

A SOCIAL INFLUENCE ANALYSIS OF PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examined the effects of social influence on employees' perceptions of organizational support (POS). An important characteristic of POS is that it reflects an employee's subjective evaluation of the treatment he or she receives from the organization. Employees' interactions with their coworkers, then, may have an important influence on their POS. As a result, the development of POS may be a social process rather than solely an intrapsychic one. However, the majority of POS research has focused on how an individual employee's personal experiences with an organization affect his/her POS and largely ignored social factors.

To address this gap in the literature, I argue that advice ties between employees will be related to similarity in POS because they serve as a source of social information. Friendship ties, on the other hand, will result in similarity in POS because they are utilized for social comparison. Finally, role model ties will result in similarity in POS because employees learn from the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of others they respect and admire. In addition, I explored the differential effects of strong and weak ties and multiplex versus simplex ties on similarity in POS. My expectation was that strong ties and multiplex ties would be more influential than weak ties and simplex ties. Finally, I explored the effects reciprocated and non-reciprocated ties

with the expectation that reciprocated ties would be more highly associated with POS because they are characterized by information sharing.

Social network methods were utilized to test hypotheses among 93 admissions department employees at a university in the eastern United States. Results indicated that when reciprocated ties were considered, employees tended to have POS that are similar to those of their strong role model ties, strong advice-role model ties, and strong friend-advice-role model ties. However, when reciprocity was not a requirement for strong ties between employees, only strong friend-advice-role model ties were related to similarity in POS. This pattern of results suggests that strong, multiplex ties in which two-way information sharing occurred were more likely to lead to similarity in POS. Implications were drawn from these findings, and suggestions for future research were made.

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PREFACE

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

Many organizations are more decentralized and reliant on teams today than two decades ago (Ilgen & Pulakos, 1999; Manz, 1992). These changes have altered the traditional relationship between employee and organization such that employees rely less on formal organizational representatives such as supervisors for organizational information and more on informal relationships with coworkers (Cross & Prusak, 2002; Rousseau, 2001). This is significant because the information that employees receive from coworkers is likely affected by those coworkers' views of the organization.

Surprisingly, research on the connection between employee and organization has not yet addressed this issue. Rather, this research is driven by the implicit assumption that the only relevant parties to development of this relationship are the employee and organization. This view is limited because it does not consider the role that social factors play in shaping employees' perceptions about the employee-organization relationship. Accordingly, the objective of this dissertation is to investigate whether or not a focal employee's beliefs about the employee-organization relationship are influenced by coworkers' perceptions about their relationships with the organization. In order to address this important issue, I draw upon research regarding perceived organizational support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986) and social influence (Coleman, Katz, & Menzel, 1966; Festinger, 1954; Festinger, Schacter, & Bach, 1950; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978).

The employee-organization relationship is the focus of the perceived organizational support construct (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Tekleab, Takeuchi, & Taylor, 2005). Eisenberger and colleagues (1986) argued that employees aggregate the treatment that they receive from

representatives of the organization to form “global perceptions concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being” (Eisenberger et al., 1986: 501), or perceived organizational support (POS). When employees have high levels of POS, the reciprocity norm (Gouldner, 1960) motivates them to help the organization reach its goals and objectives (Eisenberger et al, 1986).

Consistent with Eisenberger’s proposition, research reveals that employees with high levels of POS are more committed to the organizations they work for and more satisfied with their jobs (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Such employees are less likely to be tardy, absent, or resign (e.g. Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003; Eisenberger et al., 1986); are more likely to go “above and beyond” formal job duties (e.g. Witt, 1991); and have higher in-role performance (e.g. Armeli, Fasolo, Eisenberger, & Lynch, 1998). These consequences of POS impact the viability of organizations and are therefore a testament to its importance.

Researchers have investigated the factors that lead to POS among employees so that employers may benefit from the ensuing favorable consequences. Studies reveal that supervisory relationships, perceptions of fairness, and human resource practices consistently predict POS (for a review, see Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). POS research, however, is driven by the idea that an employee independently evaluates the treatment that he or she receives from the organization and determines the extent to which he or she feels supported. This intra-psychic perspective is clearly a one-dimensional view of how POS is shaped within employees. Although employees’ beliefs concerning the extent to which treatment offered by the organization may be favorable in the eyes of the perceiver, it is important to explore the possibility that social forces, such as coworkers’ perceptions of support, may influence a focal employee’s POS as well.

Social influence research is important to the development of employee perceptions because it demonstrates that perceptions and attitudes do not form in a vacuum, but rather are shaped by the social environment (Erikson, 1988; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Through relationships with others, a focal employee may be exposed to new information and different points of view. Accordingly, the expectation of most social influence studies is that individuals who maintain relationships with one another will have greater interpersonal similarity with respect to perceptions or attitudes than will individuals who do not interact with one another (Coleman et al., 1966; Festinger, 1954; Friedkin, 1993; Festinger, Schacter, & Bach, 1950; Homans, 1951).

I expect that because coworkers are an important source of information about the job, the organization, policies, procedures, organizational events, and workplace norms (Morrison, 1993; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Rousseau, 1995; Rousseau, 2001), the information that employees acquire through their interactions with coworkers will shape their perceptions of organizational support. This will occur through three social influence processes: social information processing (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), social comparison (Festinger, 1954), and social learning (Bandura, 1986). Social information processing theory contends that when employees do not understand what is happening in an organization, or when information is incomplete, they look to the organizational environment for information that helps them to better understand what is happening (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Social comparison theory argues that individuals compare their opinions and outcomes to those of other relevant individuals to help develop their own beliefs (Festinger, 1954). Finally, social learning theory states that individuals learn from their relationships with others by observing their behavior and making inferences for their perceptions based on the observed behavior (Bandura, 1986).

Researchers also consider the content of relationships that exist between individuals because different types of relationships, or ties, can be more or less influential (Friedkin, 1993; Ho, Levesque, & Rousseau, 2003). Studies examining tie content usually explore how friendship and advice ties influence perceptions or attitudes (Ibarra & Andrews, 1993). Friendship ties are strong, emotion-based ties connecting individuals with similar personal characteristics (Marsden, 1988) and as a result are useful for social comparison (Ibarra & Andrews, 1993). For instance, when an employee identifies with and interacts with a friend who is also an employee in the same organization, the treatment that the friend receives from the organization may serve as signal to the employee regarding how he or she is treated by the organization (Felson & Reed, 1986). When the friend has been treated poorly by the organization, the employee will interpret this information as a signal that he or she has also been treated poorly by the organization, and vice versa. As a result, an employee's POS will become more similar to those of other employees with whom they maintain friendships.

Although friendship ties are based on affect, employees share information or advice related to the completion of their work, organizational policies, procedures and events through advice ties (Ibarra, 1993; Morrison, 1993; 2002). Based on this, advice ties should play a role in social information processing: when employees do not understand what is occurring in the organization, they will use advice ties to gain insight. Advice-sharing exposes employees' to their coworkers' views and beliefs about the organization. This exposure or sharing will play a role in shaping beliefs about the treatment employees receive from the organization, leading to similarity in POS.

