Strategic Hires and External Sources of Knowledge

in the Context of Organizational Absorptive Capacity

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Strategic Hires and External Sources of Knowledge in the Context of Organizational Absorptive Capacity

Absorptive capacity (ACAP) is a theoretical framework for understanding how organizations acquire and absorb outside knowledge to innovate and remain competitive within a market (Cohen & Levinthal, 1989; Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Zahra & George, 2002). When an organization has a high degree of ACAP it is able to absorb new knowledge from outside sources, transform that knowledge within their organization, and exploit that knowledge for strategic market gain, usually in the form of increased revenue or market share.

Recent scholarship posits that within a competitive and rapidly evolving landscape, an organization's ACAP is as crucial as ever to success (Lehmann, & Menter, 2016; Patterson, & Ambrosini, 2015; Zobel, 2017). As organizations evolve in order to account for new technologies and changing business practices, it is crucial that organizations are able to efficiently retain knowledge, absorb it within their organization, transform it, and put it to use in a timely manner in order to keep pace with or outpace their competitors.

Alongside the rising need for knowledge transformation, organizations strategically hire new employees (Kekäle, 2018; Mbugua, Waiganjo, & Njeru, 2015), recruit employees in emerging professions (van Esch, & Black, 2019), and acquire external knowledge through the hiring process (Combs, 2019; Martin & Alleyne, 2017). While research and development (R&D) remains relevant, scholarly research and industry trends are showing that in addition to conducting research to further exploit external knowledge for organizational benefit, organizations are also implementing

strategic hiring as a strategy to bring desired outside skills and knowledge directly into the organization.

Thus, while ACAP research often examines external knowledge that is absorbed internally and then utilized for competitive advantage purposes, there is a lack of literature in the context of ACAP regarding processes of engaging new hires as a means of knowledge acquisition, hired strategically for their external knowledge. This study expands on existing work regarding ACAP by focusing on recruitment as a source of external knowledge acquisition. In order to build towards this objective, the following sections first provide a comprehensive literature review examining foundational and modern absorptive capacity applications, as well as relevant literature on the ways in which modern organizations are strategically recruiting as a means of gaining external knowledge. Furthermore, the literature review highlights how those in emergent professions are involved in this process as they may have skills or external knowledge sought by organizations who wish to be more competitive. The arc of the literature review is used to develop the focal research questions and introduce the collected data and the research methods. The closing sections detail the findings and outline the implications of how emerging professions and strategic hiring play a crucial role in the future of absorptive capacity within organizations and best practices for organizations wishing to increase their capacity to efficiently absorb new knowledge.

Literature Review

The following section explores the foundations of ACAP theory and delineates ways in which absorptive capacity has been operationalized. The literature review also

places ACAP's theoretical constructs alongside burgeoning trends in strategic hiring, emerging professions, and acquisitions of external knowledge by modern organizations.

Foundations of Absorptive Capacity Theory

ACAP was theorized as a means of describing an organization's capacity to learn—specifically to "identify, integrate, and exploit," (p. 569) information from the environment (Cohen and Levinthal, 1989). Through an organization's ability to absorb, Cohen and Levinthal theorized that ACAP provided a strategic opportunity in which to create new knowledge and innovate within the organization. Organizational research and development (R&D) had received relatively scant acknowledgement as a means of obtaining new information, because it was assumed that technological innovation was a public good and there understood effortlessly by those within the corresponding business domain (Arrow, 1962). Cohen and Levinthal posited that not only was R&D critical to gathering the information required for successful innovation, but that R&D was not effortless and needed to be seen as a strategic initiative within an organization in order to be successful. For these reasons R&D teams, which are specifically tasked with gathering and analyzing external sources of information that may be used for innovation, became the focal point of ACAP research (Dai & Yu, 2013; Griffith et al., 2003; Kafouros et al., Kinoshita, 2000; 2020; Un, 2017).

ACAP posits that strategic research efforts do not occur in a vacuum, nor do they lack the potential to be cumulative in nature. Thus, another important tenet emerged in understanding potential to absorb external information: pre-existing knowledge within

the organization. The combination of pre-existing knowledge alongside an organization's R&D's strategic objectives to gather information allows pre-existing knowledge to be built upon by individuals in the organization. This combination of inherent knowledge and acquired knowledge provides symbiotic layers wherein organizations not only acquire new information but are also understood to have varying levels of readiness to receive new knowledge. High levels of readiness within an organization, based on pre-existing knowledge, allows an organization to more efficiently process, analyze, and exploit new information to reach organizational objectives. These factors, together, influence overall ACAP potential.

Operationalizing ACAP

The broad nature of gathering external knowledge and making sense of pre-existing knowledge within an organization has proven challenging. Scholars struggle to operationalize and apply the concepts of external and pre-existing knowledge in consistent ways (Joglekar, Bohl, & Hamburg, 1997; Matusik & Heeley, 2001). In response, Zahra and George (2002) proposed four specific stages in which organizations must operate in order to increase their absorptive capacity: acquisition—prior investments and knowledge that enable the organization to know what they need for information and to be able to search efficiently for it; assimilation—the ability for the organization to understand the value of the information, comprehend the information, and conceptualize the information within the confines of their own organization and potential applications; transformation—marrying the organization's existing structures and routines with the newly-understood information in a manner that allows for the facilitation of both sources towards a shared objective or schema; and exploitation—the

completed implementation of external knowledge within operations for strategic competitive advantage of the organization. These four stages - acquisition, assimilation, transformation, and exploitation - together, position ACAP as a dynamic capability.

Another addition of these constructs was the overarching concepts of potential and realized capacity. An organization's potential capacity, conceptualized as occurring during the aforementioned stages of acquisition and assimilation, is the readiness or receptiveness to new information, including baseline knowledge as well as a culture that values innovation, for example. Realized capacity, conceptualized as the stages of transformation and exploitation, refers to leveraging the knowledge that has been absorbed for strategic purposes, such as increased revenue or market share. Realized and potential capacity, parsed into the four aforementioned operationalized stages, are important because they behave symbiotically and also chronologically, contributing to an organization's overall ACAP potential.

The operationalization of Zahra and George's work has allowed for scholars to break a complex concept into components – this follows the logic that if one can concretely improve one stage of the ACAP process, then one can then increase efficacy throughout all four stages. When studying organizations, scholars have approached knowledge acquisition as it pertains to international skillset demands (Björkman et al., 2007), knowledge acquisition in emerging markets, assimilation in manufacturing environments (Tu et al., 2006) as well as enterprise information systems (Saraf et al., 2013). Transformation has been examined as an isolated variable in the context of innovation within traditional industries (Spithoven et al., 2010) and high-tech organizations (Xie et al., 2018), while exploitation has been examined in the contexts of

supply chains (Malhotra et al., 2005) and partner relationships (Sáenz et al., 2014). All of these instances, while unique in their contributions speak to an ongoing effort to utilize these operationalized stages to help organizations, little by little, to increase their absorptive capacity potential.

Modern Applications of ACAP

ACAP continues to be widely studied and applied because of the critical role of innovation preparedness. Furthermore, emerging technology and modern business practices have provided new avenues for scholars to understand how external knowledge can be understood and exploited. For instance, ACAP has been utilized to better understand stakeholders: van Esch and Black (2019) found that potential recruits to an organization, recruited through software tools using artificial intelligence, had varying experiences based on their familiarity with artificial intelligence (AI) and prior positive relationships with AI in their recruiting history. ACAP has also been used to understand organizational innovation motivation through incentives that encourage employees to seek out innovation and therefore increase their ACAP by being more open to new information (Wang et al., 2018). Both of these examples speak to how ACAP has been applied to changing organizational contexts and in understanding how organizations can better absorb external knowledge.

Because ACAP is a dynamic process, and organizations rarely experience static levels of ACAP, scholars have also examined organizational forgetting, and the ways in which ACAP and innovation potential may fluctuate over time due to varying factors such as attrition, engagement, and external environmental factors (Huang et al., 2018). Zoebel (2017) explored the dynamic nature of ACAP by examining openness to

innovation, a growing principle of many modern organizations, and ACAP, and whether openness to innovation was inherently tied to increased flexibility for those within the organization to innovate. That work found that assimilation and availability of external technological resources played key roles in whether employees were able to transform openness with measurable increases in realized innovation. These scholarly contributions, as well as additional recent research demonstrate that innovation, inherent knowledge, recruitment, and organizational performance are top-of-mind for academics and practitioners alike and have thus contributed to the enduring nature of ACAP (e.g. Ali et al., 2016; Ince et al., 2016; Martin & Alleyne, 2017).

Strategic Recruitment

Due to the rising concern of skills gaps as a competitive hindrance to modern organizational success (Thomson, 2017; Johnson, 2016; Kolding et al., 2018;), scholarship has shown an increased focus on strategic hiring to fill such gaps (Koong et al., 2020; Larsen et al., 2018). A skills gap can be defined as a discrepancy between the skills expected by managers or needed for organizational goals and the skills possessed by candidates available in the potential hiring pool.

In order to fill skills gaps, organizations put time and resources into strategically finding and hiring candidates that help to alleviate the gaps between current knowledge within an organization and the information that is needed to innovate. Some organizations leverage the power of digital tools to recruit across borders in order to increase the size of the organization's potential applicant pool (Banks et al., 2019), while others may rely on external consulting services or job-needs experts to help alleviate attrition and retain ideal candidates (Boggan et al., 2016). Others still have found that in

order to creatively segment their desired candidate population the organization must make themselves known in the environments in which those candidates occupy - e.g. using social media as a recruiting tool for skilled social media professionals (Aggerholm & Andersen, 2018). All of these examples speak to emerging means by which organizations are using recruitment and new technologies to more expeditiously fill their innovation-dependent knowledge and organizational skills gaps.

Emerging Professions

In-demand skill sets sought by innovating organizations are often found in professionals who operate in not-quite-established, or emerging professions. However, emerging professions can be difficult to define. In supportive documentation for emerging professions, the state of Minnesota (Minnesota Department of Health, 2017) described emerging professions in healthcare as:

> *New and emerging professions – such as Community Health Workers, Doulas, Community Paramedics, Dental Therapists, Medical Scribes, Health Education Specialists, Peer Support Specialists, and many yet-untitled roles -- are often uniquely positioned to fill gaps in the healthcare system or to take advantage of new models of care or payment. They also often have more diverse backgrounds than traditional health professions, which gives employers an opportunity to hire workers who reflect underserved or underrepresented populations.*

Those in emerging professions may occupy a variety of roles across industries but share a commonality in that they take up professional space in roles that have not yet reached mass acceptance in terms of job function, are in flux, or are carried out in ways that may be deemed as non-traditional, e.g. a fully remote digital marketing professional (Jacukowicz & Merecz-Kot, 2020). These emerging professions are seen as pre-professions (Olofsson, 2016) and embody cutting edge organizational practice (e.g., robotics development (Elvira et al., 2019)). These roles and skills have crossover

innovation in organizations—for instance if automation is viewed by an organization as a high-opportunity strategy for imminent innovation, the organization will place priority on the skills required to implement automation within their market sector, and therefore hire employees with those skill sets (Stiegler, 2018; Sweet & Meiksins, 2020). Therefore, we can understand strategic hires by an innovating organization as more likely to include candidates whose areas of expertise exist within emerging or "pre-profession" fields and are therefore in greater demand.

