leadership at Company helped on-board Lucy. Her immediate manager and the team’s assistant played the biggest role in welcoming Lucy to her new role. Between the two of them, they showed her what was expected of her, how to get things done, when things needed to be done and whom to ask for help. Corporate leaders also reached out to

Lucy, although only once. She was taken to lunch early on, yet has not had much contact since then.

Others supported her in learning some specific tasks. For example, the regional financial statements; "One of things is we do business reviews and this is with the regional director and we have to, ya know, we are judged on all these numbers. I actually know what those numbers are and what to do to impact them. My first business review I sorta wanted to throw up, ya know, because it's just, so, 'I didn't know!'"

Some team members did not welcome Lucy. She said many just assumed she knew all the answers, did not help her, and were impatient while she was learning. Some expressed their anger with the situation: "One of them told me she did not believe in Company. She was really upset my predecessor was fired and said she was really disillusioned, and she did not do her job well after that. She ended up quitting." Some people did not even bother to meet with her even when she had set up one-on-ones with them.

Lucy was not involved in any ERGs nor did she participate in any of the volunteering opportunities. Her job was challenging and kept her busy. She also felt her peers in similar roles in different locations were her ERG. "They are my club."

At the time of the interview, Lucy had been in her role almost one year. She indicated it took her about four to five months to start to feel like she had her "arms wrapped around the job." Yet she did not feel 100% comfortable. She knew she had not experienced everything yet, because she had not yet been there a year.

Lucy's year and a half out of work was a topic that raised itself multiple times in the interview. Like many of the other study participants, Lucy referred to her layoff experience many times, in the context of how it motivated her to assure safety in her job. She shared that it caused her to modify the way she managed her own integration into her new role as a result of having experienced a layoff. "One thing I have done more of is I ask for feedback. Even Thursday I went to my boss. I need to know, what….how can I improve. What do you want me to do different? It's almost in a frantic manner. I am like 'Oh my god please, tell me what I can do.'"

Lucy closed our interview by reiterating her motivation for all the work she had done to get to know everyone. Earlier she had stated it was her natural style to reach out and get to know everyone. Yet, towards the end, she admitted it was not always that case: "I feel important again. There (at an employer she had contracted for during her year and a half laid off) I felt like another number. At my old employer I didn't reach out to my cube-mates. I didn't know who they were, because I was a contactor and contractors are expendable."

In summary, Lucy worked hard to meet everyone and build relationships. She worked hard to understand what was expected from her, and she was motivated to build relationships and learn her role because she did not want to experience losing her job again. She was not specifically assigned a mentor, but her immediate boss and the team's administrative assistant acted as teachers. ERGs and volunteering opportunities did not affect her integration into her new role.

Case #8

"Lee" answered my ad for study participants, and during the original in-take phone call, he indicated he had not been out of work, that he had moved from his previous employer to Company without a break in between. The most important piece of criteria for the study participants was not met, yet an interview with Lee could uncover some interesting facts. In case study methodology, Yin (2009), suggests it is wise to study a "rival proposition." While not truly a "rival proposition," as his experiences are not contradicting the others, interviewing someone who had not experienced the break between work, would most likely uncover different areas of excitement, fear and motivation than the other study participants. I decided interviewing him would be valuable.

Lee, an Asian male in his 30s, is from South Africa. He is not married and does not have any children. He holds a college degree, and has not experienced a time away from work. He held his first job out of college for 9 years, then moved to Company.

Lee was excited about his opportunities at Company. He had been purposeful in obtaining employment at Company. It was large, and he perceived there were career advancement opportunities. "I was excited about the reputation, and that Company is a great company to work for; job security and everything like that, and the new technology I could be part of and helping people."

When asked, Lee said his only fear when joining the company was being able to understand the politics of such a large organization. He had worked for a smaller organization where IT was a small team. Everyone knew everyone else and they supported the entire business. At Company, the IT department was more dispersed; employees were assigned to business units. Having a smaller reach, he recognized his impact would be smaller. He said he knew at a larger company, it was more about who you knew, then what you knew, that would get you promoted.

Because Lee was focused on the politics of the organization, he shared that the skill set he brought with him to his new job was his social skills. In his past role, he had worked with the president of the organization. He said he knew how to work with all leaders at all levels, as well as peers and customers. “I learned how to watch people and interact with people. Since I was here… I was in the back in a meeting and I would watch people, and I would ask, and that first few months it’s just a learning curve. But I have that skill where I can see people how they interact and I can learn how do I need to participate, and stuff like that.” Lee explained that there are some people on his team who are not very social, and he “can see the segregation.” He said he goes to about half of the happy hours so management will see him, and get to know him. He wants to make connections.

This behavior is intentional in Lee. He knows where he wants to be in the next 2 to 3 years. His new job at Company is just his first step, his “foot in the door,” as he said. He knows connections are very important, and he is focusing his energy on building networks with management across the organization.

Regarding building a sense of community with his team, Lee observed the personalities of his coworkers. “I learned you need to know their personalities in order to work with them. Like, one person really has a strong personality so then the way I interact with her you don’t want to butt heads. So then you use different tactics to talk to them. And certain other people are just quieter so then you set up a meeting to get what you want from them so you don’t disturb them.”

Lee turns the conversation back to his career aspirations. He wants to be in a position of leadership soon, and perceives that his current manager is grooming him for a role. “For me I want to be 100% perfect so if I get into that role, I wanna learn everything I can so I can be a successful manager because I always hear about a certain manager not doing as well as they should and I don’t want to be like that. Every time I wanna be in a position I wanna be the best.”

Lee did talk about building a sense of community with his team as well. While they did not initiate lunches or other social discussions with him, he did initiate these interactions with them. He was not concerned by their behavior, “But I’m used to that. If they don’t come to me I go to them because I’m new so I’m going to try to make that friendship, so…”

It took Lee about 6 months to feel comfortable in his role. However, he measured his own comfort by his confidence in his technical and medical knowledge, not by his relationships on the team. “I know stuff that I can fix and then on their side, they are all [at a high job] level, they think ‘okay this guy didn’t have medical experience but then he’s picking up stuff’ so then they feel comfortable and they respect me now and say ‘yah he does know what he is doing.’”

Lee had a mentor assigned to him. His boss explained that the mentor would train Lee in his role. The training was more ad hoc than planned. When Lee needed something, he went to his mentor and received straightforward information. Typically, he needed to initiate the conversation. They did not have daily or weekly meetings to cover specific tasks; instead, Lee would reach out as needed.

Lee was only vaguely aware of the ERGs. He was interested in joining one group, but reported he did not have the time. He also did not participate in the volunteer activities, as he lived far away from work, and preferred to volunteer in his neighborhood.

The conversation with Lee was far different from those with the other seven study participants. He focused greatly on building a network that would help him further his career. His goal was to be promoted in the next 2 to 3 years. His current job and team appeared to be players in his strategy, whether they knew it or not. He did not express any concerns regarding losing his job, or not being able to do the work, or even not fitting in. On the contrary, his confidence that he was already one of the best workers on his team was clear. His only fear: that he would not figure out the political system, seemed a luxury. Many others in this study expressed a need and an enjoyment in building relationships with team members. Lee, on the other hand, did not seem to care about building personal relationships. He was more focused on building political relationships.

The interview with Lee added an interesting dimension to this study. He is an "N" of one, and cannot be used to generalize the behaviors of other workers who have not experienced a significant time away from work. However, the contrast is both interesting and suggests a new area for further study.

Summary of Common themes

This chapter introduced the study participants via their interview narratives. Each participant answered the same nine questions. By design, the interview questions led to the identification of common themes, and these themes were easily organized into the following categories: excitement at the beginning of employment, fears regarding employment, strategies used to combat fears, usage of networking, and employment insecurity. Strategies used to combat fears included relationship building, and a desire to learn their job quickly, thoroughly and at a high level of competency.

As suggested in the Introduction, it was expected that newcomers would report leveraging past experiences and knowledge about the working world, to help them as they started their new jobs. All eight study participants had examples of purposefully recalling past knowledge or experiences they used early on in their new role. Examples of these past experiences include: knowledge about the work from a previous job, knowing that leaders like follow-up, knowing that building relationships helps you connect with your team, which makes it easier to get help when needed, and recognition that demonstrating competence in your role quickly engenders trust with your coworkers.

Also suggested in the Introduction was the expectation that study participants would report actively seeking membership in Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), Professional Association Networks (PANs) and other Company-sponsored volunteering opportunities as a way to build relationships and seek community. Contrary to that expectation, ERGs, PAN and volunteering opportunities were rarely leveraged as ways to build relationships, network or otherwise get to know team members and other company employees.

The assignment of a mentor or peer buddy was not a common practice. Most of the study participants navigated through their on-boarding process on their own, seeking support and training from many different team members and sources. Not all peer buddies or mentors behaved in the same way. Three were very forward in leading the participant and teaching them their role. The other two waited for the participant to approach them and ask questions. One participant indicated she stopped going to her peer buddy because the buddy always seemed annoyed, so she sought different support and help.

Three of the participants reported that they had Individual Development Plans to support their personal career development. None of the participants reported knowing about the organization-wide employee recognition program. No one was sure if they had ever received recognition through the corporate program or not. Instead, they reported more ad hoc “thanks yous” and “good jobs.”

Participants reported OJT was ad hoc at best. Only one participant reported having a defined and robust training plan provided for them at the onset of their orientation. This training plan consisted of tests and measures of competence he was expected to reach in order to move forward to the next level of training. The rest of the participants who did report OJT indicated it was not well laid-out or defined. This OJT was immediate and supported the participant in the moment.