While friendship and advice ties are fairly common in social influence studies, role models have been largely ignored in this line of research. This is surprising because role models

are becoming an increasingly important relationship in the changing organizational environment (Gibson, 2004; Ibarra, 1999). Shapiro, Haseltine and Rowe (1978) define role models as “individuals whose behaviors, personal styles, and specific attributes are emulated by others” (52). Social learning theories suggest that individuals observe role models because they are helpful in learning new tasks, skills, or norms (Kohlberg, 1963).

Observation of a coworker who is considered a role model does not ensure that an employee will know what that role model thinks about how he or she is treated by the organization. I argue that role model ties will be influential when they are multiplex – or comprised of more than one type of relationship (Portes, 1998). For instance, by having an advice relationship with a role model, an employee will gain a better understanding of the role model’s perceptions concerning the level of support the organization provides for employees. Information or advice from role models may be more influential than advice or information from non-role models because employees emulate perceptions and beliefs of role models. When employees “learn” the perceptions of support of admired role models, their POS will become similar to the POS of the role models.

Tie strength also plays an important role in social influence (Granovetter, 1982; Krackhardt, 1990). Tie strength is defined as "the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding) and reciprocal services that characterize the tie" (Granovetter, 1973: 1361). Repeated interaction increases the repetition of information, which increases the opportunity for the transference of social cues and as a result leads to greater similarity in attitudes or perceptions (Krackhardt, 1990). Therefore, I expect that strong advice ties and strong advice ties with role models will be more strongly associated with similarity in POS.

Exploring the effects of social influence on perceptions of organizational support will inform the organizational literature and management practice in important ways. Demonstrating the shaping effects of role model, friendship, and advice relationships, as well as the strength of these relationships, on employees' POS challenges the traditional assumption that the formation of POS is driven only by the employees' independent evaluation of treatment offered by the organization. The social influence analysis that I propose demonstrates that the development of employees' POS is a *social process*, not simply an intrapsychic one. This is an important contribution because it adds to the literature on antecedents of POS.

This dissertation also informs research on role models and social influence. To date, role models research has emphasized their importance in career development (Bucher & Stelling, 1977; Gibson, 2003, Ibarra, 1999) and in helping employees who observe them to learn skills and norms necessary to succeed in an organization (Earley & Kanfer, 1985; Ibarra, 1999; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). Little attention has been given to the possibility that employees' interaction with role models may influence perceptions and attitudes about the organization itself. In today's decentralized organizations, employees may work off-site or in team contexts in which opportunities to interact with supervisors are limited (Cross & Prusak, 2002). Employees may look to role models for information that they can use to better understand their relationship with the organization. In these cases, role models may play an important role in shaping employees' POS. Specifically, role models with whom employees maintain advice or friendship relationships may be a particularly important social influence agent. Further, this dissertation will inform social influence research by considering the role that the strength, reciprocal nature and multiplexity of ties play in the social influence process.

Finally, this proposed dissertation has important implications for managers. If social relationships do in fact play a role in shaping employees' POS, managers should consider this when making decisions. If an employee maintains advice relationships with others or is widely regarded as a role model in the organizational context, treating that employee in an unfavorable way may have important effects on the perceptions of other employees in the organization. When the focal employee shares his or her stories with coworkers, his or her beliefs about the perceived insufficiency of support may spread through the social network and lessen other employees' POS as well. In contrast, managers who look after employees who are widely regarded as role models or advice ties may be able to increase POS in the organization via the contagion process described above.

In this dissertation, I utilize a social networks approach to explore the shaping effects of advice, friendship, and role model relationships on employees' POS. A social networks approach focuses not on individual attributes, but rather on the content and strength of relationships between actors and their impact on social phenomena. Social networks approaches are commonly used to explore social influence in organizations. I explore the effects of social influence on employees' POS in the admissions department of a large university in the eastern United States.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational support is an important concept in the management literature because it offers an explanation for the relationship between an organization's treatment of its employees and the employees' attitudes and behavior towards their jobs and organization. While the formal concept of perceived organizational support (POS) was not introduced and quantified until the 1980s, the idea of organizational support has been present in the management literature for nearly seventy years. I will briefly examine the development of organizational support research in the context of societal and industrial change and provide a history of the conceptual development of the POS construct in the management literature.

The Development of Organizational Support in the Management Literature

Researchers have long recognized that organizations are an important source of material and socio-emotional support for employees. Initial organizational research in the early 1900s focused exclusively on the material resources and benefits an employer provided for employees (Taylor, 1911). However, the Hawthorne studies of the 1930s (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939) illustrated that organizations were also an important source of socio-emotional resources for employees. Results of these studies indicated that employees who were given work breaks and shorter hours had better attitudes and higher productivity than employees who were not provided these benefits.

To better understand the results of these initial experiments, researchers devised programs in which employees were interviewed by managers. The surprising result was that employees who had interviews subsequently had better attitudes than employees who were not interviewed (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939). Employees interpreted being interviewed as an

indication that the organization cared about them. Overall, the Hawthorne studies suggest that when organizations signaled to employees that they were valuable by paying attention to them or providing favorable treatment for them such as work breaks, they had higher levels of productivity and better attitudes.

Mayo (1941) extended the findings of the Hawthorne studies by arguing that the socio-emotional support organizations offered employees helped them deal with societal changes such as massive industrialization of the 1940s. Rather than living in small towns or villages where they were known for performing a specific task or trade, individuals moved to large cities where they lost the esteem and identity that they had previously derived from their jobs. To deal with this loss of identity (or “anomie”), employees increasingly turned to their organizations and the individuals within them for support, esteem, and identity.

Levinson (1965) also argued that organizational support was important for employees dealing with changes in social and geographic mobility in the 1960s. When people moved away from their friends and family, they lost a valuable source of support and esteem. Levinson contended that employees derived esteem and support from the organizations they worked for to compensate for this loss. He theorized that employees attribute human-like characteristics to, or personify, the organizations that employ them. Thus, the actions of individuals who represent the organization are attributed to the intent of the organization itself. This is because (1) organizations are legally, financially and morally responsible for the actions of their agents; (2) organizational precedents, traditions, policies and norms provide continuity and prescribe role behaviors of organizational agents; and (3) the organization, through its agents, exert power over individual employees.

Levinson's work explained the larger scope and justification for employee-organization relationships. The importance of the employee-organization relationship continued to grow in the business environment of the 1970s and 1980s as organizations became increasingly concerned with developing and retaining productive employees to gain a competitive advantage in a global marketplace. Research shifted from investigating employees' beliefs about how they were treated by the organization (or the extent to which the organization was committed to them) to understanding what made the employee committed to the organization.