New Hires as Sources of External Knowledge

Organizations are concerned about professional skills gaps hampering innovation and preventing them from keeping pace with competitors (Hurrell, 2016; Michaelis & Markham, 2017); similarly, individual job skills are challenging to transfer from one employee to another (Sumbal et al., 2018). Thus, organizations use strategic hiring to acquire the external knowledge they need to innovate (Ardito & Messeni Petruzzelli, 2017). Strategic hires, particularly those in emerging professions, are a source of external knowledge acquired through recruitment and subsequent employment. Furthermore, strategic hires are more important than ever in swiftly changing workplaces.

Unfortunately, external knowledge is not enough to guarantee the absorption and realized capacity of the knowledge for effective organizational growth (Cordero & Ferreira, 2019.; Grandinetti, 2016). Strategic hires must be acquired (hired), assimilated (understood, valued, analyzed), transformed (negotiate with pre-existing organizational practices, routines, and knowledge), and then exploited (used for strategic organizational gain) in order to be fully realized.

The ACAP operationalization of new hires also raises additional questions about internal versus external knowledge and when, precisely, external knowledge becomes internal. One might assume that once a strategic hire becomes an employee, his or her knowledge becomes inherently internal knowledge of the organization, but is this truly the case in practice? If the strategic hire were to exit the organization before completing crucial stages of ACAP, did he or she ever truly contribute external knowledge resulting in knowledge absorption by the organization?

Unseen Labor and Emerging Professions

Multiple variables impact and organization's absorptive experience with regards to external knowledge. This exploratory research takes a two-pronged approach in examining potential factors that may impact absorptive capacity in the context of strategic hiring.

First, the research examines how new hires from emerging professions integrate into new organizations. A wide range of scholarship has explored questions of unseen labor (e.g. labor incurred outside of an individual's job description and to which he or she likely does not receive credit (Kehrig & Vincent, 2017)) in emerging professional positions (Shuffelton & Hochman, 2017), unacknowledged job functions (Sindelar, 2019), as well as the additional pressures placed on employees when professional practices are in flux or business practices change rapidly (Crain et al., 2016).

Extant research fails to capture how those working in emerging professions navigate their new surroundings and the unique challenges of working in a "pre-profession." Most importantly, there is a dearth of research regarding the feelings and

perceptions of those in these not-quite-formed organizational roles. For this reason, the following research question is posed:

> *RQ1a: How do employees in emerging professions conceptualize integration into an organization?*

Furthermore, individuals navigating unknown professional fields face inherent challenges as individuals in emerging professions may have non-linear career paths that make their ability to be readily understood within an organization more difficult (Boffo & Fedeli, 2018). Given the aforementioned considerations of not-fully-formed job roles, unclear expectations, and non-traditional career paths, the following research question is posed:

> *RQ1b: What obstacles do employees in emerging professions face in assimilating to an organization?*

Job Tenure

Key variables such as tenure impact the assimilation and transformation of a strategic hire within an organizational network. The time that a strategic hire has been employed by an organization is likely to play a role as the dissemination of external information into an organization. An organization's readiness to expeditiously accept new information can be considered a factor in overall ACAP, rendering job tenure even more crucial as a point of consideration. The role of tenure within a profession has been previously examined in relation to varying aspects of absorptive capacity: for instance, Tian and Soo (2018) examined absorptive capacity at an individual level in order to better understand how factors such as tenure impact an individual employee's capability to absorb new information. Jansen et al. (2005) viewed tenure as a variable when it came to inter-organizational job rotation and overall ACAP. While both examples outline job tenure as a relevant variable for ACAP, neither, nor does related extant research, examine

job tenure in relation to strategic hiring for external knowledge absorption. Nor does extant research examine how strategic hires are understood to be connected or disconnect from others within their organization. For this reason, degree centrality is explored.

Job Tenure and Degree Centrality

Degree centrality is a network analysis measure of very connected individuals or "popular" individuals who are likely to hold the most information and who can quickly connect with the wider network (Hage & Harary, 1995). Actors with high degree centrality can be understood as crucial to the flow of distributing information and connecting actors within the organization. Tenure can play a role in absorption and degree centrality is a means to measure the connectedness of individuals within an organization. In-degree centrality refers to how many nodes within the network are pointing towards or are connected with a particular individual (Scott & Carrington, 2011). For example, how many employees within the organization who communicate with a particular employee regularly. Outdegree centrality is a measure of the number of individuals or actors within a network that an individual connects with (e.g. whom they report speaking to regularly). Outdegree centrality helps us to understand the ways in which individuals within a network seek information from others within the organization.

Because employees with increased tenure have had more time within the organization to become integrated into crucial organizational functions and are therefore more likely to have more connections in the network, the following hypotheses are posed:

H1: Increased employee tenure will positively correlate with an increase in the in-degree centrality of an employee.

H2: Increased employee tenure will positively correlate with an increase in the out-degree centrality of an employee

Job Title Familiarity

Pre-existing knowledge has a crucial role in understanding an organization's potential to mobilize absorptive capacity. As previously mentioned, an organization will more likely innovate a light bulb if they have ingrained organizational knowledge as to how to produce a light bulb when they begin. Cohen and Levinthal (1990) knew that a organization's ability to utilize pre-existing knowledge not only assisted in the expedience with which they had the potential to incorporate external knowledge but also contributed to the organizational understanding of why said external knowledge had value.

In the context of strategic hires, it is almost that individual actors within an organizational network utilized pre-existing knowledge as evident by their decision to procure the hire in the first place. That is, certain decision-makers or strategic human resource practitioners must know that a potential hire is a source of needed external knowledge in order to be motivated to hire for the position. However, it is less clear that pre-existing knowledge exists regarding the value of the hire at the organizational level in terms of base knowledge spread throughout the population. Familiarity, such as having worked previously with professionals of a similar job title, is one factor that may impact pre-existing knowledge regarding a strategic hire. This experience may provide members of the organization with a baseline of pre-existing knowledge as to what a new hire may do, and therefore have prior knowledge about the value of their external knowledge, simply because the member has seen it or been acquainted with a similar situation previously.

While ACAP research has not directly examined job title familiarity in the context of strategic hiring, prior knowledge as a concept is a consistent theme in ACAP academic research. Liyanage and Barnard's (2003) work on prior knowledge found that core knowledge played an important role in organizational innovation and facilitates and expediates the absorption of new knowledge. When organizations lack pre-existing knowledge, scholars have also worked to highlight best practices and models in which these organizations may utilize to assist them in being able to understand value, create a baseline of knowledge, and therefore absorb new knowledge (Acklin, 2013). Even within organizations, scholars have sought to understand cross-cultural knowledge absorption and ways that international organizations may use prior knowledge to facilitate inter-organizational collaboration (Kayes et al., 2005).

Considering the role that job title familiarity plays in the absorption of organizational knowledge and the aforementioned social network analysis measures of degree centrality and closeness centrality, the following hypotheses are posed:

> *H3a: Actors with increased job title familiarity are more likely to be popular within the organization.*

Job titles are dynamic. Job titles may be reflective of the brand of the employer or help to position the organization according to particular ideals (Zavoina & Reichert, 2000). Conversely, job titles may stay the same while the expected job functions or areas of expertise within the position evolve (McMullen & Yeh, 2013). Scholars have also examined strategic management planning that forgoes job title creation, and instead focuses on core competencies (Guinn, 2000). While some industries experience long-term and expected job title heterogeneity (Carneiro et al., 2012), others do not, even to the extent of allowing employees to name their own job titles as a form of individual

organizational contribution (Grant et al., 2013). Job titles are changing, particularly with the influx of technology-related emerging professions (Han & Howe, 2011), while job skills may exist separate or independent of an expected title. Thus, for the purposes of this research job titles and job skills as considered as distinct.

Job Function Familiarity

Similar to job titles, actors within an organization may have a level of familiarity of a strategic hire's area of expertise, or a familiarity with their skills. For example, an employee may not have worked with an Art Director prior, and therefore have limited prior knowledge attached to that specific job title, however, they may have experience working with those (with other professional titles) who have expertise or skills in the domain of graphic design. Once the Art Director becomes attached, in the mind of the actor, to the skill of graphic design, the Art Director may be more likely to be understood or valued for their knowledge within the organization. By addressing job functions independently from job titles this study aims to examine nuances between job title and job functions, and to extrapolate how to better connect organizational actors for increased innovation potential. Thus, the following hypothesis is posed.

> *H3b: Actors with increased job function familiarity are more likely to be popular within the organization.*

Job Training and ACAP

Prior organizational knowledge is dynamic, and organizations may increase or supplement organizational knowledge for strategic purposes or future planning efforts. Job training is one strategy utilized by organizations to achieve this.

Employee training and development exists as the paramount method to increase baseline knowledge, and scholarship has widely explored the ways in which employers

may train or increase knowledge within their employee population (Bartel, 1994; Hughey & Mussnug, 1997; London, 1989; Noe & Kodwani, 2018). Additionally, increasing employee training can also increase knowledge sharing within an organization (Hsu, 2006), as well as connects employee training and knowledge sharing to innovation outputs (Caloghirou et al., 2018). Employee training plays a role in the pre-existing knowledge of an employee population prior and during the introduction of new information or knowledge, such as in the form of a strategic hire. The actions taken to train employees about emerging professions and areas of external knowledge that hold great opportunity, as well as to build knowledge connections between current employees and strategic hires may greatly influence an organization's overall ACAP.

Employee training is in flux and changes as the organization innovates, develops, or responds to economic factors (Derouen & Kleiner, 1994; Newman & Krzystofiak, 1993; Weber & Weber, 2001). Thus, the employee training experience may differ between employees of varying tenure. Those that joined the organization an experienced onboarding at different periods time of stages of growth within the organization.

By isolating perceptions of organizational training and examining in relation to tenure, this study aims to understand if an organization is moving closer to a higher degree of ACAP, as well as organizational endeavors that may have impacted employee knowledge sharing over time.

Methods

This study analyzes emerging professions, job training, and organizational variables in the context of ACAP. Data collection was conducted in two components of this overall research initiative: Study A and Study B. Data for Study A was gathered through interviewing professionals currently working in emerging professions and their experiences in working within organizations, the labor involved in educating their peers regarding their job role and function, and the obstacles that may inhibit ACAP from occurring when these professionals are understood to be a source of external knowledge. Data for Study B were collected using a survey of the employees of a digital marketing agency and conducted a social network analysis to explore variables such as tenure, job function, and job role in relation to the social ties between actors within the whole network.

Study A

Study A using semi-structured in-depth interviews to better understand the obstacles of working within an emerging profession and the behaviors and the working environments that can occur when an individual's job role is largely unknown within the organization.

Research context. In order to capture professionals in emerging professions that are utilized as sources of external knowledge, Study A sought participants who were experts in their field of research while also working in a domain that is emerging and not fully formed.