Attendance at new employee orientation (NEO) or Mission ceremony did not appear to impact the study participants. Two expressed their appreciation for the NEO experience, and were impressed by its thoroughness, yet due to its extremely high-level focus, it did not affect anyone's integration into their immediate job or team. The content of NEO was not specific enough to support the local on-boarding needs of the study participants.

The Mission ceremony also lacked impact with the study participants. While some shared their positive emotional reaction to the Mission ceremony, the messages of the Mission ceremony were not reiterated throughout interview. This ceremony, designed to build employee commitment to the company as well as empathy and connection to the patients who benefit from the therapies manufactured by Company, had little to no long-term affect. Study participants did not reference the Mission ceremony when talking about their excitement in joining the company nor did they refer to it when talking about how they might feel connected to their team.

The importance of networking was evident in five of the eight interviews. Study participants shared that knowing someone in the company helped them secure employment either due to that person recommending them for the position, or asking them directly to apply. One participant felt that networking within the organization would secure future promotions. Two achieved employment without the help of an insider.

Fear of losing one's job was the main motivator of behavior in six of the eight interview narratives. Study participants reported a perpetual insecurity regarding their employment status, regardless of their feelings of security in their newly developed relationships or their sense of competency at their job.

The Company engaged in a semi-annual employee satisfaction survey, used under contract from a well-known vendor. The survey is widely used and possesses the necessary qualifications for validity and reliability.

Survey results, which aligned with the dates of the interviews, were reviewed to determine if the study participants answered interview questions similarly or differently from the responses recorded in the corporate survey. Six study participants had taken the survey. They were from the same division of the company, which meant the survey results were the same for each. This eliminated the opportunity to compare results from different divisions across the organization to identify variations in reported satisfaction regarding on-boarding and training, relationship with one's manager, organizational commitment, and teamwork. The initial goal was to identify where the study participants self-reported positive or negative perceptions, and how those perceptions mirrored the results of the survey. Since the six were from the same division, the data gathered from the employee satisfaction survey did not add additional information or insight to the research itself (see Table IV).

In the next chapter, the themes identified here will be further explored and interpreted. Additional themes emerged from the data that were unexpected, yet these themes appear to be driving forces in study participants' behaviors as they strive to create a Psychological Sense of Community at Work for them self.

TABLE IV
Employee Satisfaction Survey Results

	Company % favorable (scores of 4 and 5)	Division % favorable (scores of 4 and 5)
Immediate Manager Support and Trust		
My immediate manager/supervisor makes it clear what I am expected to do	78	54
My immediate manager/supervisor actively works with me to develop my job skills and abilities	62	32
My immediate manager/supervisor gives me feedback that helps me improve my performance.	65	46
My immediate manager/supervisor creates an environment of trust, respect, and appreciation for individual differences	71	64
My immediate manager/supervisor creates and maintains an environment where everyone feels a full part of the organization.	70	56
Training and Development		
New employees receive the training necessary to perform their jobs effectively	61	25
I have the tools, technology, and equipment I need to do my job.	79	86
Overall, I am satisfied with the on-the-job training I have received	66	46
My organization supports the development and advancement of employees without regard to individual differences (*for example, disability, race, gender*).	77	63
I am currently implementing a documented Individual Development Plan (IDP) agreed upon by my immediate manager/supervisor and me	53	56
Team		
In my organization, we are all in this together.	67	54
The people I work with cooperate to get the job done.	77	68
My organization makes it easy for people from diverse backgrounds to fit in and be accepted.	80	68
My organization encourages employees to be involved in making a positive impact in their community (*for example, volunteering time for community projects*).	64	82
Organization Commitment		
I have a clear understanding of the [Company's] Mission.	95	97
The work I do supports the [Company] Mission.	94	96
I have a clear understanding of my organization's goals and priorities.	84	85

Chapter 5: Cross-Case Analysis

This research has attempted to uncover the strategies employed by experienced newcomers to create a sense of community for themselves. The study looked for the *what* and the *how*. Likewise, it sought to understand if these strategies resulted in a psychological sense of community at work (PSCW).

The interviews of the eight participants uncovered themes that can be organized into the following groupings: excitement at the beginning of employment, fears regarding employment, strategies used to combat fears, use of networking, and feelings of employment insecurity. Strategies used to combat fears included: relationship building, a desire to learn their job quickly, thoroughly and at a high level of competency, and the defining of their work-place boundaries.

The three strategies used to combat the fears articulated by the study participants align with the study findings as reported by Bauer et al., (2007). New employees who engage proactively in their organization socialization process, often utilize strategies around social acceptance/adjustment to group, self-efficacy/task mastery, and role clarity/resolution of role demands. Social acceptance/adjustment, which is similar to inclusion, is a requirement for effective newcomer adjustment (Rollag, 2004). If the newcomer is adjusted, are they experiencing PSCW?

A clear theme revealed through the interview data is that, consciously or subconsciously, the study participants were well aware that their ongoing employment was dependent on their ability to develop relationships with others and learn their new job quickly. Themes surfaced around the why and how they built relationships and learned their job responsibilities. Ashford and Taylor (1990) postulate that newcomers are active and purposeful in their engagement during organization socialization. They specifically articulated the motivation behind this purposeful behavior is stress management. The need for stress management results from the newcomer's belief that if they are unable to acquire the new skills needed for success, there is an increased probability that they will be "selected against" (p. 7). This fear of being "selected against" is the motivator for the behaviors displayed by the study participants in seven of the eight interviews. They were demonstrating a desire to manage this stress.

The stress experienced by the majority of the study participants resulted from the fear of experiencing a layoff again, or not maintaining their current employment. Lee, who had never experienced time away from work, was unfamiliar with the emotional phenomenon resulting from experiencing a layoff, and did not express any concerns regarding his on-going employment. Fearing a loss of employment motivated the study participants to engage in relationship building.

Obtaining Social Acceptance and Inclusion through Relationship Building

Study participants were well aware that the building of relationships on their new teams was significant to their success. As indicated in the literature review, newcomer adjustment is not complete without the newcomer feeling and believing that they have been socially accepted and included by their team and by their organization. Newcomer adjustment is a precursor to a PSCW, and without feeling socially accepted and included, newcomers are often not successful in their role.

The study participants employed similar strategies to building relationships on their new teams. They also had a similar motivation for building relationships: a belief that if people grew to know them, they would be seen as valuable to the team, which would secure long-term employment. Their strategies were simple, yet effective.

Lucy and Nicky set up one-on-ones with almost everyone they supported. Lucy, as the manager, held one-on-ones with all her direct reports who were full-time and in the office regularly. At the time of the interview, she still had not met all of the part-time employees who worked very few hours, but she was determined to meet them face to face as well.

Nicky, on the other hand, had met with everyone she supported in her new role. She asked for their expectations and contracted with them for support. In addition to these meetings, she reached out to those on her team and found ways to get to know them.

This strategy, getting to know others, was employed by everyone in the study. Kelly had less people to get to know, and Lucy had the most, yet everyone in between focused efforts on developing relationships with their new team members. Jean, Nicky, Marcie and Liam found common topics for discussion, such as, kids, divorce, cabins up north, cars and spring break destinations. Liam noted that when you ask someone about their self, they will tell you a lot.

The building of personal relationships on the teams afforded the study participants many benefits. All but one participant reported feeling they could ask almost anyone for help on a problem. Jean recognized that once you have something in common with another person, not only is it easier to ask for help, but they are more willing to offer and give help in return.

All but one participant indicated their focused efforts on building relationships was a new behavior for them. Many expressed that prior to their layoff, or end of their previous temporary role, they did not engage in such overt relationship building. Lucy admitted that while working in a temporary job she held between permanent roles, she did not engage in relationship building. As a contractor, she felt expendable. She did not see the benefit of building relationships when she did not perceive she would be around very long.

Lee was the only study participant whose relationship building strategy was not based on formerly having lost a job. His strategy focused on building relationships that would support his career advancement at Company. He indicated this was the skill he brought to his job: his social skills and his ability to read the environment, know how to act and with whom. He was motivated by gaining visibility across the organization; he was not motivated by avoiding a future job loss, as were his peers in the study. Lee could not conceive that he would be considered for job elimination.

The Quest for Task Proficiently

Six of the eight study participants talked at length about their need to learn their role and demonstrate competency early on. Their self-reported behavior indicated a high sense of responsibly, as well as a personal belief that their performance was directly related to their future employability.

The most common ways the study participants learned their roles was through ad hoc one-on-one sessions with someone who had been identified as a mentor or one who would help them. Only one person, Frank, had a training plan to guide his early integration into the company. Kelly was the only participant who had only one person to go to, her manager, for training and support. The other six were left on their own to discover how to do their jobs and to what extent.

This lack of purposeful training to support their acquisition of task proficiency created stress for the study participants. Many reported feeling that if they made a mistake, it might be catastrophic. Therefore, they went about seeking feedback, asking questions and sharing their own ideas and insights with others in an effort to solve problems.

For example, Nicky received very positive feedback regarding her task acquisition process. She employed “following-up” with those who had assigned her work. She let them know where she was on their project, as well as what other information or support she needed. They liked how she did things, praised her for her efforts, and ultimately her outcomes.

Similarly, Kelly worked one-on-one with her manager and, having done similar work in the past, fell back on her past successes and skill set when she was learning a new process. She problem-solved in the moment and shared her suggestions for solutions with her manager before she implemented a solution.