Employee commitment to the organization, or organizational commitment, is defined as an employee's "identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Mowday, Steers, & Porter., 1979). Organizational commitment has become an important variable to both managers and researchers because it is related to productivity, turnover, and absenteeism (for a review, see Meyer & Allen, 1997). Eisenberger et al. (1986) proposed a social exchange approach to integrate employees' beliefs about how they were treated by the organization and organizational commitment. Eisenberger and colleagues argued that when employees believe that the organization is committed to them, they will be committed to the organization (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Shore & Tetrick, 1991).

Social Exchange, Reciprocity, and Attributions in Perceived Organizational Support

To measure employee beliefs about the organization's commitment to them, Eisenberger et al. (1986) proposed a new construct called perceived organizational support (POS) and laid out the theoretical foundations for a social exchange model of the employee-organization relationship. His seminal work utilized social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and the reciprocity norm (Gouldner, 1960) to integrate different perspectives of the employee-organization relationship. Social exchange relationships, according to Blau (1964), are based on the exchange

of mutual support, much of which may be socioemotional in nature. Applying Blau's perspective to the employer-employee relationship, Eisenberger and his colleagues (1986) proposed that the employee-organization connection was a social exchange relationship in which the organization offered employees rewards and favorable job conditions in exchange for loyalty and work effort. However, an employee's relationship with the employer is not based on simple quid-pro-quo. Eisenberger was concerned with the employee's subjective valuation and perceptions of the treatment that the organization offered rather than objective measures of organizational support. When employees perceived that the organization supported them, he argued that the reciprocity norm (Gouldner, 1960) would obligate them to support the organization. According to Gouldner (1960), the reciprocity norm is a generalized moral norm that requires individuals to help (and not harm) individuals who help them.

Commitment (termed "support" by Blau) that the employee offers to the organization is most often represented by measures of organizational commitment such as the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire developed by Mowday et al. (1979) and the three-component model of organizational commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1984). However, management researchers had not yet created a construct that assessed employees' beliefs regarding the treatment that they were offered by the organization, or organizational support. Eisenberger et al.'s (1986) perceived organizational support construct addressed this need in the literature. POS is based on employees' expectation that "in order to determine the organization's willingness to reward work effort and meet needs for praise approval, employees develop global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being" (501).

Eisenberger and colleagues (1986) argued that POS develops as a result of employees' tendency to personify the organization and attribute actions taken by its agents to the intent of the organization itself rather than to the individual motives of agents (Levinson, 1965).

Organizations signal to employees whether or not they are favored or disfavored through human resource practices, quality of supervisory relationships, and fairness of treatment. However, favorable treatment from the organization does not always correspond to high levels of POS in employees. Rather, employee attributions for the treatment offered to them by the organization play a key role in the development of POS.

Attribution theory explains how people use information to arrive at causal explanations for events (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). People make dispositional attributions when the cause of behavior is thought to reside within the individual performing the behavior. Situational attributions, on the other hand, are made when an individual's behavior is controlled by the situation or environment that the individual is in. Eisenberger and colleagues (1986) stressed that POS would be more strongly affected when employees made dispositional attributions for organizational treatment. Thus, organizational treatment that materially benefits employees (e.g., pay raises) would not always result in high POS. If, for example, employees received a pay raise from the organization as a result of pressure from a union or if they received better working conditions as a result of government regulations, there would be no increase in POS because this treatment would not be attributed to the disposition of the organization. Employees, according to Eisenberger's model, would make an external attribution for the positive treatment and POS would not be affected.

Empirical Measurement of Perceived Organizational Support

Following the introduction of the POS concept, Eisenberger et al. (1986) tested their expectation that employees develop global perceptions of organizational support by creating a measure of POS. This measure was an important contribution because it empirically captured employees' beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization was committed to them, and therefore made it possible to test the proposed social exchange approach to the employee-organization relationship.

To develop the POS measure, Eisenberger and colleagues (1986) created thirty-six statements "representing various possible evaluative judgments of the employee by the organization and discretionary actions the organization might take in diverse situations to benefit or harm the employee" (501). These statements, labeled the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS), were administered to 361 employees in various organizational settings. Employees reported the extent to which they agreed with each of the statements using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.

Results indicated that employees responded to SPOS items in a consistent manner, demonstrating that employees develop global beliefs regarding the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. Further, factor analysis revealed that items loaded higher on the POS factor than they did on a second factor, indicating that the scale was unidimensional. To create a scale that could be administered to employees in a more timely fashion, Eisenberger et al. (1986) selected the seventeen highest-loading items for the short version of the SPOS. The first study assessing the relationship between POS and an outcome variable (absenteeism) revealed that the reliability coefficient of the SPOS was .93 (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

In subsequent studies, researchers have often used the shortened seventeen-item version of the SPOS or even shorter versions of the scale. For instance, a number of researchers have measured POS with a nine-item version of the SPOS (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990), which had a reliability coefficient that varied between .95 and .74 across employees in five different organizations. In other studies, researchers have used the eight highest loading items from the initial SPOS (reliability coefficient of .90) (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, & Lynch, 1997). A scale comprised of the six highest-loading items evidenced a reliability coefficient of .77 (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, & Rhoades, 2001). Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) advocate the use of shorter versions of the SPOS because of its unidimensionality and high internal reliability. However, they stress that both facets of the construct (valuation of employee contributions, care for employee well-being) need to be included in the scale. Overall, research indicates that POS is unidimensional construct with high internal reliability, and it can be assessed using as few as six items.

Conceptual Distinctiveness of Perceived Organizational Support

Although Eisenberger et al. (1986) took steps to distinguish POS from other concepts, some researchers contended that “the fundamental nature of perceived organizational support is not yet clear” (Shore & Tetrick, 1991: 642). Distinguishing POS from measures of organizational commitment was initially an important task because Eisenberger et al. (1986) framed POS as being part of a “social exchange approach to organizational commitment” (501). On the other hand, affective commitment is defined as “an affective or emotional attachment to the organization such that the strongly committed individual identifies with, is involved in, and enjoys membership in, the organization” (Allen & Meyer, 1990: 2). Continuance commitment is defined as “a tendency to engage in consistent lines of activity based on the individual’s

recognition of the “costs” (or lost side bets) associated with discontinuing the activity” (Allen & Meyer, 1990: 3). The key distinction between POS and affective and continuance commitment is that affective and continuance commitment assess an employee’s *commitment to the organization*, while POS assesses employees’ beliefs regarding *the organization’s commitment to the employee* (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Shore & Tetrick, 1991).