Digital content marketing. Due to the emerging nature of digital content marketing as a practice, but relative newness of the professional domain, this study focused on digital content marketing (DCM). Scholars define DCM as a goal-oriented

form of digital communication, wherein "the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating, and satisfying customer requirements profitably" through relevant digital communication occurs (Rowley 2008, p. 522). DCM is a marketing strategy used to engage with strategic audiences via digital technologies, keeping their attention, and nurturing audience intentions to take intended actions (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Effective DCM garners the attention of external stakeholders but can also assist in establishing trust between communicator and audience (Duhon, 2015), and increasing consumer loyalty (Wang et al., 2017).

DCM refers to a content-centric communication approach to gain access to an organization's external stakeholders by building affinity and trust and providing answers and educational materials to that target audience (Content Marketing Institute, 2019). In exchange, external stakeholders typically provide detailed contact information and build a multi-touch relationship with the organization or external communicators over time. The long-term goal is for the organization to encourage the external stakeholders to engage in desired behavior; this could involve becoming a customer, habitually visiting a website, or even becoming an ambassador of the organization.

Content created for the purpose of content marketing is diverse and can include open-access efforts such as blogs and emails, "gated" (requiring contact information to access) content, such as e-books, white papers, toolkits, pre-recorded videos, posters, and even live events such as webinars or in-person events, usually involving an industry expert (Wang et al. 2017). Content marketing also includes social media as part of the overall content universe available online and relating to a brand.

DCM as an emerging profession. Digital communication channels have fundamentally changed the way that customers make purchasing decisions and interact with organization's during their decision-making process (Lingqvist, O. et al., 2015; Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016), which has in turn changed the way that digital marketers must conduct their professional practice. DCM was first studied in 2008 (Rowley, 2008) in an attempt to understand what they perceived to be an emerging practice and skill to be considered within the workplace in order to further innovate an organization's online strategy. More recently, scholars began to see DCM as an essential element of online marketing strategy innovation understood as crucial for organizations to understand and implement effectively (Baltes, 2015). In the last five years DCM has been further solidified as a growing trend in marketing practices and a source of innovation for organizations looking to position themselves strategically online (Kee, Wong & Yazdanifard, 2015).

Correspondingly, DCM scholarship in the past five years has grown with knowledge regarding effective DCM touted as a means of innovation in far-reaching topics such as consumer engagement (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019), customer satisfaction (Andac et al., 2016), university branding (Pharr, 2019), professional services (Wang et al., 2019), public relations (Lahav & Zimand-Sheiner, 2016), social media and online communities (Plessis, 2017), as well as internal communication (Pažėraitė & Repovienė, 2018).

Participant Sample

Participants for Study A were gathered through convenience sampling and were only included if they had relative expertise in DCM. Expertise was determined through

tenure, job experience, and job role responsibility in terms of budget allocation. Each participant had at least five years of industry experience related to or culminating in a digital content marketing position. In terms of revenue, participants represented over 100 million dollars in annual communication budget by their organizations and clients, thus representing a substantial slice of the industry. Interviewees included employees from communication agencies, Fortune 10 companies, venture-capital funded tech startups, private equity-funded organizations, and Software as a Service (SaaS) organizations. See Table 1. (p.64) for further participant demographic characteristics.

Data collection and analysis. Semi-structured interviews between 30- to 90-minutes long were conducted over the phone with 18 digital content marketers. Sample questions included, "Do you feel that your colleagues understand your job role?", "Do you expect your co-workers to have an understanding of your job role when you start a new position?", and "Do you think people you work with could explain your job to someone else?" Phone interviewing is advantageous due to the ability to work with participants in diverse locations, mitigate cost, and access previously difficult-to-reach populations (Drabble et al., 2016). In addition to convenience, there are also methodological strengths: perceived anonymity, privacy for respondents, and reduced distraction (Cachia and Millward, 2011; Sweet, 2002; Stephens, 2007; Lechuga, 2012). Participants received a $10 Amazon gift card upon completion of the interview.

First cycle coding included structural and descriptive codes; second cycle coding included initial categorization of codes based on similar themes; and third cycle coding focused on creating umbrella categorizations based on themes and connections to the theoretical framework (Saldaña, 2015). First cycle coding was developed through the use

of key words and phrases (e.g. for anticipated knowledge, beginning phrases began with: "don't know what I do," "don't expect executives to truly understand my role," "research the organization." "what I expect them to know"). Second cycle coding brought these phrases into themes (e.g. for anticipated knowledge, this is when this theme would emerge, as well as related but distinct themes such as knowledge penetration and flux of role). Third cycle coding reconceptualized findings to relevant theoretical constructs (e.g. anticipated knowledge would be then be examined in terms of the consequences of lack of anticipated knowledge, thus exploring the ways lack of anticipated knowledge contributes to lack of ACAP potential).

Because of the length and number of interviews, this coding process was implemented to organize transcript data, then create categories, and then further examine these categories based on overarching themes. All interviews were recorded using Google Voice recording software, exported as digital audio files and transcribed, resulting in a total of 208 pages of text available for analysis.

Study B

Study B involved an online survey of a digital marketing agency and a quantitative "whole network" social network analysis of the results conducted in R.

Social network analysis. Social network analysis of an organization from a theoretical perspective involves viewing actors through the lens of their interactions with one another, with less importance than the actors as individuals. For example, a social network analysis of a network may examine the role of bridges, or actors who fill a structural hole between other actors or groups of actors who have weak ties (Granovetter, 1973). The concept of centrality in social network analysis refers to the importance or

influence of a particular actor or groups of actors within a network (Scott & Carrington, 2011). These are just two examples of the ways in which scholars may concretely examine a social network analysis, using key terms and measurements.

A networks perspective of ACAP. When a strategic hire joins an organization, they are joining a new network that constitutes the organization. There may be sub-networks, such as departmental or group-level, but when thinking about overall organizational ACAP, scholars ultimately look at the organization's ability to absorb external information as a whole. In this way, a networks perspective is an ideal way to examine both an organization's ACAP as well as relationships that manifest between strategic hires as they are acquired, assimilated, and transformed throughout the ACAP process.

Specifically, the stages of assimilation and transformation are in the ACAP process, and therefore in examining the resulting social network. Once a strategic candidate has been hired, he or she has been acquired as a source of external information and is brought into the organization in a literal sense by beginning employment. It is the following stages of assimilation—wherein the strategic hire merges with his or her team, decision-makers, and the organization at large, followed by the stage of transformation — where his or her external knowledge is integrated into the norms and routines and strategy of the organization, that play a vital role in understanding an organization's ACAP as it relates to strategic hiring.

While previous scholars (Zahra & George, 2002) have conceptualized potential (acquisition and assimilation) and realized (transformation and exploitation) ACAP, this research instead conceptualizes assimilation and transformation as a bridge between

acquisition and exploitation in the context of strategic hires, wherein, without adequate assimilation and transformation, an organization exhibits neither potential nor realized capacity. Acquisition serves as the entry-point for the external information, in this case when the strategic hire is employed with the intention of integrating within the organization. Exploitation, the final stage, is conceptualized as the stage that will occur with greater ease and a sense of natural outcome should the strategic hire be properly assimilated and transformed within the social network of the organization.

Whole network analysis. A sociometric or whole network analysis of the organization, according to DeJordy and Halgin (2008), is appropriate if the research objective is to focus upon the entire group and develop a "global structure" in which to better understand network-specific patterns of interaction, how resources or knowledge flows within the network, as well as structures of status. A blending of social science research with a networks perspective, sociocentric networks are powerful in that they are more likely to be generalizable or applied to other networks with similar characteristics (DeJordy & Halgin, 2008).

Study B context. Participants in Study B included employees of a mid-size digital marketing agency with 45-55 full-time employees. The digital agency has three locations, but only their prime or "headquarter" location was surveyed, with a total of 32 participants completing the survey in its entirety. The agency provides media production, public relations, advertising, media buying, analytics, and social media marketing support to clients primarily operating in the healthcare and education sectors. The organization has been operating in the New England region of the United States for more than fifty years.

Participants were acquired through convenience sampling via the researcher's pre-existing relationship with the organization. Participants generally conducted their workday on-location in one building, which allowed for potential in-person (as well as digital) socialization opportunities throughout the workday. The boundaries for the network included salaried employees of the organization (not contract workers) but did leave flexibility as to whether the employee was full-time or part-time. The organization was given a $300 gift certificate upon completion of the survey. In order to achieve a whole network analysis designation, participance response rate required over 80% response from the organization, which was achieved.

Data Collection

An online survey was conducted over the course of two weeks in June 2020 using Qualtrics. Survey questions were developed to better understand features of the digital agency's network and specific relationships to actors within the network germane to their tenure, skills expertise, and job title. Furthermore, participants were asked about their experiences regarding employee training in order to better understand pre-existing knowledge formation efforts. By conducting a survey, data was produced that relied upon the reported data of those within the social network of the organization. Lastly, a previously validated job satisfaction training scale was also included in the survey, adapted from Schmidt (2007), to better understand satisfaction with training as well as organizational support of employee training, with four measures for each. The valence was measured using a 5-point Likert scale, from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree."

Analysis Plan

This survey data was assessed, visualized and analyzed using R. H1 and H2 utilized a Pearson's correlation coefficient to examine the correlation between tenure and in-degree and out-degree tie formation. In order to address H3, an exponential random graph model (ERGM) was generated in R and utilized a Markov Chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) algorithm. The resulting model was analyzed to better understand latent variables within the organizational network. An analysis of the model's goodness of fit (GOF) was conducted to ensure that the simulated models were in line with the collected data. The data was also analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation. The following paragraphs provide a brief description of the network overview, ERGM as a statistical method, the MCMC algorithm, as well as how each hypothesis was specifically addressed and analyzed. The results of the survey were used to construct a visualization of the social network using R. Data analysis examined the nodes (the actors in the network), the attributes of the nodes (characteristics within the network), and their ties with one another (how the nodes relate to one another) (Scott & Carrington, 2011). Node attributes included the relative tenure of the participant, their job title, and their skills expertise as self-reported by the actor but also by the rest of the network. Tenure was a categorical variable wherein 1 was coded to correspond to 0-1 years of tenure at the organization, 2 corresponds to 2-3 years, 3 responds to 4-5 years, 4 corresponds to 6-10 years, 5 corresponds to 11-15 years, and 6 corresponds to more than 15 years. Job title awareness was coded by conducting a count of the total amount of job titles each participant responded that they were familiar with of all the job titles within the organization (39). Job function familiarity was calculated by using a count for each participant popular job skills contained within a marketing agency and found in job

search descriptions for the aforementioned job titles. Participants self-selected which job functions they felt familiar with, which allowed for their total count.

Further node attributes examined the extent (through valence) to which job titles and job functions were understood by other actors in the network. Analysis of network ties examined who actors sought spoke to regularly and whom they sought for organization-related information. This data were analyzed to include directed data in order to observe the patterns in which specific actors sought others for information to acknowledge that this information-seeking may not always be reciprocal. Following node attributes, the network was measured in R according to size and overall homophily (common attributes between the nodes in the network, and network density, which compares the total possible connections with those that exist in the network (Scott & Carrington, 2011).