Jean also used past experience to help her learn new skills. She recalled a previous job in which she thought she “knew it all” yet did not. Recognizing that she was capable of assessing her skill proficiency, she engaged in learning new things whenever she had “down time.” She also volunteered to take work home, proving to others her value to the team.

Like Jean, Frank focused on learning new things. He was able to take part in training on the job, as he had a defined training plan with accompanying tests. His employment was literally dependent on his demonstration of both task and knowledge proficiency. If he did not do well in training, he would not be retained as an employee. Frank reported that he had had similar experiences in past jobs, yet this time around, he was more focused on proving to both his boss and the trainers that he was at the top of his new hire class. He wanted to assure they never questioned their decision to hire him.

For three of the study participants, they believed their focus on learning their role at a high level of proficiency afforded them the status change from contractor to permanent employee. For the three who had been hired into permanent status originally, it was their way of assuring lengthy employment. For the remaining two, they were hopeful they had proven themselves and that the conversion from contractor to permanent status was imminent.

Seeking Role Clarity and Boundary Expectations

Role clarity and boundary expectations, while related to task proficiency, involve understanding one’s place in the organization and the boundaries of the role itself. The study participants reported similar strategies for identifying role clarity and expectations for themselves.

Lee, who had not experienced a time away from work, immersed himself in understanding how the IT department worked with other departments at the company. He had been used to a small, flat organization where he had had the opportunity to work with all the areas of the organization, as well as having access to the CEO. He knew how to function in that environment, but not in the larger environment of his new employer. He determined his employment success was dependent on understanding how to function in the larger company, where he would not have access to the CEO, as well as most of the vice presidents, and may not ever work with the majority of the departments. IT had organized and aligned itself with the departments. Lee was assigned to one area. He was not going to get exposure to other areas or other people if he did not overtly find ways to expand his reach. He soon found out that this created friction on his team. He was getting involved in projects and places where he was not wanted.

While Lee's process caused some friction in his area with his peers, Jean experienced friction as well when her boss assigned her a task to change a process. Jean quickly found out how unpopular the change was. Her boss had tried to push this through in the past. Now Jean, who was the new person, was telling her peers how to do their job. Jean recognized early what was happening, and began implementing the changes more quietly and slowly. She was able to meet the expectation of her boss, without running over the boundaries her peers had put in place.

Lucy pushed boundaries as well. As the only study participant who was hired into a manager role, she knew she needed to challenge some of her role expectations in order to establish herself in the role. Lucy implemented Management By Walking Around

(MBWA). She spent the early morning walking around the office, checking in on everyone, asking about their weekend, their evening, or their workload. She grew to know everyone this way, and they, her. Lucy was intentional about positioning herself not only as the manager, but as a new manager. Things were going to be different with her in charge. She wanted to know what her team needed from her, and what they did not want her to change. She employed a survey, asking for feedback about how people were reacting to all the changes. She learned what they wanted, and what they expected from her.

Liam's experience in identifying role expectations was less affable. He quickly learned there was a pecking order amongst the engineers. He was low in the order. As a contractor, he did not believe he was afforded the same opportunities to bring his work in front of senior leaders. He did not see his work credited alongside others, and he caught someone taking credit for his work. The boundaries were clear to Liam. He was not to be noticed, and he was not confident his contract was going to be converted to permanent status.

The study participants experienced different outcomes associated with their quest to understand their role expectations and boundaries. Lucy engendered herself to her new staff; the few who did not appreciate her management style soon left the organization on their own. Liam expressed a sense of dejection at knowing he had not been allowed to venture beyond the boundaries put in place for him. He was aware that his long-term employment might be hampered by those boundaries. Lee and Jean found ways to circumvent the boundaries without affecting too much harm on themselves or others.

The ways the eight study participants were active in their own organization socialization matched the expectations of the theorists; they spent time building relationships, they focused on developing task proficiency, they clarified their role and work expectations. Did these strategies result in the study participants experience PSCW?

PSCW is defined as the way in which a person experiences a community environment in their place of employment that may explain reasons for putting the collective above self, and meeting needs of identity, meaning, and achieving supportive relationships. There are six constructs of PSCW: 1) Sense of belonging, 2) Coworker support 3) Team Orientation, 4) Emotional Safety, 5) Truth-telling, and 6) Spiritual Bond (Burroughs and Eby, 1998).

The analysis of answers given in the interviews resulted in themes that revealed the behavior and actions used by the study participants to actively integrate into their work teams. They were intentional about building relationships and developing task proficiency quickly. They were purposeful about making themselves irreplaceable.

Did the participants' behavior and actions create PSCW? Of the eight study participants, only seven had experienced a significant time away from work. For the remainder of this chapter, only these seven interviews were analyzed to discover the subsequent themes.

The study participants similarly experienced three of the constructs of PSCW: Sense of Belonging, CoWorker Support and Emotional Safety. Team Orientation, Truth-

Telling, and Spiritual Bond were experienced by some, but not all of the survey participants.

Sense of Belonging

When employees are experiencing a sense of belonging, trust and security on their team, members are well known to each other and willing to help each other, and feel accepted by the group (Burroughs and Eby, 1998; Love, 2007; Pretty and McCarthy, 1991). Burroughs and Eby provide deeper descriptions of how one might express experiencing a sense of belonging. They may report a belief that being part of the organization is important to them, they may indicate they care about the organization, they care about the people in the organization, people are friendly, and they give and receive help from their peers. Given these deeper definitions of sense of belonging, it was possible to organize the study participants' responses into themes.

Of the seven participants who had experienced an extended time away from work, they all expressed some level of excitement toward working at the company. They also indicated that getting to know others, and having others get to know them, was important and part of the attraction to their employer. There also were varying degrees of belief regarding how friendly others were to them.

Lucy stated, in response to being asked what she was excited about in term of her new employment: "I felt honored, and I felt thrilled and I felt relieved" Marcie also indicated feeling thrilled, "I was excited about working for [the company]. I was really thrilled! Walking in and being able to say hi and know somebody's name and know a little bit about them and them about me. It is really nice." Kelly, focusing on the support she received when learning her new role, said: "It's just the people here that I worked with. They were so great they were very welcoming they were very patient and most of all they were good at teaching so I was able to pick up things quickly." Another participant was charmed by the reception she received most every morning: "Oh yes, and people here are so nice...I mean, coming over here into this building an even in [another building], when I come through the door, often times they hit the doors so they open and I can just walk in. What a feeling of invitation and being welcome! That is so nice, and people know your name." Jean talked about the supportive culture: "So I just figure it's a great company to work for because of that culture is more supportive and not going to hold you back."

Other study participants recognized that working for the company could have long-term benefits to them; they saw reasons to attach to the organization. Nicky saw the role as the right career move for her: "I mean it's a very good company, but when I came for the interview, it was in [area of specialty]…That's what my degree is in, so I saw a good fit."

Frank focused on the future opportunities employment with the organization would open up for him: "Excited first, working again and to have an excellent opportunity given the opportunities that were out there."

A sense of belonging goes beyond career fit and a feeling of excitement about the organization, it includes the overt *feeling* of belonging, as indicated by Liam: "Oh it's nice to fit in. It's nice to have the long term relationships, friendships to be able to do things with other people…have a common background. But still, I think that cohesiveness… trying to have that…family thing."

For Liam, the sense of belonging had eroded over time. He was at first delighted to work for the company, but towards the end of the interview, he admitted his passion for the organization was waning. Yet for the rest of the study participants, they were excited to work for the company, and they liked the people they worked with. Their efforts in building relationships and gaining task proficiency appear to have resulted for the study participants, albeit in differing levels, this construct of PSCW.

Coworker support

Coworker support, which provides opportunities for the employee to collaborate with their peers, participate in decision-making, and express own ideas, is further explained by Burroughs and Eby (1998) through the identification of actions taken by the employee in the building of friendly relationships. Examples include regularly stopping to talk with peers, and demonstrating a commitment towards coworkers, even if they do not like them.

Seven of the study participants demonstrated differing levels of relationship building and subsequent coworker support. Liam described his typical behavior during the lunch hour: "I used to go up and eat in the cafeteria all the time. [I'd] see someone and ask 'can I sit with you?' Just learn a little bit more about them and talk about themselves. Find their interests so you got something to talk to 'em about…golf or travel or… If there's nothing to talk about then usually its 'Do you have any vacation plans for the summer?' and that's our mutual conversation it can at least get people talking."

Jean discussed her willingness to take work home, something she had rarely done in the past: “I find myself bringing work home more than I’ve ever done in the past… Being willing to bring it home more…. Mainly because I had a commitment that ‘Hey, I’m going to get this done by this date and time for this’… and if I wasn’t getting it done at work, then I’m going to bring it home and do it. Whereas before, I’d just try to adjust the deadline.”

Frank shared his frustration with a peer whom he labeled as “not a team player…. But to never call a guy back who in all honesty is positive in trying to reach out and try to work on a common ground, it irks me a little bit. I’m not like that; I always try to help people out. So that was my biggest pet peeve and still is to this day.”

Lucy discussed how she purposefully endeavored to get to know her team: “I set up one-on-ones with everyone. I made it a point to go talk to everybody, I mean, seriously, you walk around this place, everybody, *everybody* knows me, *everybody*, I implemented MBWA; management by walking around. I do that all the time. That’s not done here, but I walk around all the time. I made it a rule, just, that’s what I do. I reach out to people.”

Coworker support was the most easily created by the study participants, as it is directly related to the actions most embraced by the group; relationship building. To a person they charged ahead and did not let setbacks get in their way. Not all of their attempts at developing relationships were embraced by others, but their efforts were rewarded by most. Coworker support is the most evident of the six constructs of PSCW for this group.