Conceptually distinguishing POS from job satisfaction was also an important step in demonstrating the value of the POS construct. Shore and Tetrick (1991: 641) argued that POS was conceptually distinct from job satisfaction because “POS is a global measure of employer commitment, whereas satisfaction is focused on various facets of work.” In addition, they noted that POS is a set of beliefs about how much the organization cares for their well-being, while job satisfaction is an affective response to different aspects of the work situation (Shore & Tetrick, 1991). Finally, Eisenberger et al. (1997) argued that only discretionary organizational actions, or actions that employees believe the organization controls, influence POS (Eisenberger et al., 1997). In contrast, job satisfaction is affected by any actions taken by the organization or any aspects of an employee’s job that makes him or her more or less satisfied, regardless of whether or not the organization controls them (Eisenberger et al., 1997).

Other researchers have noted the similarity between POS and the psychological contract (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003). Rousseau (1995) defines a psychological contract as a relatively stable mental model that an employee holds regarding promises the organization has made to them in exchange for their efforts on behalf of the organization. Rousseau and Tijoriwala (1998) argue that psychological contracts are based on perceived promises that an employer makes to an employee and the employee’s subsequent obligations, while POS is a measure of favorable treatment from the organization that does not consider whether or not the treatment provided by

the organization is based on perceived promises or obligations. Second, POS only considers the employee's side of the employer-employee relationship, while classic definitions of the psychological contract consider both employer and employee beliefs about this relationship. Overall, then, POS and psychological contracts assess employee-organization relationships, but in different ways.

Empirical Distinctiveness of Perceived Organizational Support

Researchers have also investigated the construct validity of the SPOS with the intention of distinguishing it from other constructs. Because Eisenberger and colleagues intended to measure employee perceptions of the organization's commitment to them, researchers initially worked to ensure that the construct was empirically distinct from measures of employee commitment to the organization. A factor analysis conducted by Shore and Tetrick (1991) revealed that the SPOS was empirically distinct from the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Mowday et al., 1979), as well as the Affective Commitment Survey and the Continuance Commitment Survey (Meyer & Allen, 1984). However, results from this study did not distinguish the SPOS from the Specific Satisfactions Scale, which includes measures of employees' satisfaction with security, pay, growth, coworkers, and supervision (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). At this point in time, then, no empirical evidence existed that showed that POS was different than job satisfaction.

To address this issue, Eisenberger et al. (1997) investigated the role that employee attributions for treatment provided by the organization played in the development of POS and satisfaction. They found that treatment which employees considered discretionary (or controlled by the organization), including the physical work environment, organizational procedures, training opportunities, and recognition, were seven times more strongly related to POS than were

job conditions that were considered non-discretionary, such as long hours worked on a demanding job. While attributions mattered such that POS was more strongly affected by discretionary treatment provided by the organization, they did not matter for job satisfaction. Job satisfaction changed regardless of the attribution that the employee made for job conditions. These findings indicate that job satisfaction assesses an employees' evaluation of their job, while POS assesses employees' evaluations of treatment provided by the organization.

Finally, Kottke and Sharfinski (1988) investigated the distinctiveness of POS and perceived supervisor support. Perceived supervisor support is defined as employees' general views concerning the degree to which supervisors value their contributions and care about their well-being (Kottke & Sharfinski, 1988). Factor analysis revealed that employees differentiate support offered by the organization from support offered by supervisors. Hutchinson (1997) replicated and extended this study by showing that employees distinguish between perceptions of support from their supervisor, the management of the organization and the organization itself (POS).

Overall, the results of research investigating the conceptual and empirical distinctiveness of POS reveal that it is distinct from affective and continuance organizational commitment, psychological contracts, job satisfaction, perceived supervisor support and managerial support.

Antecedents of Perceived Organizational Support

Given that POS is a distinct construct and related to important outcomes such as organizational commitment, going "above and beyond" duties specified in job descriptions, and turnover (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), researchers have investigated the factors that lead to POS within employees. Eisenberger et al. (1986) proposed that employees' POS results from favorable organizational treatment attributed to the discretion of the organization. Generally,

research exploring the antecedents of POS can be divided into three main categories: (1) fairness of treatment, (2) support from organizational representatives, and (3) human resource practices (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Research on the antecedents of POS is reviewed in the following three subsections of this dissertation.

Fairness of Treatment. Shore and Shore (1995) provided the conceptual justification for the relationship between the fairness of treatment provided by an organization and POS. These authors argued that perceptions of fairness create trust between employees and the organization. Such trust is critical so that employees do not see themselves as being at greater risk of not being compensated for their efforts to help the organization reach its goals. Fair treatment affects POS because it increases employee expectations that the organization will reward their efforts. In addition, fair treatment creates “closer, open-ended social exchange relationships” that “produce obligations for the employee to repay the supervisor or organization” (Cropanzano, Rupp, Mohler, & Schminke, 2001: 42).

Employees assess how fairly they are treated by their organizations through the lenses of procedural and distributive justice (Greenberg, 1990). Procedural justice is defined as the fairness of formal procedures underlying the decisions the organization makes concerning employees (Thibaut & Walker, 1975), while distributive justice is concerned with the fairness of the distribution of outcomes in the organization (Greenberg, 1990). Researchers have hypothesized that both procedural and distributive justice would be related positively to POS because fair policies and procedures strengthen employee beliefs that they will be rewarded for their efforts to help the organization (procedural justice), while receiving benefits from the organization would signal to an employee that s/he is valued (distributive justice). In addition, Shore and Shore (1995) proposed that procedural justice would be more strongly associated with

POS than would distributive justice because instances of procedural justice occur on a day-to-day basis while promotions and pay raises occur only once in a while. Consistent with expectations, researchers have found that procedural justice and distributive justice are both positively related to POS (Cropanzano, Hayes, Grandey, & Toth, 1997; Cropanzano, Prehar, & Chen, 2002; Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000; Moorman, Blakely, & Niehoff, 1998; Tekleab et al., 2005; Wayne, Shore, Bommer, & Tetrick, 2002) and that this relationship is stronger for procedural justice than distributive justice.

The relationship between fairness perceptions and POS offers some support for the proposition that POS is socially constructed. This is because perceptions of procedural and distributive justice themselves are socially constructed, as there is no absolute level of organizational justice (Umphress et al., 2003). When employees are trying to decide whether or not the treatment offered by the organization is fair, they may try to obtain this information from their coworkers in the organization. Previous research on social influence shows that employees' beliefs about organizational justice are similar to the beliefs of other employees in their social networks (Umphress et al., 2003). Therefore, I expect that POS will be driven by interaction with coworkers as well.

Support from Organizational Representatives. While employees pay attention the fairness of organizational policies when forming POS, they also consider their relationships with organizational agents. One of the key assumptions of POS is that employees aggregate the treatment that they receive from organizational agents who control the outcomes that they value into a general perception of support. The greater the extent to which an employee believes that the actions of an organizational agent are representative of the actions of the organization itself, the stronger the influence an organizational agent will have on that employee's POS. Therefore,

a manager with high formal status should have a stronger impact on an employee's POS than should a manager with lower formal status (Eisenberger, Jones, Aselage, & Sucharski, 2004).