ERGM models. Exponential random graph modelling (ERGM) refers to a class of social network analysis that can be used to examine the structure of a communication network (Pilny & Atouba, 2018). In recent years, there has been a notable increase in the use of ERGMs as an approach for understanding a wide range of network patterns (Lusher, Koskinen, & Robins, 2013; Pilny & Atouba, 2018), including within communication and for the study of communication in organizations (Monge and Contractor, 2003). ERGM is particularly well suited for examining factors that impact the probability of tie formation between any two actors (Shumate & Palazzolo, 2010). ERGMs provide a method for communication scholars in particular to better understand the mechanisms that can influence how communication networks form within an organization (Pilny & Atouba, 2018). For instance, one might look to see whether or not

actors within the organizational network have a tendency to connect with more popular actors. Do nodes' attributes (e.g. tenure, education, age) influence ties between them?

The emergence of ERGM is an intuitive process for many researchers implementing statistical analysis because it has similarities to traditional analysis procedures such as regression, utilizes familiar social science concepts such as independent and dependent variables, and can be evaluated for goodness of fit (GOF) that demonstrate the usefulness and reliability of the model, similar to an R^2 from traditional regression models. Furthermore, ERGMs can be used to infer whether specific structural or procedural occurrences within the network are more likely to happen than by chance alone (Pilny & Atouba, 2018).

The Markov Chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) process. MCMC is a class of algorithms used to sample from a probability distribution (Pilny & Atouba, 2018). MCMC allows scholars and researchers to use statistical software and computers to conduct Bayesian statistics, better allowing them to examine to look at probability, but also the closeness in which data is representative of a belief, such as a hypothesis (Bolstad & Curran, 2016). The use of Bayesian statistics, sometimes referred to as Bayesian inference, is used to update the probability for a hypothesis as more data or evidence becomes available within the model (Bolstad & Curran, 2016).

Since MCMC is a general model used for Bayesian inference, it can also be applied to specific forms of inference. One such area of inference is likelihood inference. For complex stochastic processes, the exact calculation of maximum likelihood is difficult or impossible, and therefore by utilizing the MCMC approximation, researchers can use the MCMLE (the MCMC by way of maximum likelihood, condensed as

MCMLE) to simulate rapid parametric simulations to better understand likelihood (Geyer, 1991).

Goodness of fit (GOF) is an overall examination of differences between a statistical model and the data being analyzed (Maydeu-Olivares & García-Forero, 2010), and is similar to an R2 (Pilny & Atouba, 2018). In a GOF test, thousands of networks are first simulated using the ERGM formula, which are then compared to the observed or "real" network. If the simulated networks created using the ERGM are visibly similar to the network being analyzed, that network is considered to have a good fit with the model (Pilny & Atouba, 2018). If the simulated networks do not closely resemble the real network, then the researcher will often continue to add variables or elements in order to better represent the network in the ERMG model.

Star in-degree tie network formation. In order to address "popularity" as mentioned in H3a and H3b, star tie formation is a network parameter that measures the degree to which a node is the recipient of "numerous and frequent choices" (Scott & Carrington, p.15, 2011). In the case of a communication network, this is an actor with a high degree of popularity and leadership within the network. A node that is in the middle of a "hub" is one that several other actors choose as a communication choice. A star then chooses who from among those that choose him or her, who he or she chooses to communicate with (Scott & Carrington, 2011). Simply put, many people will choose to communicate with a star actor in the network, and a star has a great deal of choice in who they would like to reciprocate the action, in this case regular communication.

Analysis Plan

A sociometric network analysis of a survey taken by members of a digital marketing agency was conducted in order to address hypotheses 1 through 3 and to further understand how specific variables may impact the assimilation and transformation of external knowledge embedded within strategically hired employees may be absorbed within an organization.

In order to address H1 and H2, specifically in-degree and out-degree, a Pearson Correlation Coefficient was conducted. The first hypothesis will be supported if the tenure variable has a significant and positive correlation with in-degree tie formation and the second hypothesis will be supported if tenure has a significant and positive correlation with out-degree tie formation.

Hypothesis 3a and 3b will be addressed by using the ERGM model to predict star tie formation (e.g. actors with increased job title familiarity will be more likely to form star ties with other actors within the organization; actors with increased job function familiarity will be more likely to form star ties with other actors within the organization, respectively). Specifically, this analysis will examine nodes in-degree istar2 nodes that are likely to have two edges (two ties) nodes that and are likely to have three edges (three ties). Hypothesis 3a will be supported if the job title familiarity variable is significant within the overall ERGM model. Hypothesis H3b will be supported if the job function familiarity variable is significant within the overall ERGM network.

Results

The following succinctly summarizes the findings of Study A and Study B in order to prepare for discussion and theoretical contribution.

Study A

Anticipated job role and DCM knowledge. Addressing RQ1a, which asks how employees in emerging professions conceptualize their integration in an organization, participants responded when entering a new organization, they often anticipate the relative level of knowledge regarding their job role in the new organization in order to better prepare for integration within the organization. This means drawing on prior experience working in emerging professions in past organizations, or prior knowledge regarding the general level of knowledge of their job role among certain groups of professions. In order to better prepare for their roles, these types of assumptions are necessary in order to anticipate how to best integrate.

Regarding content marketing, one participant shared that she expects that employees in a marketing organization, "Know what it is, and I think they know why it's important, and may be able to identify some pieces and parts of (the job role), but aren't able to describe it in a meaningful way." This assumption was based on prior experience but also based on firsthand experience gathered through the job description and through the interview process. By making this assumption, the participant was able to think critically about the gaps in content marketing knowledge within the organization and how those gaps may impact her role.

In general, participants felt that overall understanding of their job role among professionals who liaise with marketing on a day-to-day basis was low. Alternatively, understanding was rooted in prior understanding of marketing efforts and had not quite reached modern job function understanding. Participant 6 explained,

> *Some people outside of marketing might think they know what (digital content marketing) means. But they might think more in the traditional sense like, "Oh, okay - like a sales sheet." Or they might think content marketing is something that you're going to print out. But they're not thinking about social media content, or*

blog content or videos that we make with clients and members as digital content. So, I think many people still think in an old school way about content."

It was important for participants to evaluate how traditional an organization is likely to be in order to best anticipate the working environment. Participants also considered the familiarity of other employees with regards to marketing as a practice and whether or not it would be necessary to combat established routines regarding marketing.

This lack of knowledge often led to frustration towards the new organization, but also towards clients who had procured their business (e.g. an agency) for content marketing services. Interviewees indicated a lack of knowledge in the new organization, but also a lack of knowledge on the part of the clients or partners that solicit their services. For example, Participant 3 observed:

Critical parts of content marketing today seem so basic. But it is surprising how many people don't get it. I don't know if it's being lazy or (they) don't understand how much value (digital content marketing) could bring or how much they need it, but it shocks me every day.

Interviewees remarked that they often wondered why an organization would strategically hire an employee whose role they do not innately understand, or why clients would solicit services that they did not fully understand.

Even at the executive level, participants often felt that they could expect that business owners had often a vague understanding that content is valuable but not necessarily a clear understanding of the connection between digital content marketing and revenue. Participant 12 shared:

No. I would say generally speaking (the C-suite) don't understand. I don't even think some of the business owners that I work with understand, and what they don't understand is the true business value of content.

This anticipated level of knowledge or understanding, or typically anticipated lack of knowledge, shaped how participants approached organizations, their willingness to join certain organizations, and their information-gathering during the hiring process. Ultimately, those working in DCM had to ask themselves, "considering the anticipated level of knowledge about my job role, is this job worth it?" This disconnect of knowledge colored the way that participants thought about their role within the organization from the onset of their employment.

"They don't know what I Do." Focusing on organizations with a low level of prior knowledge, participants expressed that working in an emerging profession meant that their colleagues "don't know what I do." Participants expressed that their colleagues, who encounter DCM efforts as consumers outside of the organization, often struggle to identify their consumer experiences as DCM. One participant explained, "[My colleagues] have no idea the economics of how they shop and how [DCM] plays a role in how they think or how their consumer decision making is impacted." In many cases participants expressed the lack of knowledge within their current organization regarding DCM and their job function at large. For participants working outside of a marketing agency at a traditional organization, many expressed absolutely that they did not feel their co-workers understood the job roles of their peers. One participant, working at a medical research company, replied, "Oh my God. Absolutely no. One hundred percent no," when asked about her peers' level of understanding. One participants who worked in an organization that was more marketing or digital-forward, that percentage of DCM understanding tended to increase, with one participant sharing, "Probably, I would say probably 50 percent," who understood her current role within the organization.

Ambassadorship. Also addressing RQ1a, many participants conceptualized themselves as boundary spanners or brokers when they thought about their integration into an organization. Participants felt the need to evangelize the benefits of their job function and to be an ambassador for their emerging profession, particularly if this was the first time that the organization had hired a role with their skill set and organizational prior knowledge was low. When thinking about the unique role of an emerging profession in comparison to more established organizational roles, Participant 17 observed:

> *I think that [working in emerging professions] can create unique challenges for people who work in those areas because no one knows what you do. To be an ambassador for your own work within the organization you've got to constantly prove the merit of what you do. Whereas people who work in finance don't need to prove the merit of what they're doing because everyone generally knows what they do and the value of it.*

For many, explaining their role and increasing organizational knowledge comes with the territory when they are thinking about integration into a new organization or into their current organization. Despite the boundary spanning nature of their role not being a part of their official job description, many accepted it as part of the territory. Participant 12 elaborated,

> *I laugh because my life mission is to now try to explain exactly what I do to everyone I work with. Try to explain it and get them to say, 'Oh okay I get it.' I find if you give an example of a deliverable of content marketing then it clicks, but off the bat I think the phrase content marketing and the phrase content strategy are so ambiguous to most and most people have no idea what that means.*

This role of being an ambassador for your job role within your organization is something that some expressed pride in. Their passion for their job helped carry them through the additional labor of educating others, as Participant 17 shared:

> *I'm constantly shoving [DCM] down their throat. So, I feel like at a certain point everyone should be like, "yes, I know what content marketing is," but to be honest I don't really ever know that for sure.*

While participants expressed that they may take on an ambassador role, they often did know the exact level of pre-existing knowledge or how their labor increased knowledge regarding their role within the organization over time.