Emotional Safety

Emotional Safety addresses the quality of the relationships within the group. Burroughs and Eby (1998) further define the actions and impressions identified by employees as feelings of safety that allow employees to share their successes, as well as feel safe disclosing areas where their skill set is still under development, and ask for subsequent help. Employees also need to be able to share their passions, and express difficult emotions when appropriate.

Seven respondents disclosed stories that reflected differing levels of emotional safety. Some expressed feelings of vulnerability and subsequent risk taking. The emotional safety felt by the study participants was a result of some of the risks many of them took during their efforts to build relationships, and demonstrate competency in their new jobs.

Nicky felt vulnerable. She believed she had something to lose either way; if she told her boss about her personal issues, her boss might terminate her. If she did not tell her boss, her boss might very fearful that my manager would be reluctant to keep me on [temporarily] or even bring me on [permanently] because I had these other obligations. I mean, I had to attend the child support hearings and the divorce hearings and the follow-up medical appointments…. She was very supportive. Then I found out every woman in the same role as me went through a divorce and they started sharing their stories with me. So that was really nice that these women were comfortable enough—they didn't know me very well, I wasn't on the job long. They were comfortable enough to say, 'Hey we've been there' you know."

Lucy did not feel 100% comfortable approaching her boss, but after hearing of a coworkers termination, and recognizing her emotions were getting the best of her, she spoke openly. She told her boss the termination of her peer triggered her emotional fears regarding losing her job. Having experienced a layoff in her past, she was afraid of having that experience again. She, like Nicky, did not know which way the conversation would go, but knew she needed to have the difficult conversation, regardless of the outcome. For both, the outcome was positive. While they recognized a risk in opening up, they also disclosed their need to share their most personal emptions. They felt some send of emotional safety.

Participants demonstrated other examples of Emotional Safety as they described how they learned their jobs. All seven were intent on demonstrating to their new team their task proficiency. Of the seven, six needed support in learning their new jobs. Of these six, only one had a designed training plan. The remaining five needed to ask for help, and needed to be upfront with new coworkers about what help they needed. The seventh, Liam, came very well prepared for his job tasks; his area of need was in the company's specific processes and documentation procedures. Similar to his peers in the study, he was able and willing to ask for help when he did not already possess the knowledge needed.

Regarding a safe environment for study participants to share their successes, the results are mixed. Most were supported throughout their on-boarding by at least one person, helping them learn their job and the expectations regarding their performance. Only one person disclosed a story where his successes were not encouraged. Liam had a coworker take credit for his work. While this experience angered Liam, it did not stop him from being successful or from communicating future successes. “So I think I'm doing my job well, I just don' t think recognition is there.”

While the data reveals the existence of Emotional Safety for the study participants, it also hints to the underlying fears articulated by almost all the study participants; their fear that they would once again lose their job. Fear of impending job loss is not a consideration in the definition of PSCW. In the survey instrument developed by Burroughs and Eby (1998), no questions were designed to measure the absence or presence of fear. If Emotional Safety had one question that alluded to fear, such as fear of losing one’s job, the data would not support the conclusion that these study participants were experiencing Emotional Safety.

Inconsistently experiencing a Psychological Sense of Community at Work (PSCW)

The three remaining constructs of PSCW; Team Orientation, Truth-Telling, and Spiritual Bond, were experienced by some, but not all of the seven study participants.

In Team Orientation, members show concern for each other through social support, and demonstrate recognition for contributions. Individuals fully believe the activities of the group are critical and therefore worthy of their individual and collective effort. It is further defined by Burroughs and Eby (1998), to include activities such as the team discussing the ways they communicate, how they work together, and consequently looking for way to improve. Conflicts on the team are managed well and respectfully, and the team has a collective focus on the organization’s mission and purpose.

Not all of the study participants had examples of their team members showing concern and support. Kelly, Jean, Nicky, Marcie, and Frank had examples where they had received care and kindness from their peers, yet none of them shared examples of their teams working to communicate better or manage conflict respectfully. Liam, on the other hand, had the experience of someone else taking credit for his work, and not always receiving the support he needed.

Truth-Telling, where members of the community openly and honesty communicate feelings, concerns and disagreements, and where members have the permission and ability to say what needs to be said, versus what they think others want to hear, was experienced by only a few. These few knew that there were times when they should not, and therefore did not, speak up about something.

Spiritual Bond was not discussed by most participants. A spiritual bond exists when members leverage guiding principles, which are usually rooted in shared ethics and values, to inform their activities and decisions on the job. It also allows employees to feel secure enough to share their personal spiritual beliefs. A few of the study participants indicated they had joined the ERG for Christian employees, and looked forward to the fellowship gained by membership in the ERG. Those who had attended the Mission ceremony did not express any impact that experience may have had on their sense of shared values with the organization as a whole. The discussion of spiritual bonds on their respective immediate teams was lacking. In short, discussions that would have provided data on Spiritual Bond were mostly non-existent.

Summary

The study participants provided examples of ways they were proactive in their own organization socialization: they built relationships, they worked hard to learn their jobs, and they determined where their role expectations and boundaries were. These strategies did appear to support the creation of some aspects of PSCW: Sense of Belonging, Coworker Support and Emotional Safety. Team Orientation, Truth-Telling and Spiritual Bond were not experienced by most of the study participants. It is inconclusive whether or not the strategies employed by the study participants resulted in the experience of PSCW, as some data or evidence may not have been shared in the interviews (such as information on Spiritual Bond). While the interview data was inconclusive regarding PSCW, it shed light on the reason why the study participants were not, as a whole, experiencing PSCW. They were experiencing a separate phenomenon that often follows experiencing an involuntary termination such as a layoff. This phenomenon is employment insecurity.

Chapter 6: Emergent Themes

The purpose of this study was to understand how experienced newcomers, who had experienced a significant time away from work, were active in their own newcomer adjustment, and developing a Psychological Sense of Community at Work (PSCW). While the data discussed in chapters 4 and 5 indicate that the study participants were not, at the time of the interviews, completely experiencing PSCW, they were indeed taking action to build it for themselves. It is apparent the study participants were purposeful in building relationships, developing task proficiency and learning their role expectations and boundaries. It is not clear whether these strategies would result in PSCW, as the majority of the study participants also were experiencing the additional phenomenon of employment insecurity.

The theme of employment insecurity stemmed from the main reason the majority of the participants were out of work: five had experienced a layoff immediately prior their employment at the company. Two study participants who had not experienced a layoff, also were experiencing employment insecurity; one was worried his contract would not be renewed and the other was still recovering from some upsetting feedback received from a previous manager.

While the experience of being laid off was not the main focus of this study, the data analysis showed that the layoff experience was a major influence on participants' feelings and behavior during their re-entry into employment. Following this emergent theme allowed this study to move beyond its original planned structure and uncover surprising results. Therefore, in this chapter, additional findings related to the experience of being laid off and the concept of employment insecurity are discussed: impacts to self-esteem, self- efficacy, cynicism toward the company and the presence of worry.

Between the time the study participants volunteered, and the interviews took place, the company had announced a reduction in force (RIF), i.e.; layoffs. This change in the atmosphere affected the study participants themselves as five had experienced a layoff in their past and two were waiting for their contractor positions to be converted to permanent. One person was unaffected by the recent announcement. This announcement may have contributed to a sense of employment insecurity in almost all of the study participants.

Employment insecurity, also known as Job Insecurity, is an emotional experience an employee has when their tenure with their employer is in question. Sverke and Hellgren (2002) define the experience of employment insecurity as the "anticipation of [a] stressful event in such a way that the nature and continued existence of one's job are perceived to be at risk" (p. 27). Employment insecurity is not job loss, it is the anticipation of involuntary job loss which appears to exist only when that possible job loss is *involuntary* (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Kim and Choi, 2010; Pugh, Skarlicki and Passell, 2003; Sverke & Hellgren, 2002).

In order to understand employee insecurity, one must first understand the concept of *psychological contract theory.* Psychological contract theory suggests employees and employers have entered into a reciprocated agreement whereas each party will fulfill their obligations; the employee performs work as expected, and the employer maintains work for employee. The employee often sees job eliminations as the employer breaking the psychological contract (Datta, Guthrie, Basuil & Pandey, 2010). One of the study participants, Lucy, personified this sense of a contract breach when she said, "That's why I *would not* go back to my former employer. I want a guarantee that it won't happen again."

Employment Insecurity

Psychological breach of contract results in one experiencing low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, cynicism toward their new employer and worry. It also typically results in one lowering their intent to be highly productive (Datta et al., 2010).

When the contract has been broken, in the mind of the laid off employee, the employee experiences feelings of inadequacy and a lowered self-esteem. When the laid off employee gains new employment, they carry to their new job feelings of low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, cynicism towards the new organization, persistent worry regarding employment security, and a propensity to decrease their productively (Datta et al., 2010).

Gant and Wrzesniewski (2010) studied the conditions that strengthen or weaken an employee's sense of self-esteem, self-efficacy, and ultimately their perception of their performance. They attempted to prove that "employees who tend to have high self-esteem, self-efficacy, beliefs in personal control, and emotional stability are motivated to achieve higher performance" (p. 108). They concluded that employees who are amicable and affected by "other –orientation" (i.e. a belief that poor performance will induce feelings of self-guilt, and good performance will induce feelings of pride in others) are those who are most likely to have an increased desire to perform at a higher level.