The majority of the research examining the relationship between organizational agents and POS has focused on supervisory relationships. Treatment that employees receive from supervisors is often interpreted as coming directly from the organization itself. That is, employees believe that the actions of their supervisors are representative of the organization's positive or negative orientation towards them. Supervisors are considered particularly important because they are responsible for directing and evaluating subordinates' performance, as well as conveying these evaluations to higher-level managers (Eisenberger, Stinglehauser, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002).

Research shows that employees' beliefs regarding the extent to which they are supported by supervisors are positively related to POS (Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001; Yoon & Lim, 1999). In a longitudinal study of the supervisor support-POS relationship among retail sales employees, Eisenberger et al. (2002) determined that perceived organizational support changed in response to changes in perceived supervisor support, suggesting that supervisor support is an antecedent to POS. Further, the perceived status of the supervisor moderated the relationship between supervisor support and POS such that employees' relationships with higher-status supervisors had a stronger influence on POS than did relationships with lower-status supervisors (Eisenberger et al., 2002).

Like perceived supervisor support, leader-member exchange focuses on the quality of exchange between the employee and the manager and is based on the degree of emotional support and exchange of valued resources (Graen & Cashman, 1975). Leader-member exchange was expected to be positively related to POS because supervisors tend to allocate more rewards

to employees with whom they have high-quality exchange relationships, thus reinforcing such employees' beliefs that the organization cares for them and values their contributions. Results of a study of 1,413 salaried employees from across the U.S. by Wayne, Shore, and Liden (1997) were consistent with this hypothesis, as were results of a later study by Wayne, Shore, Bommer and Tetric (2002) involving 211 employee-supervisor dyads.

Research on the relationship between supervisory relationships and POS is important to the relationship between coworkers and similarity in POS because it demonstrates that individuals can influence POS. However, research on supervisor support and leader-member exchange views the supervisor as a representative of the organization. Thus, it has only considered the relationship between formal organizational representatives and POS. In this proposed study, I explore the possibility that informal relationships – coworker relationships – can play a role in shaping employees' POS. However, the perspective presented in this dissertation differs from extant research because I do not view coworkers as an agent of the organization, but rather as a source of social influence. The information that coworkers provide to a focal employee regarding their beliefs about their relationship with the organization, not the treatment that they provide to a focal employee, will shape the POS of the focal employee.

Human Resource Practices. Human resource practices that are perceived as an investment in human capital are expected to lead to high or low levels of POS because they signal to employees that they are valued. Consistent with this proposition, developmental experiences, training and feedback - investments in employees that convey to them that the organization values them - are positively related to POS (Hutchison, 1997; Wayne et al., 1997).

Researchers have also investigated the relationship between autonomy and POS. Autonomy is a signal provided by the organization to employees that the organization trusts them

to carry out tasks on their own, and that the contributions that they make will benefit the organization. Like autonomy, HR practices such as inclusion, participation, and goal setting are expected to be indicators of the organization's respect for the ability of employees and are all positively related to POS (Allen et al., 2003; Hutchison, 1997; Wayne et al., 2002). Finally, rewards provided by the organization, including developmental experiences and promotions, signal to employees that they are valued members of the organization and as a result are positively related to POS (Wayne et al., 1997). In fact, Eisenberger et al. (1986) speculated that individual rewards offered by the organization to employees would be more strongly associated with POS than support offered to all employees across the organization because individual rewards distinguished an employee receiving positive treatment from others employees, making that employee feel valued.

Understanding the relationship between human resource practices and POS has important implications for understanding how employees' relationships with their coworkers will influence POS as well. Specifically, employees may solicit the opinion of their coworkers to obtain information regarding treatment offered by the organization (Salancik & Pfeffer; 1978; Ho, 2002), particularly when conditions in the organization are ambiguous (Festinger, 1954; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Individuals may compare their own evaluations of the human resource practices offered by the organization to the evaluations of other employees in their social network, or ask their coworkers to help them make sense of the meaning of the organization's HR policies. Through this process, employees may come to adopt beliefs that are similar to those of their coworkers.

Summary of Antecedents to POS. Overall, research indicates that fairness of treatment, relationships with organizational agents, and human resource practices lead to employee POS.

However, this research presents a one-dimensional view of how POS forms. The only parties considered are the organization (or supervisors representing the organization) and the employee. The possibility that POS is socially constructed, as are other perceptions, is largely ignored in the extant research. Therefore, the objective of this dissertation is to explore how an employee's coworkers' beliefs regarding organizational support influence the focal employee's POS. Understanding how POS is shaped within employees is important to both researchers and managers because it is related to important employee and organizational outcomes, discussed in the next section.

Consequences of Perceived Organizational Support

As mentioned previously, social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and the reciprocity norm (Gouldner, 1960) predict that an individual will reciprocate favorable treatment from another person by helping that person. Eisenberger et al. (1986) argued that these mechanisms would cause employees to respond to POS with attitudes and behaviors that help the organization to reach its goals. Research on POS has explored the relationship between POS and attitudes such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and job involvement, as well as behaviors such as in-role performance, organizational citizenship behavior, turnover, and absenteeism.

Before discussing research on the outcomes of POS, it is important to consider why POS leads to these outcomes. Researchers had long speculated that favorable treatment from the organization obligates employees to respond by helping the organization. However, this claim was not explored empirically until Eisenberger et al. (2001) proposed a measure of felt obligation. Felt obligation is defined as a prescriptive belief regarding whether one should care about the organization's well-being and help it to reach its goals. Eisenberger and colleagues (2001) found that felt obligation mediates the relationship between POS and outcomes. This

occurs because the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) obligates employees who receive favorable treatment from the organization to help the organization reach its goals.

In the following sections, research on the attitudinal and behavioral consequences of POS is reviewed briefly.

Attitudinal Consequences of POS. The fundamental proposition of POS research is that employees' beliefs regarding how committed the organization is to them will result in employee commitment to the organization. To empirically assess this claim, researchers have investigated the relationship between POS and affective organizational commitment. POS is hypothesized to be positively related to affective commitment because it fulfills the socioemotional needs of employees including respect, caring and approval (Armeli, Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Lynch, 1998) and therefore results in a strong sense of belonging to the organization. Consistent with expectations, studies consistently provide support for a positive relationship between POS and affective organizational commitment (Eisenberger et al., 1990; Eisenberger et al., 2001; Gakovic & Tetrick, 2003; O'Driscoll & Randall, 1999; Wayne et al., 1997).

Researchers have also speculated that POS would make employees satisfied with their jobs because they believe that aid is available when they need it and have strong performance-reward expectancies. That is, employees with high levels of POS realize that the organizations that they work for will reward them for their efforts on the job. Research provides strong support for this proposition as well (Eisenberger et al., 1997; Masterson et al., 2000; Witt, 1991).

Finally, researchers have explored the relationship between POS and job involvement. Job involvement is defined as an individual's identification with and interest in the specific work that they perform (Lodhal & Kejner, 1965). O'Driscoll and Randall (1999) argued, and found

support for, the idea that POS would be positively related to job involvement because it makes employees believe that they are better at their jobs.