Flux. When thinking about their organizational integration (RQ1a), participants expressed a great deal of understanding that their role, and that their industry, were constantly in a state of flux. This acceptance of perpetual fluctuation provided a holistic perspective as to how they saw the evolution of their role, the future of DCM, and why patience and thoughtfulness was required of them as stakeholders operating within an emerging professional space. This understanding superseded the organization and caused participants to reflect upon their role in the greater scheme of society. Participant 3 shared:

> *If I ever told my parents, 'I'm going to major in Facebook,' they'd be like, "that's fake." [And I was in college] not that long ago. It makes you think about what's going to be the next thing or the new jobs? Are there going to be new majors? But colleges all over the country are going to add to their curriculum and will create support for emerging professions in the next couple of years.*

One participant shared how job roles for DCM have changed even during the last few years, and even as the profession has become more mature. All of these reflections have changed the way that integration into an organization can be understood, and the flux taking place that never truly ends. Participant 1 explained:

> *I was thinking about how a director of content is a new role I've started seeing. That's something that makes me feel like we're the new social media managers now, even "the olds" at this point know that social media jobs exist, but they're still completely unsure about this area. But it's evolving*

Regarding the flux of DCM and organizational digital integration as a whole, one participant described it as, "It's like a recipe book. But the problem is that the food is always changing." This theme of constant flux according to market demands and organizational needs provided an idea of impermanence and change in how participants thought about their roles and places within an organization.

Getting started. With regards to RQ1a, participants reflected on their own transition into the field of DCM, and how that journey impacts their current view on their role and strengths within organizations. This reflection helped participants to delineate the nucleus of their skill set as they prepared or actively attempted to educate those around them regarding their role. Participant 10 lent this summation:

> *All the roles that we're looking for really highlighted inbound marketing and inbound marketing, which is primarily rooted in content marketing. So, it's like coming up with good smart content that people will want to download in exchange for their contact information or will generate strategic interest.*

This perception of evolution and a nucleus of specific skill sets led several participants to reflect upon their success in the emerging profession. One participant summarized, "Whatever success I have today is about being a creative problem solver." Participants used their summaries and reflections on their skills to encapsulate what they offer an organization and how they can anticipate positioning themselves when entering a new work environment.

For other participants, their thinking around organizational integration and external knowledge centered on their personal career trajectory, and this often involved moving from one emerging profession to another, through developing overlapping skills and seeking in-demand knowledge. Participant 12:

> *First, I got involved with social media. And that evolved into social media marketing or using social media to reach very specific audiences. And that evolved into learning more about the audiences and about the different personas that we were marketing to and getting very specific deep dives into who we were trying to sell. Meanwhile I improved my copywriting and long form writing to speak more clearly to these audiences.*

This quote highlights how a professional working in an emerging profession might naturally move to a related but less-developed profession as their career progresses. This participant's entry into social media marketing helped them develop expertise in audience research which is now being used for DCM. This coincides with market saturation, where social media marketing is no longer as nebulous or in-demand as more and more individuals learn these job functions, and therefore by moving to the next role, participants are able to keep their employability and stay in-demand amongst top employers.

Dignity of role. However, participants shared that working in DCM as an emerging profession did not necessarily equate with professional respect. Participants shared that their skill set, similar to social media marketers ten years ago, was often frowned upon by those in more traditional roles. Participant 10 explained:

> *In addition, those from more traditional professions such as journalists often end up doing "content marketing" to help pay the bills but they simultaneously look down on it, like they think it's just complete bottom dweller work. As someone working in content marketing, I think I was susceptible to that for a while where (journalists) kind of made me feel ashamed of what I do and then I was like wait a minute I'm actually just helping people solve their problem through content. Furthermore, I have a skill set that those from more traditional professions have to spend the time to learn and not everyone can do it well.*

This highlights how perceptions of prestige or belonging also factor into how those working in DCM might think about their integration into an organization and some factors that can exist below the surface about belonging, talent, and dignity of work.

Integration Obstacles

RQ1b asks what obstacles employees in emerging professions face when integrating with an organization. The following highlights specific obstacles that participants experienced, and the following section entitled "Consequences" helps to further unpack the resulting behaviors or workarounds to these obstacles.

Lack of knowledge penetration. Overwhelmingly, the biggest obstacle for participants working in an emerging profession was a lack of knowledge penetration within the organization regarding DCM and their emerging profession work. This works in tandem to the previous sections regarding members of the organization not knowing what the person in the emerging profession does. Participants shared that it was not simply that relevant stakeholders may be unsure of their role. A significant problem was a lack of overall knowledge penetration within the organization as a whole. Participant 1 explains:

> *There are five or six people that are on the marketing communications team. And then there are a handful of product managers that understand it but that's probably another two or three or four more people. The salespeople might understand it but that's another six people. So, what are we up to like a dozen and a half people out of 200? Most of my company doesn't know what content marketing is.*

For participants, the lack of knowledge among their peers was equally important than a lack of knowledge among decision-makers in the organization. Participants expressed their reliance on other implementational employees (non-management) in helping them to achieve day-to-day tasks and objectives. When implementational employees did not understand the participant's role or the value of DCM, overall productivity was more arduous. Several participants expressed that the source of this obstacle was a lack of training. Participant 15 shared:

> *One thing that always drives me a little bit crazy is that…you usually work really closely with sales but it's like nobody has ever explained to sales exactly what content marketing is. And so, everything starts and is on your shoulders. But am I responsible for training sales?*

When asked if there was a majority of people in the participant's organization who understand what they did, that same participant replied:

> *Absolutely not. I think that they interact with it on a regular basis, but they don't understand what it actually is, and they don't know it's what I do. I hear people describe my job in different ways all the time in the organization and it sort of makes me laugh and makes me want to scream every time I hear it.*

In regard to employees whose job roles were closer to the participants – in the same department or in tandem with deliverables – some participants felt like this naturally led to increased understanding, but still more understanding was needed. Participant 10 shared:

> *At a high level as far as we create this material that people are interested in reading, generally. But the details of its value at our organization or how we work with other departments, less so.*

Participants overwhelmingly felt that their clients (e.g. if they worked in an agency setting) lacked understanding on their DCM services, even if they actively sought those services. Participant 12 shared the following:

> *I've roughly worked with seven clients in the last eight months. I consult with a creative agency and I would say even the more mature marketers and the creative agencies still don't fully grasp content marketing at all.*

Participants as a whole felt like this obstacle was crucial to overcome within the organization in order to best utilize their skill set and make use of their external knowledge.

Finding like-minded peers. One way that participants expressed mitigating the obstacles in RQ1b regarding lack of knowledge penetration was to specifically seek out

employees in their organization or when they joined a new organization that they anticipated to be like-minded, or to be able to easy understand the goals of their work. In finding these allies, Participant 3 shared:

> *(Liked-minded employees) definitely get it and I bounce ideas off of them all the time. So, it's definitely good to have some people who can have those conversations with. Keeps you sane.*

While finding like-minded employees is an action or behavior taken by participants, it exists most fully as a factor that impacts how they think about their integration as individuals working in emerging professions. Specifically, employees considered whether or not they will be completely alone at an organization or if it is likely that they will find a few like-minded individuals as part of their integration strategy.

Obstacle Consequences. The aforementioned obstacles pertaining to RQ1b naturally lead to discussion of the consequences of these obstacles and how the obstacles to integrating into a new organization led to real developments or negative situations for participants when trying to integrate and conduct their job functions. One such consequence expressed by several participants involved the result of lack of knowledge leading to a lack of comfort with DCM-related decisions, particularly by organizational decision-makers. Participant 10 explained,

> *It's hard to justify (budget) for (decision makers in the organization) even if they know that it makes an impact. On paper it shows some benefits, but they're still going to lean towards things that they're a little bit more comfortable or confident in like advertising dollars or (tactics) that they've just seen and experienced more in the past.*

This consequence often meant that participants had to lobby for marketing spend while dealing with unchanged expectations – simply put they were often asked to do more, with less. They found that organization leaders would hire those working in DCM because

they knew at some level that the effort was important to their growth in the digital space, but often hesitated to allocate the funding needed to make that role and effort successful.

The obstacle of lack of knowledge and subsequent hesitation to support DCM led to an increased demand placed on employees to justify the numbers and budgetary spend for their unit at every turn, a task that was often far outside their job description, but often ended up being a monumental challenge. Participant 6 shared the following:

> *I think that's one of my biggest challenges is actually explaining how you take likes and comments and impressions, and how it leads to revenue. You've got to help (organizational leaders) to understand why that stuff matters and how revenue gets there. Because I said I don't think people understand it.*

An additional consequence is that lack of knowledge resulted in unrealistic expectations of production for participants working in emerging professions. Those in authority positions do not understand the full scope of the role, the challenges of the role, or the unseen labor of the role within the organization and therefore allocate an unreasonable workload upon the employee in order to ensure they receive a return on the hire as soon as possible. This is an expectation that participants felt was not expected of other new hires, those whose roles were better understood. Participant 6 explains:

> *It's a little bit frustrating right because people want endless amounts of (content marketing). I don't think they also understand the amount of effort that gets put into good content marketing and think we can just vomit out an e-book.*

But this pressure to produce can result in additional consequences, participants explained. When you have pressure to work outside your job role and produce more than your job description outlined, quality and efficacy of the effort can diminish. For example, Participant 15 explained:

> *Content marketing is cyclical. You need to be able to understand why (a content effort) didn't work in order to optimize and want to change what comes next or what you create next. Sometimes there just isn't time or there aren't resources to*

> *do that. I think the organization suffers because you don't you can't adequately say, "all right, this is how we're going to get much better in the future.*

This rush that participants expressed to fulfill these expectations had the consequence of potentially leading to poor business practice wherein participants working in their emerging profession were not able to perform or utilize their external knowledge effectively due to obstacles within the work environment. Participant 10 shared:

> *The danger of [too little time and unrealistic expectations] is you're just churning so fast that if you don't have good habits or you don't have good practices in place the quality can drop and if you're not actually learning and iterating as you go, you're just a fool.*

Unsurprisingly, participants expressed a want to succeed at their job roles, whether currently within an organization or entering a new organization. The result of wanting to be successful and wanting to show their colleagues what DCM can achieve often meant they took on the lion's share of these unrealistic expectations and simply worked more hours.

Study B

The following section summarizes the findings from the second component of the research study.

Descriptive Statistics

Thirty-two of 39 employees completed the survey (n=32) (82% of the organization). There was one participant between the ages of 18-24, eight between the ages of 25-34, seven between the ages of 35-44, six between the ages of 45-54, eight between the ages of 55-64, and two over the age of 65. Twelve of the employees identified as male and 20 identified as female. In terms of education, two participants

identified with having some college education, twenty-seven had completed college, one had a master's degree and one doctoral degree.

Correlation Analysis Results

Tenure and outdegree tie formation were found to be weakly correlated, r (30) = .1, p = .06, and non-significant. Tenure and in-degree tie formation were found to be weakly correlated, r(30) = .18, p = .03. Additional variables were also examined, including job title familiarity. Job title familiarity and outdegree tie formation were found to be strongly correlated and significant, r(30) = .72, p = <.001. Job title familiarity and in-degree tie formation were found to be moderately and significantly correlated, r(30) = .44, p =0.01.

ERGM Results

Seven models were developed in a stepwise fashion in order to assess the overall network fit. Akaike information criterion (AIC), an estimator of out-of-sample prediction error, was used to compare between models. The final model (Model 7) had an AIC of 1171. Following Hunter and colleagues (2008) goodness-of-fit of the final model was assessed by using the fitted parameters to generate simulated networks. The degree distribution of those simulated models was then compared back against the initial dataset. Figures 2-6 (Please see Appendix) reports and demonstrates the fit between the modeled networks and the original network for the key parameters associated with this analysis. Figures 5 and 6 show the in-degree and out-degree distribution for the simulated models compared against the initial data. The figures show a generally acceptable fit, although there are some degree ranges that skew a bit further than would be ideal. That said, the

overall model aligns with theoretical expectations and is therefore was used for this analysis.