The data themed from the interviews show evidence of feelings of low self-esteem and low self-efficacy in seven of the study participants. Worry regarding employment security was evident in six of the participant interviews as well. Few showed signs of cynicism, and the data did not show any evidence of a desire in the study participants to decrease productivity. The opposite, a desire to demonstrate high task proficiency, was identified in its place.

Feelings of low self-esteem and worry were evident in the interviews. Nicky exposed her feelings of low self-esteem and worry when she expressed her concern that her team had low expectations of her. “Here I go again, I have to prove myself, I’ve got to gain their trust.” Kelly saw a change in her self-esteem and self-efficacy “Yeah, I don’t want to make mistakes, it was a different experience for me. I am not exactly sure where it was coming from other than I think, because I’d been out of the workforce long enough, my confidence was not quite what it had been before. That, to me, was very interesting.”

Lucy expressed feelings of low self-efficacy when she started her new job, “Am I good enough? Can I do this Job? You know it was overwhelming. My job is really [pause] really demanding. At my old job it was easy-peasy-pudding-and-pie.”

Jean shared her sense of worry, “I feel like if I don’t perform, they are going to find somebody better. So I do feel that stress still even with or without the RIF in place. That stress would still be there. I do everything I can to not just to meet expectations, but to constantly exceed expectations. Whereas before I was probably more focused on meeting expectations and if I exceeded them, great. Whereas now that needs to be the standard."

Frank, while excited to be employed again, was "still a little nervous. Having lost a job and being laid off for what I would say is an extended period of time, makes you a little gun-shy to get back to work. You feel like you are kinda under the gun to do extremely well. So there was a sense of fear but a sense of motivation to really outperform everyone else. Which quite honestly that's always been part of my mantra to do the best I can. It's extra special this time around."

Affects to self-esteem and self-efficacy also showed themselves when the study participants talked about their interviewing and hiring experience. The hiring process was not one of the interview questions asked of the study participants, yet six of the study participants volunteered information about how they obtained their employment.

Four of the participants reported believing they would not have gotten their job if not for friends on the inside. Two of the study participants used employment agencies to receive their contractor roles. Once in these roles, each was asked to apply for a permanent role. Each reported they did not think they would have had a chance at the role if the hiring manager did not already know their work product or performance. Two different study participants gained employment without help yet saw the benefit of networking to get to the next role.

Is it possible the study participants self-esteem and self-efficacy affected their self-perception that they could gain employment without the help of a network? This focus on the use of networking to gain employment was unexpected. Kelly, Jean, Nicky, Marcie, Frank and Lucy all mentioned by name those whom they saw as having assured they had access to a recruiter, an interview or at minimum, an opportunity.

Kelly had two friends in the department in which she was a contractor: her immediate manager was an acquaintance from past work experiences and her other friend, "Sarah" referred her for the position. Kelly had once employed Sarah's husband. The personal relationships resulted in Kelly knowing about the opening, and her subsequent application. The hiring manager also knew Kelly. This helped Kelly, she believed, as her work history was not only on paper, but also personally known to the hiring manager. Kelly was the right choice for the role, yet she truly believed she needed that help to get a job.

Jean used a staffing company to help her join the company as a contractor. Although her position had recently converted to permanent, she shared a level of disparagement about the hiring process. "It's very frustrating from a potential employee situation. It makes the company run well, I think, because they can really test drive with employees as a contractor before they actually make a commitment to hire them. I think that's one big reason why it is as it is around here, 'cause they don't have to hire you. They don't have to commit to somebody that they think is not going to perform well up to their standards." Jean believed had she not had the opportunity to prove to them she was the right person for this job, she would not have been given the chance. "Test driving" was the company's way of hiring new employees, yet you had to have your foot in the door via another route before you could even take the test.

Nicky also used an employment agency to obtain her contractor position at the company. Once in the role, she worked hard to prove herself. This resulted in her boss asking her to apply for the position for permanent employment. Like Jean, Nicky recognized her opportunity resulted from building relationships on the team and especially proving her competency in the role. She did earn the position based on her performance alone, yet she was sure she would not have gotten a chance had she not already been performing the role as a contractor.

Marcie's employment story is similar to Kelly's, Jean's and Nicky's. She knew someone on the inside whom she believed made sure her application was noticed. "And the biggest thing is that you… there's no good, you can't find a job. No matter how good you think you are…. I've known Dawn for a hundred years. Dawn and I used to work together. So she was the one who called me, 'Hey you looking for a job, you should apply to this one.' Yeah so they knew that I knew her so I kinda had, like, given a blessing or something." Marcie acknowledge that she believed her lack of a college degree made it difficult for her resume to get noticed, yet with Dawn's help, she was both noticed and hired.

Frank demonstrated a more purposeful usage of his network to gain employment at Company. As a sales person he was well versed in the building of reciprocal networks and how to use them to get what one needs. When Frank heard the company was hiring sales representatives, he reached out to a number of his former colleagues who were currently employed at Company. He asked for letters of recommendation, which he received. Frank's network was so strong, he asked for a letter of recommendation from a current Company employee who had, very recently, been a direct competitor of his. Frank got the letter of recommendation. He was certain these letters helped set him apart from other applicants and gave him access to the interview process. After his hire, he, in turn, wrote letters for others who were still in the application process.

Lucy as well had started in a part-time contactor role with the company before obtaining full-time and permanent employment. During the application and interviewing process for her permanent position, the person who gave her the most support was the office assistant. Had it not been for the support for her, Lucy is not sure she would have gotten the interview that ultimately got her the job. “She was the champion for me to get the job.”

The experience of these six study participants supports research conducted by Krauth (2004). Krauth ascertained that an applicant’s network supports their future employment, as well as longevity of that employment, when the members of the applicant's network are employed by the same organization. “A firm’s current employees provide information on the job-specific skills of their friends, thus improving the likelihood of a productive match” (p. 1186).

Krauth (2004) also identified that weaker social ties produce more effective networking for employment outcomes. His research outlined that one will typically have the same information, or access to information, as his/ her peers in his/ her close-knit social network, and therefore does not benefit as much from the information gained from that network. Conversely, a weaker-linked network provides information not as readily accessible to the job applicant, and therefore the applicant gains more from the relationship via the information gained.

This phenomenon played out for four of the study participants. Frank shared that he asked a former competitor to write him a letter of recommendation. Lucy said it was the office assistant who was her biggest supporter. Kelly had been an acquaintance of two people in her area. Marcie and Dawn knew each other for “100 years” before Dawn reached out to her regarding a job opportunity; they had worked together many years in the past. For Jean and Nicky, their usage of an employment agency, while not a social network, was their weak-link network. It had access to information not normally known by Jean or Nicky. The agencies access to employment opportunities made it possible for Jean and Nicky to gain employment. Similar to Krauth’s (2004) assertion that the current employees of an organization will help provide data to confirm the match of an applicant to a position, the agency provided confirmation to the company that Nicky and Jean were matches.

As stated above, six of the eight participants indicated they did not think they would be in their current role if it had not been for the help of someone on the inside. Liam, who obtained his current contractor role on his own, indicated he was not confident his contract would be extended, as those making those decisions were not aware of what he could do or what he had done. His lack of a network was working against him. Lee also gained his employment on his own, and had not leveraged a network to gain employment at Company. He also was focused on the networking concept, yet more overtly on building vertical relationships so as to position himself favorably for promotional opportunities as well as larger, more visible and important assignments.

Networking has been defined as one's "attempts to develop and maintain relationships with others who have the potential to assist them in their work or career" (Forret & Dougherty, 2004, p. 419). Lee, Frank and Liam were intentional in developing their networks to "assist them in their work or career," and Lucy, Nicky, Jean, Marcie and Kelly also leveraged their friendship-network to help them get and keep their employment.

This usage of one's network, purposefully, as in Frank's case, or fortuitously, as shared by the others, was identified as the reason they had access to the job in the first place. They did not indicate belief that they would have had access on their own. The belief that they needed help to get their foot in the door with the company shows possible signs lower self-esteem.

Attitudes and Behaviors

Literature on the attitudes and behaviors of newly hired layoff victims is scarce. Pugh et al., (2003) and Kim and Choi (2010) studied the relationships between layoff victims and their new employers. The results of the study conducted by Pugh et al, (2003) indicated a causal relationship between a psychological breach (a layoff) and the presence of cynicism towards the new employer, as well as an inability to develop trust in the new employer.

Kim and Choi (2010) were interested in uncovering whether or not a layoff victim has more trouble developing trust with their subsequent employer than their first. They hypothesized that those who have experienced a layoff experience more difficulty in developing trust with their new employer, feel less obligation to, and therefore do not fully commit to their new organization.

The results of this study contradict Pugh et al. and Kim and Choi's findings that layoff victims cannot develop trusting relationships with their new employer, and are cynical towards their new organization. Cynicism was only partially apparent in the interview data, worry was more apparent, and the ability to develop trust was only intermittently discussed by some of the study participants.

Liam and Lucy showed some signs of cynicism towards the company. Liam was open about his frustration that he had not yet had his contract converted to a permanent role. He spoke more negatively about the company and his ability to get noticed and hired on permanently. He also was the least positive when talking about his team members and his boss. He indicated that he worked hard to get to know others but they did not seem to reciprocate his friendliness. Liam had not officially experienced a layoff; however, he had experienced numerous short-term (about 6 months long) contractor assignments that had ended, leaving him unemployed for extended periods of time. One could consider the past contracts ending without converting to a permanent position as a psychological breach of contract (Pugh et al. (2003). It is reasonable to conclude that Liam's cynicism toward the company was rooted in his belief that this company, as the others before, would be letting him go soon.