Behavioral Consequences of Perceived Organizational Support. In addition to holding attitudes favorable to their jobs and the organization, employees are expected to behave in a manner that helps their organizations to reach their goals and objectives when they believe that they are supported. Accordingly, researchers have investigated the relationship between POS and organizational citizenship behavior, in-role performance, and withdrawal behaviors. Results of these studies are discussed next.

Organ (1988) defined organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) as “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization” (4). Consistent with Blau’s (1964) suggestion that individuals will reciprocate favorable treatment from the source that it came from, it is expected that employees who recognize that the organization has gone “above and beyond” to support them by providing discretionary support will go “above and beyond” their job duties in order to help the organization succeed. A number of studies have explored the relationship between POS and OCB. This research confirms that POS is indeed related to organizational citizenship behavior (Ladd & Henry, 2000; Masterson et al., 2000; Kaufman, Stamper, & Tesluk, 2001, Eisenberger et al., 1990).

In addition to organizational citizenship behavior, a number of studies have demonstrated a relationship between POS and employees’ in-role performance, or performance of formal job duties (Armeli et al., 1998; Eisenberger et al., 2001; Lynch et al., 1999). These researchers explain that the relationship between POS and in-role performance occurs because employees with higher levels of POS trust that the organization will reward them for their increased effort

on their daily tasks. Examining this perspective, Orphen (1994) found that POS was positively related to work effort of employees.

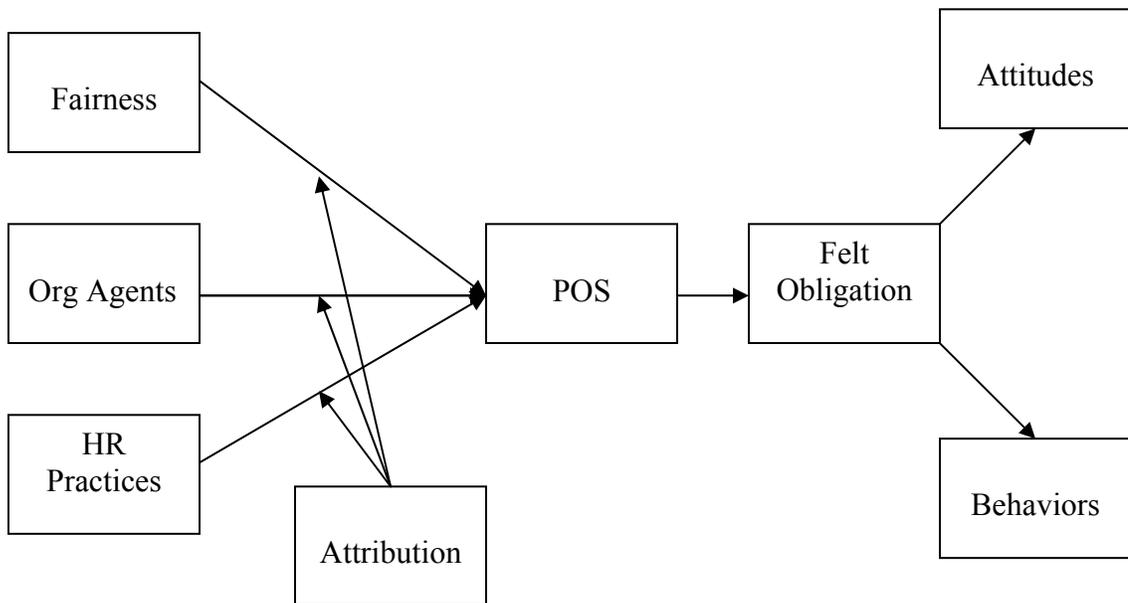
Besides obligating employees to have higher levels of performance, POS is expected to reduce withdrawal behavior in employees. Withdrawal behaviors include absenteeism, turnover intentions, and turnover. Generally, it is expected that employees who feel supported by their organizations will be less inclined to leave and seek work elsewhere because of the strong exchange relationship they have with their employer. In addition, employees with high levels of POS are expected to help their organizations succeed by attending work consistently. As expected, Allen et al. (2003) demonstrated that the positive relationship between POS and organizational attitudes makes employees less likely to seek employment with other organizations. Further, employees with high POS are less likely to intend to quit (Wayne et al., 1997; Masterson et al., 2000) or be absent from work (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

Summary and Discussion of Perceived Organizational Support Research

Figure 1 depicts the extant research on POS. Over the past fifty years, researchers have examined organizations and employees in the context of a rapidly changing business environment and society, drawing on work from the social sciences. Eisenberger's initial work on POS drew on social exchange theory, the reciprocity norm and attribution theory. Research examining antecedents and outcomes of POS reveals that favorable treatment in the form of fairness, organizational representatives, and human resource practices creates a felt obligation within employees to reciprocate favorable treatment by holding attitudes favorable to the organization and the job and behaving in a manner that helps the organization to reach its goals (Eisenberger et al., 2001; see Figure 1 for a model summarizing the extant research on POS.). However, the extant research deals only with the intrapsychic processes that are related to the

formation of POS. Research on POS only considers the role that formal organizational agents, such as managers and supervisors, play in shaping employees' beliefs about their relationships with the organization. This perspective ignores the increasingly influential role that coworkers play in today's workplace.

Figure 1 – Model of Extant Perceived Organizational Support Research



Recent organizational studies reveal that an employee's coworkers are an important source of social influence within organizations (e.g. Umphress et al., 2003). In fact, Morrison (1993) found that employees turn to co-workers as opposed to managers and supervisors for information on organizational norms and values because coworkers are more likely to have a view of the organization that is similar to their own. Employees who have less direct access to their supervisors are more likely to turn to their coworkers for information and advice because

coworkers are able to provide information more quickly than supervisors (Cross & Prusak, 2002) especially in decentralized or team-based work environments. The increased interaction with coworkers results in more exposure to the coworkers' beliefs about organizational events, policies, and procedures. As a result, the opinions of coworkers are important in shaping employees' perceptions of their jobs and organizations.

Given the importance of coworkers as a source of information in today's organizations, research is needed that examines the role that they play in shaping employee perceptions of support. I propose that we can gain a clearer picture of the formation of POS by using social influence processes to predict employees' perceptions of support. I will draw on psychology and sociology research that examines how social relationships can affect the formation of attitudes and perceptions. For instance, Festinger's (1954) work on social comparison displays the importance of social factors on judgments. He proposes that when individuals evaluate their opinions and beliefs, they utilize the opinions and beliefs of others as a reference point. Specifically, this dissertation will focus on the influence exerted by employees' coworker relationships.

In the following sections, I will present research on social influence and the relationship between similarity in POS and these important coworker relationships are developed further.