Tenure was hypothesized as a key variable for likelihood of increased communication ties within the organization (H1a, H1b). In the final model, Tenure group 3 (those with 4-5 years of tenure at the company) from ERGM Model 7 (Appendix, Table 1.) was shown to have a strong impact on the likelihood of tie formation ($p < .005$). A nodefactor "adds multiple statistics to the model, each one equal to the number of times a node with the specified attribute is at one end of the edge." (Harris, 2013)

ERGM Model 3 shows positive significance among Age Group Three (ages 35-44) with a p-value of $p=.026$ This data point shows that those participants between the ages of 35-44 were the most likely to form communication ties of any age group within the organization, at a rate that was significant in comparison to the other age groups.

In ERGM Model 4 the variable of title familiarity, that is, how familiar participants are with job titles, is examined. The more job titles a participant was familiar with, the more likely he or she is to be statistically more likely to have more communication ties, with a p-value of <0.001. This is coupled with the moderate Pearson's correlation coefficient of job title familiarity and in-degree ties ($r(30) = .44$, $p =0.01$) and the strong correlation between job title familiarity and out-degree ties ($r(30) = .72$, $p = <.001$). Therefore, H3b is supported, showing that participants who were more familiar with job titles, were much more likely to form communication ties, both in-degree and out-degree, as well as star ties or be overall popular.

In relation to ERGM Model 5, the variable of job function familiarity, not necessarily the title, but the job functions contained within job roles, there was

significance for participants of varying levels of job function familiarity. Participants were split between low job function familiarity (were familiar with between 1-15 job functions), medium job function familiarity (were familiar with 16-32 job functions) and high job function familiarity (were familiar with 33-47 out of 47 job functions). Some participants with high levels of job function familiarity had strong social ties while others with low levels of job function familiarity also had strong communication ties within the network. Therefore, H3b is not supported, with no quantitative link between job function familiarity and likelihood of istar tie formation within the network.

In ERGM Model 6 gender did play a role in likelihood to have increased istar ties within the organizational network with Gender 2 (participant identified as female) being statistically significant (p=.041 for women) demonstrating that women participants were more likely to establish star ties than men.

Integrating Study A and Study B

The intentions of this research were to better understand the lived experience of those working in an emerging profession through qualitative inquiry, and then to further illustrate and make connections through quantitative data. Study A implemented semi-structured interviews to better understand the experiences, challenges, and obstacles of those working in a "not quite well known" profession. Study B mapped the social network of an entire digital marketing organization in order to develop a quantitative "whole network" analysis utilizing exponential random graph models. Ideally, those working in the organization of Study B would have included participants found in Study A, therefore adding depth to the network and creating connections between the experiences of the participants as they shared with the researchers, and the

communication network found within Study B. Furthermore, participants in Study A reported being hired for strategic purposes, which aligns with the hiring patterns of Study B, as marketing agencies staff according to client demands.

Though Study A and Study B had distinct participants, Study A still provides insights as to how new and emerging employees within Study B may be feeling and provides insight for further questioning regarding how individuals within an organization are able to integrate and disseminate knowledge within their network over time which can be used to increase the ACAP of the organization.

Discussion

ACAP is a well-cited theoretical framework that helps scholars understand how organizations may acquire and absorb outside knowledge as a means of innovating and remaining competitive within their market (Cohen & Levinthal, 1989; Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Zahra & George, 2002). When an organization is said to have a high degree of absorptive capacity it is able to absorb new knowledge from outside sources, transform and utilize the new knowledge within the organization, and exploit the knowledge for strategic market advantage. The following section reviews the research questions and hypotheses in the context of the data findings and in tandem with the overall relevance and contribution to ACAP theory.

Absorptive Capacity in the Context of Emerging Professions

Extant research shows that organizations are hiring strategically in order to acquire external information in the form of new employees, particularly employees who work in emerging professional domains (Combs, 2019; Martin & Alleyne, 2017; Kekäle, 2018; van Esch, & Black, 2019). However, little is known regarding the integration

process for those working in emerging professions when they do integrate within an organization, and such knowledge will contribute to overall understanding of the efficacy of emerging profession hires as a form of external knowledge acquisition.

Pre-existing knowledge. Pre-existing knowledge is a key tenet of ACAP as theorized by Cohen and Levinthal (1990) – pre-existing knowledge can act as a conduit, allowing organizations to absorb new external knowledge if said knowledge is similar to the knowledge already in existence within the organization. Participants shared that when integrating into an organization their overwhelming anticipation was that individuals within the organization were unlikely to understand their job role nor to be able to describe it in a meaningful way. This assumption by participants plays a vital role in RQ1, which examined how participants think about their integration into an organization. Through a combination of past experience and participant prior knowledge regarding the general level of knowledge of their job role among certain groups of professions, participants expressed a need to specifically strategize how to enter or integrate within an organization in a way that would be successful for both themselves and the organization.

Related to anticipated level of knowledge, perhaps more concentrated within organizations with a low level of prior knowledge, participants expressed that working in an emerging profession such as DCM often meant that their colleagues "don't know what I do." According to ACAP, this lack of prior knowledge reduces the absorptive potential of the organization and also leads to a longer lead time in which the organization can exploit the knowledge for strategic purposes. Zahra and George (2002) further explored this concept by specifically outlining the four stages of the absorptive capacity process: acquisition, assimilation, transformation, and exploitation.

Prior knowledge is housed or contained within the first two stages of ACAP operationalization: acquisition and assimilation. An organization needs to have sufficient information to know that an employee with skills in an emerging profession has the external knowledge needed to innovate within the organization, that individual must be retained in the form of being hired, and then his or her knowledge must go through the assimilation process wherein the external knowledge is married with baseline organizational knowledge and integrated with pre-existing structures and procedures that enable successful utilization of the external knowledge.

The first stage, acquisition, seems to be a non-issue for those working in emerging professions. By proof of their employment it becomes clear that organizations know, to some degree, that they need the specific skill set of the individual working in the emerging profession in order to obtain specific external knowledge. However, this familiarity or awareness of this need may be siloed within a hiring manager or be surface level (e.g. our competitor is hiring digital content marketers, we should too). To sum, someone within the organization knows that this external knowledge has innovation potential and initiated the strategic hire, but that does not mean the role is understood.

H3b explored how familiar members of the organization were with specific job titles, hypothesizing that familiarity (or pre-existing knowledge) would lead to increased popularity within the organization. The results of ERGM Model 4 supported this hypothesis, showing that pre-existing knowledge led to an increased likelihood of popularity for individuals within the organization. Furthermore, utilizing a Pearson's correlation analysis, moderate and strong correlation was found between job title familiarity and in-degree and out-degree tie formation. While job tie formation exists as a

single variable, it speaks to connectedness within the organization as a whole, and that those who understand what others do are more connected and therefore have more first-hand access to knowledge through their regular communications. Additionally, the strong correlation between job title familiarity and out-degree tie formation shows that individuals who have strong job title familiarity are information seekers, who reach out to individuals within the organization to learn more from others, or regularly approach more actors within the network than the norm. This shows that psychological traits such as curiosity and extroversion may act as helping traits for individuals within an organization to learn more and utilize external knowledge through their communication-seeking behavior.

Job tie formation can be understood as a factor of overall ACAP potential and important for those entering the organization in emerging professions. It is therefore logical that those who have a great deal of popularity within the organization in particular have a certain degree of prior knowledge regarding emerging profession roles and therefore have the ability to disseminate that prior knowledge efficiently throughout the organization.

Ambassadorship during assimilation. The second stage of ACAP as theorized by Zahra and George (2002) was understood to be assimilation. Ambassadorship played a key role for participants in exploring this phase and was addressed both in how they thought about their integration (RQ1a) and in the obstacles they face in the organizational integration process (RQ1b). Participants often anticipated having to be an ambassador of their role when they thought about entering an organization and also that they often had to carry out that action by explaining to others within the organization what they did in a

way that endeared the role and it's benefits to the recipient of the information. In order to reach the third stage of (transformation), key members of the organization need to understand the external knowledge, how to best utilize the new information and integrate it into key areas of the organization's operations. Ambassadorship acts as a substantial obstacle to the efficiency of the ACAP process in that it slows down assimilation and also impedes transformation. In order for organizations to efficiently utilize external knowledge, members of the organization must understand how the external knowledge may integrate with existing structures and routines towards a shared objective. When members of the organization do not have the base knowledge to make these connections, this is not a possibility and efficient integration is also impossible.

Flux. Participants from Study A had a great deal of reflection when they thought about their integration into an organization (RQ1a) – participants realized that emerging professions are constantly in flux, and so, in tandem, are the careers of those working in these professional domains. Several employees interviewed had transitioned to DCM from other emerging professions as those professions became less in-demand, showing a key understanding that being in a pre-profession, by its very nature makes the professional a source of valuable external knowledge for potential employers. However, as more and more organizations come to understand the value and utility of an emerging profession (and the external knowledge contained in the job role), the emerging profession will also have less potential for innovation as a competitive advantage within the organization. The more organizations hire employees in emerging professions with specific knowledge, the less rare that knowledge becomes.

One participant referenced social media marketing as an example of a previous emerging profession and therefore sought after form of external knowledge and commented that now social media marketing as a job role is no longer quite so difficult to acquire in a strategic hire and that the external knowledge has reached a certain level of market saturation. This too, is likely to occur for newer emerging professions such as DCM and highlight why the expediency of the ACAP process is so important for strategic hires. If an organization is not able to assimilate new external knowledge and assist members of the organization in innovating with new knowledge, then it is only a matter of time before competitors are able to also attain the external knowledge and use it, limiting potential innovation and competitive advantage for the organization. Simply put, when it comes to external knowledge for innovation purposes, time is of the essence and to delay or encounter too many obstacles in the process incrementally limits competitive innovation.

Compounding the challenge of participants inhabiting a fluctuating professional space, issues of dignity and legitimacy were shared by participants in Study A. Those working in more traditional fields might be hesitant or have a bias against those working in an emerging profession for no other reason than that an emerging profession like DCM does not have the longstanding history that other professions may have and therefore may be seen as illegitimate or lacking skillfulness. This played a vital role in how participants thought of their integration (RQ1a) and obstacles they encountered (RQ1b).

Knowledge penetration. Lack of knowledge penetration proved to be a commonly shared obstacles by participants in Study A (RQ1b). While participants acknowledged that some members of their organization or future organization may have

working knowledge of their role, they often expressed that baseline knowledge was not shared and distributed throughout the organization. Sometimes this was cited as a lack of training before the arriving of the participant but often it was simply understood that individuals working in emerging professionals can anticipate a widespread lack of understanding of their job role and value within the organization, and that lack of penetration would increase depending on the market sector of the organization (e.g. a marketing agency is likely to have higher knowledge penetration than a pharmaceutical company due to the nature of their market sectors).