Lucy said she felt "like people are expendable…but it's also a function of the environment I'm in now which is a whole other thing" (referring to a recent termination of a peer). Having a peer fired triggered Lucy's feelings from her layoff experience. When her peer was fired, she experienced a new psychological breach of contract. She was now wondering if she could trust her new employer.

Nicky did not experience a layoff. She had left her previous temporary job due to a medical condition that needed attention. She had planned to leave her work, yet on her last day, her manager provided her with devastating feedback about her performance. The timing and the content of this feedback acted as a psychological breach of contract for Nicky. She said he had been providing her with positive feedback until her last day. He surprised her with information that caused her to question her abilities. Yet, Nicky did not show any cynicism toward her new company. On the contrary, she was able to separate the last actions of her former manager with her new opportunity at the company. To build herself up for her interview, she said she told herself: "I can leave that other bad experience behind and just start new. Maybe there's a brighter future for me in this role if I get it! And sure enough! I was offered the job as a contractor."

The others in study also did not display cynicism. On the contrary, they expressed relief at being employed and focused on the opportunities ahead. Five of the eight used the word "opportunity" when discussing what they were excited about when they were first hired into their new positions. Marcie used the word "love" to describe how well things were going for her in her new job, Kelly was 'thrilled' and Frank was 'confident.' Similar to Nicky, they put the past behind them and looked for ways to make this new opportunity work for them in their favor.

Worry, however, was broadly experienced by all those who had experienced a psychological breach of contract. Lucy indicated she wanted “guarantee that it [being laid off] won’t happen again.” Frank, the sales representative, was worried: “I’ll be particularly sensitive once we start to look at our quality plans, cause now it’s all up to me…there’s no safety net anymore. So I know I’ll do well, I have the confidence to know I’d do well. It’s almost like PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), I almost think that you know tomorrow if something happens, you know, what are we going to do? I don’t have panic attacks, just sometimes I get a little stressed that I’m not going to hit the number.”

Jean reported not feeling worried about getting laid off. “If it’s gonna happen it’s gonna happen. Nothing I can say or do is going to change it. Because I know that I am not doing a horrible a job, so I can’t really improve my job as much to save my position. If it gets eliminated, it gets eliminated. So I didn’t come to work every day stressing if I’m going to get laid off today.” Yet she frequently stated in her interview that she felt she needed to be the best at her job. “So who’s to say that at some point somebody better isn’t going to come into the picture, and take over my job for some reason, or if I don’t perform to my boss’ standards.”

Nicky was worried, and was lacking some trust in the organization. “But yeah, I am facing some challenges. I have considered looking at other jobs. I wasn’t sure if my job would remain intact. So yeah—I mean to go from this—this wonderful honeymoon ‘Oh I’m so happy to be here’ and now I’m at this place where ‘oh I don’t know-I’m not so sure’ because I’ve seen bad things happen to other people who I cared about where-you know they went through—I thought—an unfair RIF, or poor treatment from a manager.”

Marcie was the only one who had experienced a psychological breach of contract who did not show any signs of worry. “I'm very needed in my department that there's not a lot of, ya know, the coverage wouldn't be there if I wasn't there. So that’s a good feeling.”

The data gathered in this study, and the conclusion that cynicism and a lack of trust were not demonstrated broadly yet worry was prevalent, match the findings of the research conducted by Brockner, Grover, O’Malley, Reed & Glynn (1993).

Brockner et al. (1993) studied layoff survivors, yet their findings regarding the impact to self-esteem, self-efficacy and motivation to perform well can be applied to the themes uncovered in this research. They uncovered the phenomenon that employees who have low self-esteem were more likely to work harder in response to feeling worried about future employability. They found this to be true especially if the threat of future layoffs was high.

Working hard to be the best was found in the interview transcripts: all eight of the study participants reported wanting to do very well, even though six of them also were concerned they could not do the job. Once those six found they could perform the job, they increased their performance to assure they were one of the best on the team. All indicated an early desire to learn what was expected of them and show their new team members that they were the right hire for the job.

Those who had experienced a psychological breach of contract in the past worked hard to assure it did not happen again. They demonstrated the motivation to be better than their peers. The motivator behind this desire to be indispensable seems to be rooted in employment insecurity.

The Precariat

Another term to describe those who experience employment insecurity is the "precariat," as termed in Italy. The precariat or "precarious worker," is one who moves between semi-permanent jobs. These individuals endure doubt and insecurity about one's self as a result of the "endless series of short-term contracts" (Molé, 2010, p. 38). Liam's situation, moving from contract to contract, without gaining a permanent position, is an example of a precarious worker. Per Molé, the rise of the semi-permanent workforce in Italy has created a gap between those who have permanent worker status, and those who are the precariat. Those who are the precarious are marginalized by the system.

The stigma of living the precarious life-style appears to have made it even more difficult to achieve permanent worker status. The plight of the precariat in Italy is similar to the new stigma in the U.S., resulting from being laid off: unemployment discrimination (Karren and Sherman, 2012). Karren and Sherman conclude that those who have been unemployed for long periods of time are more often selected against during the hiring process, than those who have been unemployed for short periods. Their research, similar to Molé's, also addressed issues of low self-esteem in laid-off workers. They found that low self-esteem in applicants had a negative effect during the hiring process. Similar to the stigma of having been laid-off, often experienced by U.S. workers. Those who are seen as precarious workers often find it more difficult to secure permanent employment than those who are already in permanent contracts.

Fully one-half of the study participants entered into their current employment situation as contractors. All four had hoped their hard work would earn them a permanent role. For two, this had happened, yet their sense of insecurity had not yet waned.

Is the United States beginning to see the rise in temp-to-hire contracts, where, as Jean stated, corporations can "test drive" the employee first? Lucy echoed this sense of despair when she recalled not bothering to get to know her cube-mates "because I was a contractor, and contractors are expendable."

Whether or not the affect is called "precariousness" or "employment insecurity," it has the same effect on the worker: Once in a precarious situation, one cannot experience community at work.

This was evident in the interviews. The emotional feeling of employment insecurity overwhelmed the interviews and obstructed the participants' ability to create and feel PSCW. While this study endeavored to understand how this population created PSCW for themselves, it became clear early on that the precarious employee, experiencing employment insecurity, cannot be experiencing PSCW as well. The two concepts are in opposition of each other. One implies the worker is constantly on edge, making sure they are presenting themselves in a way that will secure their long-term employment, while the other implies the worker has found a sort of nirvana at the work site; and is experiencing a work environment that is inclusive, supportive and feels like a family.

The study participants had many examples of employment insecurity, or precariousness, and its impact on their ability to experience PSCW. Even though Jean had indicated she was not worried about getting laid off, she did share her early concerns of employment insecurity before her contract was converted. “Usually contractors gets cut before employees and so I was always aware of that and working towards the goal of getting hired….And being aware of that it probably pushed me harder to be that much better at my job. Which worked out in the end because it did get me hired.”

Marcie showed the most signs of recovery after a layoff, yet she shared how she felt when she first heard that the company was planning layoffs. “But yet you're afraid because when you get laid off its terrible. Its bomb dropping terrible, I mean the first month you don't quit crying.”

The pain Lucy experienced when she was laid off was still at the surface. “I mean, because basically when you are laid off, you doubt yourself completely. I just felt like “What was wrong with me?” I *often* say to people “I was laid off for a year and a half, I was laid off for a year and a half!” Ya know, So I get it, I understand, I understand hand-to-mouth, I understand. I *get* the fear. There is *absolute* fear. And unfortunately the first couple of months, it completely…really followed me in this job. And now I do feel I’ve settled in a little bit, so I’m not on my, on the edge of my seat fearful. But it does, yeah, it really does, it’s like pulling the rug out from under you and you try to get up and, ya know, it keeps getting pulled out…I wanted to be beloved so they can’t get rid of me.”

Frank talked of his inability to shake completely the experience of having lost his job. “It does stick with you. I’ll never forget it, but you know if you’re not a fighter I could see why people just kind of give up.”

In conclusion, employees whose reason for being out of work was involuntary did not experience PSCW completely, as they struggled to overcome feelings of employment insecurity, especially under the threat of new layoffs at the company. Even those who had achieved the status of permanent employee were concerned they would once again experience a layoff, or end of a contract, and become a precarious worker once again.

They experienced a negative impact to their self-esteem and self-efficacy as a result of the psychological breach of contract with their previous employer. All experienced worry regarding their ability to do their job, and /or keep their job. Expressions of cynicism and a lack of trust in the company were rare with this group. In fact, they were motivated to demonstrate high levels of proficiency in their work in order to maintain their employment, in order to avoid becoming a member of the precariat. As stated by Jean, exceeding expectations had become the standard.

Chapter 7: Recommendations and Summary

Review of Research

This study endeavored to understand the strategies experienced workers, who had spent at least 6 months out of work, employed to create a psychological sense of community at work (PSCW) during their re-entry. The study assumed experienced workers returning to work after an extended period of time would be proactive in their organization socialization process, and purposefully apply previous knowledge of the work environment to their new setting. It also assumed re-entry into work would cause stress to the experienced newcomers, as they would be changing their daily routines (Oreg, 2003). The causes of stress, and strategies used to overcome stress, were investigated in the context of community building. The study was interested in uncovering what the newcomers did, as well as how they did it.