Social Influence Processes in Organizations

In this dissertation, I examine the influence of advice, friendship, role model and multiplex relationships, as well as the strength of these relationships, on interpersonal similarity in POS. The fundamental expectation is that employees' POS will be more similar to the POS of coworkers with whom they maintain relationships than to other coworkers to whom they are not connected. Thus, the presence of POS similarity is a social influence effect. Utilization of

similarity as a measure of social influence is consistent with many other social influence studies (e.g. Burkhardt, 1994; Coleman et al., 1966; Dabos & Rousseau, 2004; Erickson, 1988; Ho, 2002; Ibarra & Andrews, 1993; Meyer, 1994; Umphress et al., 2003). Social influence can occur through a number of processes, including social information processing, social comparison, and social learning, reviewed in the following section.

Social Information Processing. Social information processing plays a key role in shaping perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors in organizations and may play a similar role in shaping employees' POS. Perceptions are influenced by the social context in which they form, either through direct statements from others or through intentional or unintentional behavioral cues (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). POS is perceptual and may therefore be affected by social information processing.

Sherif's (1935) investigation of the role that social factors play in shaping perceptions provided some early evidence indicating that individuals use information from other individuals in their environments to better understand what is happening and what it means. Subjects observed randomly moving points of light in an otherwise dark environment and then made estimates regarding the amount of movement they observed. The groups were positioned so that each member could hear the estimates of others. Sherif found that ultimately the groups' estimates converged on a single group estimate of how far the light had traveled. These experiments indicate that a person will "accept information from another as evidence about reality" (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955: 629)

Building on the work of these researchers, Salancik and Pfeffer (1978) proposed social information processing theory. They argue that because organizations are complex and ambiguous environments, individuals utilize information that they obtain from other members

when forming perceptions and evaluations concerning the organization and their jobs.

Specifically, individuals use information they collect from others to (1) learn to react to social cues; (2) to form perceptions by focusing attention on some aspects of the work environment but away from others; (3) to construct their interpretations of organizational events; and (4) to understand the requirements of their jobs.

Studies have demonstrated that social information processing results in similarity among attitudes, perceptions and behaviors of individuals who interact. For instance, Coleman et al. (1966) found that doctors' decisions to prescribe a new drug were similar to the decisions of professional associates whom they had talked with about the drug. Other studies have shown that employees' attitudes towards new technology were similar to the attitudes of individuals with whom they communicate frequently (Burkhardt, 1994, Rice & Aydin, 1991). Meyer (1994) found that employees had similar perceptions of organizational coordination to employees with whom they communicated frequently. Perhaps most relevant to the current study is the research of Dabos and Rousseau (2004), who showed that faculty members' beliefs regarding promises made to them by their university were similar to the beliefs of individuals with whom they maintained direct relationships. Thus, employees' beliefs about one aspect of their relationship with the organization are affected by social information. Overall, this research supports the idea that social information processing results in similarity among employees' attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors.

Social Comparison. Social influence can also occur when individuals draw comparisons between themselves and other individuals to better understand ambiguous situations. Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) suggests that (1) individuals learn about themselves through comparison with others; (2) individuals who have similar characteristics, such as race, gender,

etc. are often chosen for comparison; and (3) social comparisons will have strong effects when objective nonsocial comparisons are unavailable and when others' evaluations are important to the individual.

Generally, individuals engage in social comparison for purposes of self-evaluation, self-improvement, and self-enhancement (Wood, 1989). Self-evaluation occurs when one compares oneself to others in an effort to create an accurate assessment of one's personal attributes. Self-improvement refers to situations in which an individual compares him or herself to others who are better off in order to improve him or herself. Finally, self-enhancement occurs when an individual compares him or herself to others who are worse off in an effort to improve their own self-esteem. Consistent with this framework, research shows that social comparison can affect an individual's evaluation of his or her attractiveness (Richins, 1991), coping abilities (Wood, Taylor, & Lichtman, 1985), and skills (Gibbons, Benbow, & Gerrard, 1994).

Social comparison can also be used to understand an individual's beliefs concerning how he or she is treated by a third party, such as an organization (Ho, 2002). In this vein, social comparison occurs when individuals evaluate the outcomes that they receive from a third party, especially when the value of the outcomes is subjective and the individuals have no objective standard for comparison. When an individual discusses his or her beliefs about treatment from a third party with another individual with whom he or she identifies, the beliefs of the individuals may change. Specifically, social comparison can either result in association with others, which yields similar perceptions, or comparison with others, which yields dissimilar perceptions. These processes are discussed in greater detail in the following paragraphs.

Social comparison may result in similar perceptions between two individuals when an individual associates him or herself closely with another individual. When an individual

identifies with and interacts with another individual who provides information to the first individual regarding how he or she is treated by a third party, that information may serve as signal to the first individual regarding how he or she is treated by the third party as well (Felson & Reed, 1986). When the second individual indicates that he or she has been treated poorly by the third party, the first individual will interpret this information as a signal that he or she has also been treated poorly by the third party. Therefore, the first individual's interaction and identification with the second individual makes him or her believe that the treatment that the other receives is indicative of the way that he or she is treated by the third party.

Social comparison can also lead to dissimilarity in perceptions when ego utilizes alter as a point of comparison. Crosby (1984) argues that an individual will not evaluate how much of an outcome s/he receives from a third party objectively, but instead base his/her evaluation on how much of an outcome s/he receives relative to similar others. When an individual feels that s/he does not receive as much of an outcome as another person, ego's evaluation will become less favorable, and as a result be dissimilar to the other person's evaluation. This comparative function would yield dissimilarity between the perceptions of the individuals with respect to the outcome.

It seems that the associative and comparative functions present differing hypotheses about whether social comparison will result in similarity or dissimilarity among individuals' perceptions. However, self-evaluation maintenance theory (Tesser, 1988) presents a way to integrate these seemingly different predictions by paying attention to the outcomes being evaluated. The self-evaluation maintenance model is based on the assumption that individuals want to maintain or enhance their self-evaluations. In some situations, an individual will "bask in the reflected glory" of another similar individual who has succeeded. In these cases, an

individual feels good about the success of a similar other and will have a more positive self-concept as a result of their association with him or her (Cialdini et al., 1976). However, the success of a similar other can also result in a more negative self-concept for ego when it threatens the focal individual's self concept. That is, the focal individual will feel worse about him/herself when comparing him or herself to the successful similar other (Weiss, 1981).

Whether or not “basking in reflected glory” or the comparison process occurs is dependent on how relevant the outcome variable is to the focal individual's self-concept. If the outcome is something that is very important to the focal individual, then the comparison process will likely occur, and the success of another similar individual will threaten the focal individual. On the contrary, if the similar other's success is not relevant to the focal individual's success, basking in reflected glory will occur.