Tenure. Tenure was addressed by H1 and H2, hypothesizing that tenure will positively correlate with in-degree and out-degree tie formation. This was largely unsupported as the correlation was found to be quite weak (0.17, 0.1, respectively) ERGM Model 2 also addressed tenure, finding that those who had been at the organization between 4-5 years had significantly higher likelihood of increased popularity within the organization (istar). While this led to an unsupported hypothesis, it did reveal an area for further anlysis. Time at the company may not continuously correlate with tie formation, but tenure may matter to a certain degree as suggested by the ERGM results.

Employees who enter an organization may take a certain amount of time (in this case 4-5 years) to reach their maximum threshold for regular communication and integration of their knowledge within the organization. Depending on the organization, this could be a factor of trust, structure, respect, or any variety of variables mentioned or otherwise. When related to ACAP, it reveals unknowns about the time it takes to become wholly integrated within the organization to the extent that the actor is popular within the

network and able to disseminate knowledge and ideas quickly and efficiently as a leader. From an ACAP perspective, a new employee who is hired strategically to bring key external knowledge to the organization taking 4-5 years to fully integrate is far too long, and their opportunity to innovate is either lost or severely diminished amongst their competitors. In order for an organization to benefit from a high level of ACAP, employees with crucial external knowledge must be positioned in ways that they can quickly benefit the organization.

Like-Minded Peers. One way that participants expressed as a strategy to overcome lack of knowledge penetration was through the active solicitation of like-minded peers, those in which they could brainstorm their day-to-day activities. However, like-minded peers were described as a perception, or as those that participants felt at the organization were most likely to understand their role and skills. It is important to consider if or how this may change if actors within the organization had a concrete understanding of the job roles of one another and were therefore more equipped to connect similarities between perhaps seemingly dissimilar roles.

Too little time and unrealistic expectations. The largest obstacle (RQ1b) shared by participants of Study A was that they felt they had too little time to complete their work and due to lack of knowledge regarding their role, they were often overwhelmed with unrealistic expectations regarding their output. In order for ACAP to be maximized those with external knowledge need the bandwidth to integrate their role and disseminate their external knowledge throughout the organization for innovation to occur. If an individual working in an emerging profession is inundated with work and consistently

stressed about delivering an unreasonable output, it stands to reason that he or she would not have the bandwidth to share what they do, or act as ambassadors.

In an ideal absorptive environment, employees with external knowledge would not need to act as ambassadors for themselves, but with too heavy of a workload that effort to ameliorate the lack of knowledge through strategic positioning of their role within the organization is also impossible. To sum, participants working in emerging professions did not anticipate their colleagues to know what they did, and they were often too overwhelmed with unrealistic expectations to spend the amount of time needed to educate their organization regarding the value of their role. From an ACAP perspective, this limits assimilation and transformation, which would severely inhibit the exploitation process as a business cannot exploit knowledge which is not understood.

Conclusions

The findings of these studies contribute a starting point in which ACAP theory further considers strategic hires and emerging professions as formalized areas of study that regularly contribute external knowledge to organizations. The literature provides a basis for understanding how the strategic hiring of emerging professions came to be commonplace as a tactic for organizations to compete and innovate within their respective markets. Furthermore, it widens the conceptualization of ACAP and allows scholars to understand external knowledge as more holistic, and far-reaching beyond traditional research and development practices that have been widely studied thus far. This research suggests that while strategic hiring to acquire external knowledge may be a burgeoning activity of organizations, there are limitations to the efficacy of those efforts

if the assimilation and transformation of that employee (and his or her external knowledge) are not considered as essential for successful absorption.

Positionality

When accessing these organizational spaces and surveying and interviewing working professionals, the researcher must be clear regarding positionality. The researcher's prior professional experience and related workplace skills provided an entry to this research. Furthermore, both Study A and Study B were arranged through professional contacts, granted through the first author's prior employment experience and professional network. That being said, having prior knowledge of the interview subjects and the organization utilized for the network analysis provides the opportunity for bias and also increased association with the challenges, obstacles, and behavior exhibited by the subjects. That is, the first author has increased insight and personal relationships with all participants, which should be known when reading and analyzing study results. Plainly stated, the first author is a bit close to the subject which means conducting this research with a particular point of view"

Emerging Professions

The sociological emergence of professions has expanded within the scholarly community for over 40 years (Klegon, 1978; Saks, 1983; Young & Muller, 2014). Likewise, pre-professions and emerging professions have been studied extensively within management literature (Brante, 2013; David et al., 2012; Morris et al., 2006). However, there is still some degree of ambiguity in "proving" that a profession is emerging, or whether a profession has previously existed and pivoted in job role. Furthermore, it is challenging to define when a profession or organizational function moves from

developing to developed, from pre-profession to established profession. For these reasons it is important to acknowledge that the classification of DCM as an emerging profession is lacking in concrete support and was used for this research due to the availability of subjects, the perspectives of the researchers, and contributing research regarding the professional practice.

Best Practices

In terms of industry application or best practices, this research suggests that integration of new hires and engagement of current employees in the integration of new hires should be considered a strategic objective. New employees should receive strategic assistance in their integration and opportunities to integrate with ease, while tenured employees should be reconnected with new hires and provided education on new roles, new job functions, and emerging professions. Much of this could be captured through the human relations training process. While it is commonplace to train incoming employees regarding their new organization, this research suggests that there may be merit in training existing employees about the skills and role of incoming employees or emerging professions that will play a vital role in their organization's goals.

Limitations

This research is limited in that it contains the studies of two datasets gathered from traditional professional environments – both samples of participants work in an office regularly or exclusively. ACAP is applicable to a wide range of fields, including employees that work in disparate fields such as manufacturing or agriculture, and is therefore not adequately represented by groups who primarily work in an office setting.

With different fields and types of professions one may consider new variables such as multiple physical locations, geography, and also diverse employee populations.

Future Research

Future research may take a longitudinal approach to better understand the integration of employees within a network over time. In doing so, scholars can better understand the timeframe in which new employees or specific employees integrate within the organization and their regular communications as self-reported over time. In addition to self-reporting, future research may examine analytics from software such as employee chat platforms, which would allow scholars to map increases and decreases in communication between actors over time. Future research also has an opportunity from a social network analysis approach to examine actors in emerging professions in an ego network and understand which actors he or she forms ties with, and how that may differ when analyzed across multiple variables.

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Appendix

Table 1. Participant Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Characteristic		Total (%)
Gender	Female	14 (77%)
	Male	4 (22%)
Race	White	18 (100%)
	Non-white	0 (0%)
Work Experience	>5 years	17 (94%)
	<5 years	1 (5%)
Content Marketing Experience	>5 years	13 (72%)
	<5 years	5 (27%_
Management Experience	Yes	16 (88%)
	No	2 (11%)

Table 2. ERGM Model Results

Parameter	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Edges	.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***
Mutual	.000***	.000***	.000***	.000***
Istar2	.135	0.179	.127	.990
Istar3	.582	.303	.243	.948
Nodefactor.tenure.2		.497		
Nodefactor.tenure.3		.000***		
Nodefactor.tenure.4		.831		
Nodefactor.tenure.5		.030*		
Nodefactor.tenure.6		.037*		
Nodefactor.age.2			.884	
Nodefactor.age.3			.026*	
Nodefactor.age.4			.896	
Nodefactor.age.5			.489	
Nodefactor.age.6			.407	
Nodecov.titlefam				.000***
Nodefactor.jobfunclvls.low				
Nodefactor.jobfunclvls.med				
Nodefactor.gender.2				
AIC	1240	1222	1224	1190

p = 0 '***' ; p < 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.'
0.1 ' ' 1

Table 2. ERGM Model Results (Continued)

Parameter	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Edges	.000***	.001	.018
Mutual	.000***	.000***	.000***
Istar2	.137	.260	.152*
Istar3		.631	-
Nodefactor.tenure.2			.305
Nodefactor.tenure.3			.005**
Nodefactor.tenure.4			.734
Nodefactor.tenure.5			.300
Nodefactor.tenure.6			.122
Nodefactor.age.2			.945
Nodefactor.age.3			.132
Nodefactor.age.4			.364
Nodefactor.age.5			.870
Nodefactor.age.6			.566
Nodecov.titlefam			.000***
Nodefactor.jobfunclvls.low	.517		.940
Nodefactor.jobfunclvls.med	.687		.292
Nodefactor.gender.2		.041*	.326
AIC	1243	1375	1171