Case study method was used to conduct the study. Case study allows the researcher to uncover the personal experience of the study participant. One can use case study to develop rich description, test theory or generate theory (Edwards, 1998, 2004; Eisenhardt, 1989; Ellinger, Watkins & Marsick, 2005). It was the goal of this research to generate a theory regarding what experienced workers, re-entering the workforce after a significant time away, employed as strategies, and the motivations behind those strategies.

Study participants were recruited from a large medical device manufacturing and sales organization in the upper mid-west. Eight participants were chosen; seven met the criteria, one did not. Including one who did not fit all the criteria provided the opportunity to observe differences in the data.

Common themes emerged from the data regarding the creation of PSCW. The themes were organized into the following categories: excitement at the beginning of employment, fears regarding task proficiency, strategies used to combat fears, usage of networking, and employment insecurity. The study participants were proactive in choosing strategies used to combat fears. These strategies included relationship building, a desire to learn their job quickly, thoroughly, and at a high level of competency and discovery of their role expectations and boundaries.

All indicated an emphasis on building relationships with their new coworkers and their new boss. All had worked in similar roles in the past, and were able to leverage past knowledge and experiences to help them learn their new roles. These proactive behaviors of the study participants matched the theories of organization socialization as articulated by Ashford and Black (1996), Bauer et al. (2007), and Reichers (1987). Their behavior also supported Ashford and Taylor's (1990) belief that newcomers are cognitive in their engagement during organization socialization, and are purposeful in how they integrate into their new job.

Study participants saw the importance of networking. Six of them believed they had gained their employment due to their extended network. The two who did not use a network to gain employment, believed their network would provide further opportunities with the company, such as a permanent position or a promotion.

All eight participants indicated increased motivation to do very well in their new role. The participant who had not experienced any time away from work was motivated to earn a promotion into a leadership role. The remaining seven were motivated to maintain their employment. Impacted by the perception of a psychological breach of contract, they were purposeful in building relationship and demonstrating high task proficiency early in their tenure. The study participants indicated their belief that failure on their part to prove their value, would result in a future loss of employment (Ashford &Taylor, 1990).

This fear of future job loss is called employment insecurity, which was experienced by seven of the study participants. For five of the study participants, it resulted from experiencing a layoff, one participant received devastating feedback on her last day, and another had been moving from one contractor position to another. One study participant did not express employment insecurity, yet he had not experienced any time away from work.

Six of the study participants expressed feelings of insecurity regarding the long-term prospects for employment at the company. They were concerned they would once again be a semi-permanent worker, or, a "precariat."

The majority of the study participants were experiencing insecurity, and its presence made the existence of a psychological sense of community at work almost impossible. Some participants did experience some of the six constructs of PSCW, but none disclosed, through the interview process, a certainty that they were experiencing PSCW.

The conclusion was drawn that one who is engulfed in employment insecurity cannot wholly experience PSCW. The two concepts cannot occupy the same space.

Limits of the Research

The case study methodology itself is a difficult method, as there are many ways to effectively conduct a case study. Case studies are difficult to generalize to a larger population, are hard to replicate, and when not done and reported well, it is hard to follow the logic employed by the researcher. This case study is an interpretive case study. As a result, the data collected were predominately rich description, which is then interpreted by the researcher. Triangulation was part of the plan, yet data gathered by looking at corporate documents added little to no value in the study.

The population studied for this research lacked diversity in the reasons they were out of work for an extended period of time. Sixty-two percent of the study participants had experienced a layoff. Their personal recovery from the layoff, their motivation for continuous employment, and their sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy because of the layoff, became the main focus of the interview.

Had the population studied experienced different reasons for being out work, such as staying home to parent young children, or to care for an elderly parent, or travel around the world, or going back to school full-time, the outcomes might have been different. Would a returning parent or world traveler experience the same fears and excitement about returning to work? Would they express employment insecurity? Would they see themselves as members of the precariat? Or would they have shown evidence of experiencing PSCW?

The organization chosen for the study conceivably unintentionally influenced the outcomes of this study. The organization announced upcoming layoffs. The announcement took place after the participants committed to the study, but before the interviews took place. The announcement of pending layoffs may have triggered employment insecurity in those who had previously been laid off. The interviews may have been different if the participants were not currently waiting to find out if their area of the organization would be impacted.

Contractors and permanent employees alike were chosen for the study. This raises the question about the differences between those who are employed permanently, and those who are under contract and know that their employment is not permanent. Had all of the study participants been permanent employees, would the themes that emerged from the interviews be different? Would the data have reveled more, less or the same expression of employment insecurity? More or less intention to build relationships? More or less desire to prove task proficiency?

And finally, there is little previous research on how employees create PSCW. This made it hard to compare knowledge gained to the existing body of information to look for similarities and differences.

Discussion

This study offers insight into the strategies experienced newcomers use to adjust effectively to their new work environment, with the goals of finding community for themselves. The study did not reveal, however, if these individuals were *experiencing* PSCW. Due to the prevalence of workers who had experienced a layoff, the interviews uncovered their fears regarding their re-entry experience, and their chosen strategies to overcome those fears. The interviews unearthed the goals of the study participants; their goal was *to maintain* their employment, not create PSCW. The study participants were not wholly experiencing PSCW because they were experiencing feelings of employment insecurity.

One could argue strategies employed by the study participants (e.g., build relationships and prove task proficiency), are indeed the strategies one might employ to create a psychological sense of community at work. However, this study cannot claim that these strategies are indeed the strategies one uses to create community for themselves, as these study participants were not experiencing PSCW.

It is important to understand the phenomenon of employment insecurity and its barrier to newcomers developing PSCW. During the economic down turn between 2008-2010, it is estimated that 8.1 million Americans were laid off (The Washington Post, 2012). As the economy recovers, these laid off employees are returning to the work force after a significant time away.

Leaders in organizations often believe employee engagement is a significant component that contributes to high performance and profitability (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). PSCW is a similar construct to employee engagement, in that it shares many of the same principles. Kahn (1990) recognized that workers needed to feel safe enough in their environments to be themselves and build relationships with others. Feeling safe and building relationships with others are two of the constructs that underlie PSCW. If one cannot experience PSCW when also experiencing employment insecurity, it is reasonable to conclude that said employee is also not experiencing employee engagement.

The phenomenon of employee insecurity may masquerade as employee engagement. Those who are experiencing employment insecurity may be working very hard in their roles. They may be displaying the tell-tale discretionary effort so often identified as employee engagement by scholars and organizational leaders alike (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006; Shuck & Wollard, 2010). However, they are not experiencing PSCW, and they are not completely engaged, as they are still on the edge of their seat, hoping the unthinkable won’t happen to them again. Ashford and Taylor (1990) found that employees who feared loss of their job worked hard to adapt to their new environment, as a way to secure their employment. Oreg (2003) and Louis (1980) discus how new employment produces both a shock and stress for the newcomer. The newcomer works to adjust to the shock, and overcome the stress. Employment insecurity appears to be a stressor that haunts the employee through their normal on-boarding period, and long into their first year, at minimum, with their new employer. They are unable to relieve themselves of the burden of needing to constantly prove them self in order to find a sense of security.

Many of the study participants experienced relief when they were hired at the company. They indicated they were sure they would not have had a chance if someone else had not helped them get their foot in the door first. This perception that they needed help getting a new job was but one marker of employment insecurity expressed by the study participants.

Employment insecurity is mostly a hidden problem in organization. Employee satisfaction surveys do not ask employees if they are afraid they will be involuntarily terminated. Surveys ask if the employee is planning to leave voluntarily. Organizations and practitioners alike do not collect data on employee insecurity at the organization level in the same manner they collect satisfaction data.

Employment insecurity may look like employee engagement. Employees who are experiencing employment insecurity are often working hard to assure they will keep their job. If an employee is insecure in their job, there is an expected consequence to the organization as a whole. A work force of insecure workers, always wondering when their job is going to end, would likely be a stressful environment. It may develop into an environment where employees stop collaborating, stop helping each other and hold their knowledge to themselves. This organization, one that has many insecure employees, is one that is the opposite of an engaged organization, it is one not experiencing PSCW.

Recommendations for Practice

Human Resource Development departments need to use this information to build support mechanisms for newcomers who have experienced a layoff. Recognizing that employees who have experienced a layoff may have trouble developing trust with their new organization, special on-boarding plans need to be developed.

Early in the new employee tenure, immediate managers and HR need to work together to develop comprehensive on-boarding and training plans to help the new employee know what is expected of them (role clarity and boundary expectations), know how to do their job (demonstrate task proficiency), and know to whom to go when they need help (build relationships). Assigning mentors or peer buddies to this population will support them in developing relationships, understanding the culture, and feeling safe when they need to ask questions.

In addition to recently laid off employees needing additional support during their on-boarding, HR professionals should recognize that this population is eager to perform at high levels, and are motivated to do well early in their tenure with the new company. They bring lots of knowledge and capability to their new job. They are willing to work hard in order to position themselves for success, and avoid being laid off again. As new employees begin to demonstrate competence in their new role, managers and HR will need to overtly recognize performance through writing thank you notes, and providing immediate and meaningful feedback. Managers may provide new assignments that both reward and stretch the employee, or give the employee access to decision makers in the organization.

Additional training for managers should be employed to help them lead their new employees. For example, processes could be put in place to welcome newcomers (who have experienced a layoff) repeatedly over the first few months on the job. Managers should employ frequent check-ins, taking the new employees to lunches and implementing management by walking around (MBWA).