p = 0 '***' ; p < 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1
' ' 1

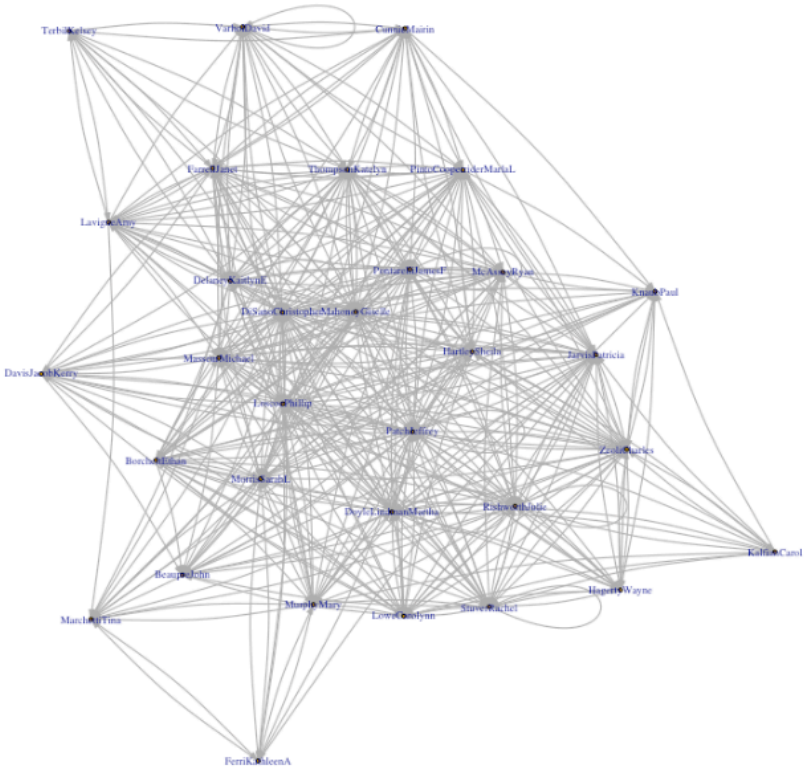

Figure 1. Communication Model Visualization

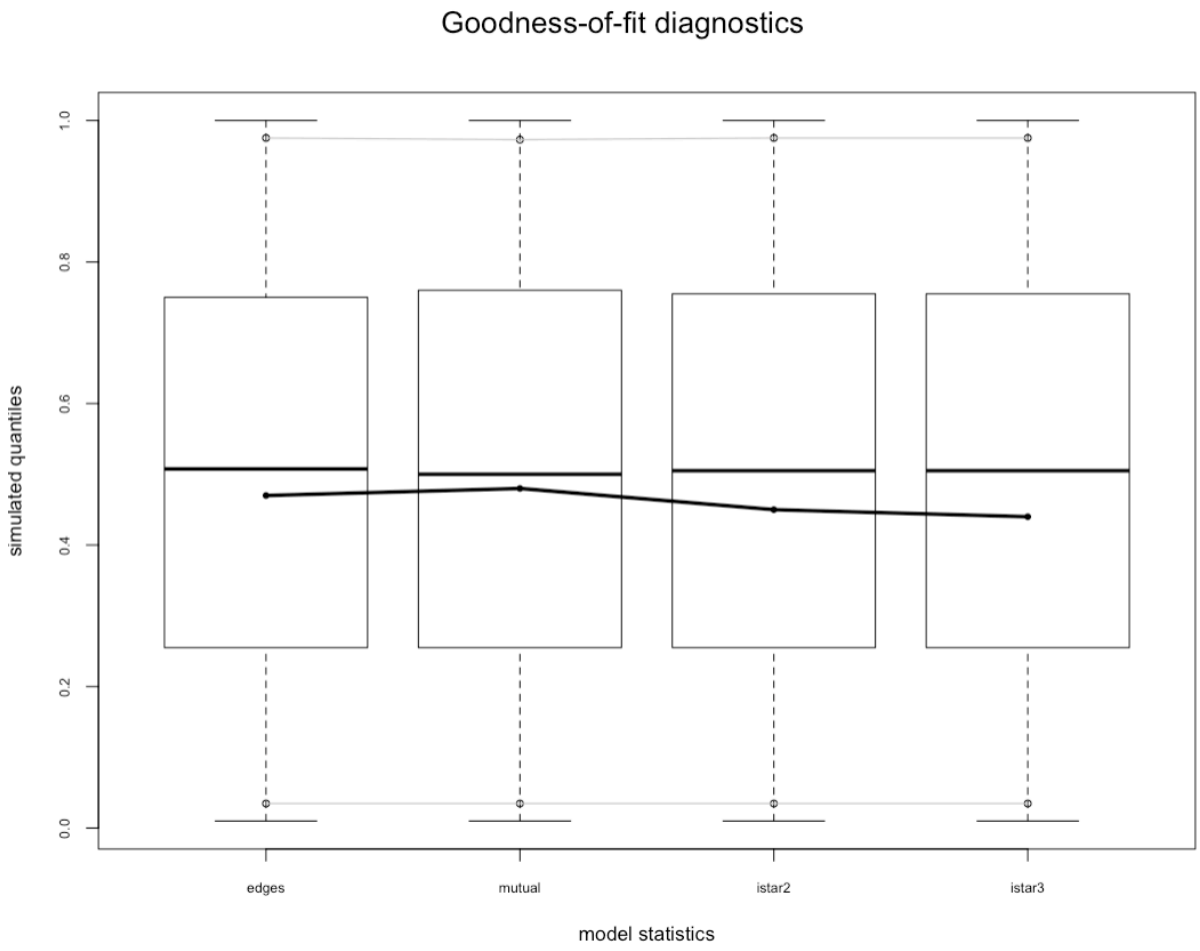

Figure 2. Goodness of fit diagnostics

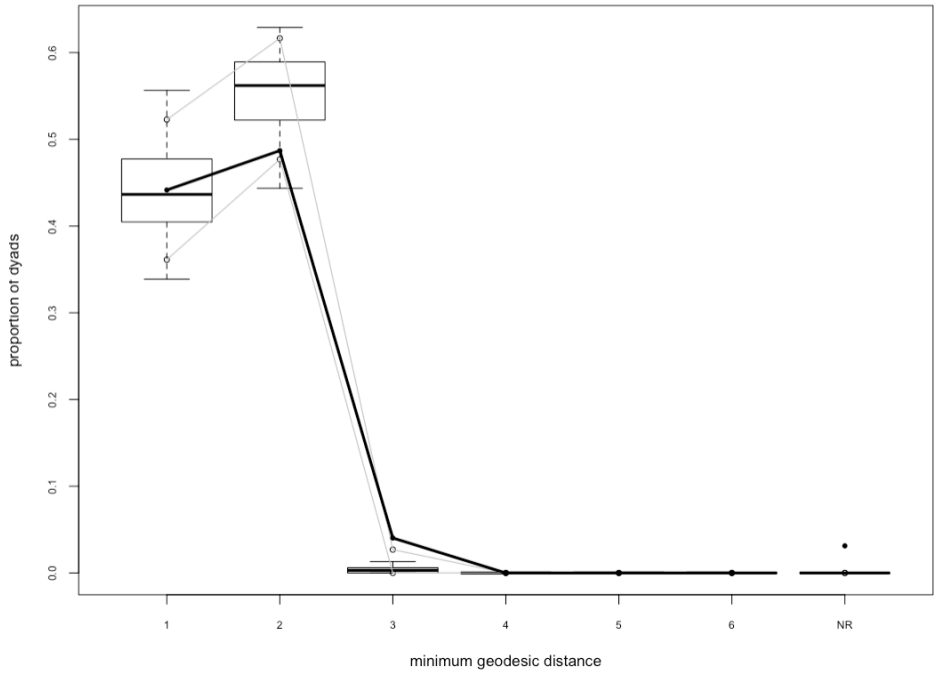

Figure 3. Minimum geodesic distance

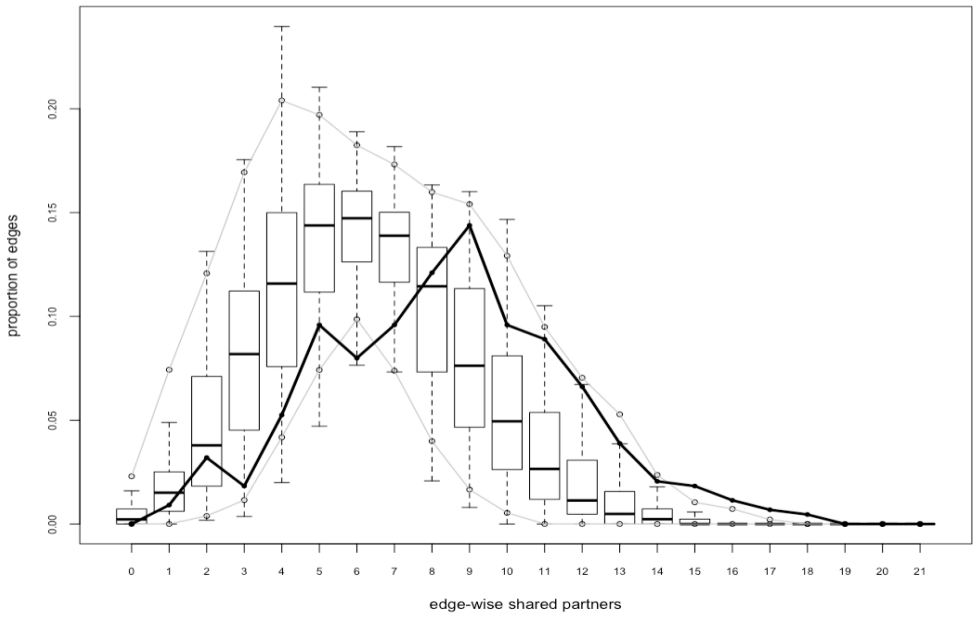

Figure 4. Edgewise shared partners

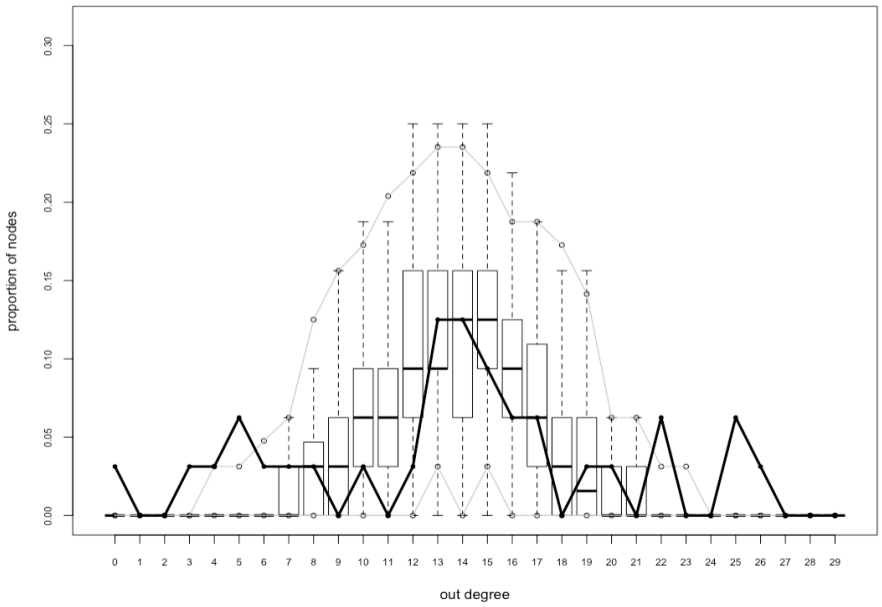

Figure 5. Out-degree fit

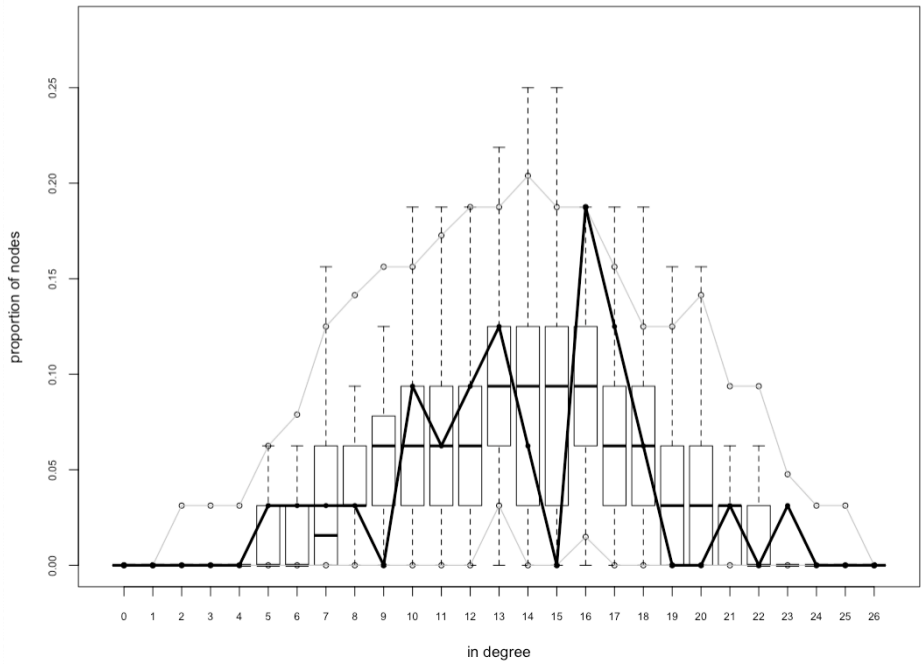

Figure 6. In-degree fit