Talent Acquisition teams will benefit from this study in recognizing that those who have been laid off may bring a higher level of motivation to work harder, to learn faster, and to make a difference immediately in order to avoid being laid off again. Recruiters can modify their strategic sourcing plans to work with organizations that are in the process of laying off employees, and overtly recruit for skill, and desire. Talent Acquisition teams will benefit from recognizing the potential in laid off employees, and not fall into the trap, as outline by Karren and Sherman (2012) and resist applying a stigma to those who have been laid off.

HR will need to recognize that newcomers who have experienced a layoff may have trouble trusting it will not happen again. They will need more communication regarding how well they are doing, as well as how much they are valued. In addition to supporting immediate managers in building relationships with the new employees, HR can support the employee later in their integration stage by supporting career development conversation and purposefully developing personal development plans.

This study did not uncover the usage of employee resource groups (ERGs) or professional association networks (PANs) as a strategy used en mass by the study participants. HR departments could do more to encourage this population to join ERGs and PANs, or develop a networking group of their own. Talking with others who have shared your experience is one of the best ways to build community. If HR departments supported a networking group to support those who are new to the organization, yet have experienced a layoff, the members of that network would support each other.

Those who lead employee engagement initiatives have the opportunity to add questions to their satisfaction surveys that uncover occurrences of employee insecurity. The development of action plans and interventions to support teams with evidence of employment insecurity would help build trusting relationship within teams and providing support to those who are feeling insecure about their current employment status.

If we expect employees to become engaged in their work, and to create PSCW, we need to help those who have experienced a layoff adjust and experience security in their employment.

Opportunities for Further Research

The results of this study have uncovered a need for more research on the *population* of experienced workers returning to work. More study is needed to uncover the *intentions* of the experienced new hire return to work. Similarly, the research on PSCW is lacking, and it is not clear whether one must experience all the six aspects of PSCW in order to confirm one is experiencing PSCW. It raises the questions: Is it even possible to experience all aspects of PSCW? Is it important to experience all aspects? Answering these questions will benefit scholars and practitioners alike when determining best practices for building community at work.

Furthermore, how does the construct of PSCW differ, in the eyes of both researchers and practitioners, from such concepts as cultures of inclusion and employee engagement? How important is PSCW to the employee? Perhaps what is important, especially to the experienced newcomer re-entering the workforce, is proving task proficiency, and building relationships. Maybe those two are the only constructs that matter to the employee. Therefore, an area for future research would be to determine if PSCW is meaningful to employees.

In this study, the one outlier, Lee, proved an interesting subject as his experience was vastly different from his peers in the study. Further research, focusing on the population similar to Lee, an experienced worker with little to no time between employments, would add substance to the one “rival proposition” included in this study. Gathering additional data on this population in order to compare strategies for re-entry to those used by the more contingent work force, would clarify the findings of this study.

As suggested above, HR departments would benefit from implementing additional support systems for experienced newcomers who have been laid off recently. Research to determine the best practices for on-boarding-experienced new hires who have experienced a layoff is needed. Also, research to help practitioners recognize the signs of employment insecurity, and subsequent recommendation to help this population heal is needed. Other questions HRD would benefit from having answered include identifying best practices organizations can implement to help layoff victims heal to avoid the burden of employment insecurity in their next job.

Conclusion

Layoff victims re-entering the workforce is a population currently understudied (Kim & Choi, 2010). Focused attention on this population and the ways in which they are proactive in their on-boarding deserves more research. The population of layoff victims returning to work is growing due to the recovering economy (The Washington Post, 2012). This population growth creates a challenge for HRD departments and managers alike, as they work to effectively on-board and support these new hires who may be joining their new organization already experiencing the symptoms of employment insecurity.

This study raises questions regarding the creation of a psychological sense of community at work and the pro-active behaviors of experienced workers returning to work after an extended period away. Did the population studied represent those who have experienced a layoff? Making the assumption that they do, recommendations for theory-to-practice were made. Specifically, HR professionals can offer additional support to those who are hired after they have experienced a layoff. This additional support may help this specific population reduce their sense of employment insecurity and increase their ability to create a psychological sense of community at work.

Suggestions for future research were made, including the suggestion that this population, laid off workers re-entering the work force, receive more attention to more fully understand their experience with their new organization, as well as to understand the process organizations can take to support the on-boarding and assure the engagement and commitment of this newcomer.

Finally, this study provided the researcher the opportunity to develop a theory on experienced newcomers, and the strategies they employ to adjust to their new work environment. Experienced workers who have experienced a significant time away from work demonstrate different pathologies than their peers who have moved from permanent job to permanent job, with little to no time between assignments. Those who have been out of work for long periods of time focus more on proving themselves to bosses and coworkers than they do in trying to create a community sense for themselves. They are overwhelmed by concerns related to being unemployed, and are only able to exert the extra effort toward task proficiency and relationship building. The experience of employment insecurity, of being a precarious worker, trumps the ability of the worker to find, create or otherwise participate in, a psychological sense of community at work.

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APPENDIX A

E-mail response to study volunteers

Hi,

Thank you for reaching out to me to learn more about my study.

I am interested in understanding how an experienced new hire (defined by me as an individual who has held a job in the past, versus someone brand new to their career) who has been away from the world of work adjusts to their new corporate surroundings; learning their job, understanding the culture, building meaningful relationships, etc. I am using case study methodology; therefore I will be interviewing each subject at least once. Interviews will be audio recorded and then transcribed verbatim to facilitate the analysis process. I'll also be looking at corporate documents, such as new hire orientation agendas, to get a sense of what the organization does for a new hire.

Audio tapes will be destroyed. Interviews will be confidential. Participants names will not be used in the dissertation…your anonymity will be protected as required by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Minnesota. No one at [Company] will know you have participated unless you tell them yourself.

My criteria for participant selection are outlined below. If you are interested but are not 100% certain you fit the criteria, please volunteer anyway.

Criteria

1. Participants must have held at least one corporate job in their lifetime, prior to their current employment.
2. Participants will have been out of a corporate job for at least 6-9 months' time, within the most recent 12-18 months.
3. Participants will have returned to a corporate job with a corporation for which they have never worked, or at least not worked in the last 10 years
4. Participants will have been employed by their new employer for at least 6 months at the time they first volunteer for the study
5. Participants are willing and able to participate in face-to-face, English language, audio-recorded interviews.

Thank you for your interest. Please feel to ask me any additional questions or to voice any concerns you might have.

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide

The questions below were asked, either verbatim, or paraphrased, of each study participant.

1. What was it like to come back to work after being away for so long (describes the subjects state of mind)
    a. (Follow-up) What were your concerns (fears?)
    b. (Follow-up) What were you excited about?
2. What previous knowledge and experience did you leverage to guide you through your journey as you built relationships with your team, and an understanding of your new job?
    a. (Follow-up) Tell me what you did to (do that)
3. What actions did you take to get to know others when you first started in your new job?
4. How did your new team welcome you?
    a. (Follow-up) How did your new team not welcome you?
5. When did you start to feel comfortable and part of your team in your new job?
    a. (Follow-up) What had happened or what was different that caused you to feel comfortable and part of your team?
6. What or who provided the most support or guidance to you as you came to understand your new job and company?
7. Are you aware of [Company’s] employee resource groups and professional associate networks?
8. Did you take advantage of any of the employee resource groups or professional association networks, volunteering activities or other social groups?
    a. If so, please indicate which one(s)
9. Were you assigned a peer mentor or buddy (please identify the individual).

APPENDIX C
CONSENT FORM

Understanding how newly hired, yet experienced employees, adjust, personally and professionally when re-entering the corporate world after an extended absence.

You are invited to be in a research study to understand how experienced new hires adjust to their new employment situation, after an extended absence. You were selected as a possible participant because you volunteered to participate and you are a recent hire employed at this organization. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: The University of Minnesota, Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to gain insights and understanding into how newly hired, yet experience workers, adjust to their new employment situations. These insights will be gained by conducting in-depth interviews with individuals who have recently joined the organization, and who are employed with their current organization for less than one year.

A second area of data collection will be the usage of corporate documents. These documents will provide additional information regarding how the corporation, in this case, [Company] Inc., actively supports the on-boarding of the new hire.

At the Corporate level

- New Employee Orientation process, agendas and attendance records
- Mission attendance records (this is an organizational commitment event for new employees)

At the Business Sector and / or departmental level

- On-the-job-training; including timing, sequencing pass/fail rates, if applicable
- Use of recognition programs; frequency of usage, usage for study participants
- Development planning: % of employees with plans, % of newcomers with plans, % of study participants with plans
- Employee Satisfaction Survey; compare department level to business sector to corporate level.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this study, I ask you to do the following: Participate in semi-structured interviews with me, the researcher, describing how you sought to adjust during your first few months of employment at this organization. This interview will last roughly one hour but will not last more than an hour and a half. Additionally, you will be asked to meet with me a second time to review the findings of this study and to add further clarity to understanding your experience. This discussion will last approximately 30 minutes. Your total participation in this study will not exceed three hours.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

The study has no foreseeable risks. While the study does not represent any immediate benefits to you, outcomes from the study may improve the overall on-boarding and retention practices at your organization.

You will receive no payment for participating in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any report that might be published, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. You will be given a participant number and referred to by the number in the written summary of this study. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only the researcher will have access to these records. The interviews will be audio recorded and then transcribed. Once the study is complete, the tape recordings and transcripts will be destroyed.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University or with this organization. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Krista Sandstrom. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact her at 763-[redacted] or at krista.sandstrom@[redacted]. You may also contact her advisor, Dr. Alexandre [redacted], at 612-[redacted]

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

____

Participant Name (Printed)

____ Date________________

Participant Signature

____ Date________________

Researcher signature