Social Learning. In addition to social information processing and social comparison, social influence can occur through social learning. Bandura's (1986) social learning theory emphasizes the importance of observing and modeling the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others in learning the behaviors and attitudes of those individuals. Initially, an individual may model a behavior performed by a respected coworker. However, if they continue to engage in the behavior, they may come to develop the perceptions and attitudes that justify the behavior that they are performing (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). This would occur because employees may feel compelled to justify their behavior by holding attitudes and perceptions consistent with that perception. Therefore, by modeling the behavior of another, an individual may eventually come to have perceptions similar to that individual.

Research on social learning theory in organizations demonstrates that individuals do in fact learn by observing the behavior and attitudes of others. For instance, a study by Bommer,

Miles, and Grover (2003) showed that employees' performance of organizational citizenship behaviors was related to the frequency and consistency of organizational citizenship behavior performance by other employees in their workgroup. In addition, Ibarra (1999) showed that employees at an investment bank and a management consulting firm making the transition from entry-level to management positions observed and interacted with employees whom they admired in order to learn what behaviors, attitudes and perceptions made the admired employees successful. They then adopted these behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions to see if what they learned would help to make them successful (Ibarra, 1999). These studies show that social learning can affect the behavior, attitudes and perceptions of employees.

Social Networks: Defining Relationships

Social networks analysis focuses on patterns of social relations among a set of actors to explain social phenomena (Wasserman & Faust, 1994) and thus provides the conceptual and methodological basis for measuring social influence (Burkhardt, 1994; Erickson, 1988; Ibarra & Andrews, 1993; Meyer, 1994; Rice & Aydin, 1991). An individual's social network contacts are important to the formation of perceptions because they provide an opportunity for that individual to understand what other individuals think, feel, say, and do about what is happening in an organization. Thus, social networks are the medium through which social influence occurs in an organization (Ibarra & Andrews, 1993) because they provide access to the beliefs of other employees who may be useful in helping an employee to better understand the work environment or their relationship with the organization.

Network Ties

The relationships examined in social networks research are often referred to as ties. A tie is said to exist when a pair of actors has one or more relationships. Ties can vary in direction, content, and strength. Characteristics of ties are important because they can affect how influential a specific tie may be.

In terms of direction, ties may be non-reciprocated (one-way) or reciprocal (two-way). In a non-reciprocated tie, for instance, an individual may provide advice for, but not receive advice from, another individual. On the other hand, an individual may receive advice from another individual, but not provide advice to that individual (Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 1999). In a reciprocal, or two-way tie, an employee receives advice from and gives advice to another employee.

Whether or not a tie is reciprocated is important because it often explains the nature of a relationship between individuals. A non-reciprocated tie may be characteristic of one-way social influence; that is, the beliefs of the advice-providing employee may influence the beliefs of the advice-receiving employee. Consistent with this proposition, Henry and Butler (2005) found that software and service firm employees who received advice from others adopted communication technology beliefs similar to those of the individuals who provided advice to them. On the other hand, reciprocal advice ties may encourage information sharing between individuals. Such sharing may result in convergence of employee attitudes because each employee has the opportunity to explain his or her point of view.

Tie content is also important to consider because ties that have different content are often related to different outcomes (Erickson, 1988; Ibarra & Andrews, 1993). Ignoring tie content may cause researchers to find spurious relationships (Harrington, 2002; Ibarra, 1993). For

instance, a researcher may find a positive relationship between friendship ties and other individuals' perceptions of an individual's power, but not measure advice ties in their analysis. The perceived power of the individual may actually have little to do with friendship ties and may be the result of the advice ties that the individual maintains. Therefore, it is important to assess different types of ties to determine which are related to a dependent variable (Ibarra, 1993). When tie content is considered, social networks researchers usually distinguish between advice and friendship ties (Ibarra & Andrews, 1993).

Advice Ties. Employees share information and knowledge related to the completion of their work through advice ties (Ibarra, 1993). Such ties are characterized by cognitive trust, or the belief that another has the ability and competence to provide help (McAllister, 1995; Ho, 2002; Ho, Levesque, & Rousseau, 2003). Therefore, asking an individual for advice is an indication of respect for the opinion of that individual and an expectation that help from that individual is available and useful.

The provision or exchange of advice is related to important outcomes in organizations. Employees who frequently provide advice to others are often perceived as being more powerful than individuals who are not a frequent source of advice (Brass, 1984; Brass & Burkhardt, 1993; Burkhardt & Brass, 1990; Knoke & Burt, 1983) because others are dependent on them for information needed to complete their jobs (Brass & Burkhardt, 1993). A study by Sparrowe, Liden, Wayne, and Kramer (2001) showed that employees who provided more advice to their coworkers received more favorable performance evaluations from supervisors. Settoon and Mossholder (2002) showed that individuals with more advice relationships were more likely to perform citizenship behaviors for their coworkers.

In addition, benefits accrue to individuals who maintain more advice ties with others. Baldwin, Bedell, and Johnson (1997) found that MBA students who had more advice ties enjoyed their program more, learned more, and had better grades. In a study of newly-hired accountants, Morrison (2002) showed that employees with more advice ties had greater organizational knowledge and task mastery than employees with fewer advice ties. The results of these studies suggest that employees who provide advice to others are powerful and evaluated favorably by supervisors, while individuals who maintain more advice ties have more knowledge about what is happening in the organization.

Given that advice ties are such an important source of job- and organization-related information, I expect that such ties will be an important source of social information that is utilized by employees in order to better understand what is happening in an organization. This argument does not imply that advice ties will not be a source of social comparison or social learning, or that friendship ties or role model ties will not be a source of social information, as this is possible and even likely. However, research indicates that similarity is a key driver of social comparison, which suggests that friendship ties are more likely to be a source of social influence. Social learning theory emphasizes the importance of an individual's admiration for another as a key driver of learning; advice ties likely will not be admired to the same extent as role models. Therefore, I expect that advice ties would most likely be used for social information processing.

Friendship Ties. While advice ties are based on the exchange of job- and organization related information, friendship ties involve expressions of personal affect, social support, and a sense of identity and personal belongingness (Coleman, 1988; 1990). As a result, individuals are likely to depend on their friends for counseling and companionship (Fisher, 1982) and are more

likely to discuss sensitive issues with friends than with other organizational members (Sias & Cahill, 1998). As a result, friendship ties are related to different outcomes in organizations than are advice ties. For instance, Morrison (2002) found that friendship network size was positively related to organizational commitment, while advice network size was not. Krackhardt and Stern (1988) demonstrated that individuals were more likely to share resources with friends from other departments than with non-friends during a simulated organizational crisis. Finally, individuals tend to make career decisions that are similar to those of their friends (Kilduff, 1990; Krackhardt, 1992).

A key point about friendship ties is that they often develop between individuals with similar personal characteristics such as race, gender, age, and religion (Marsden, 1988; Ibarra, 1992). As a result, friends are often utilized for social comparison. For instance, Wheeler and Miyake (1992) found that social comparison was most frequent among close friends, followed by friends with whom individuals were somewhat close, and least likely among individuals who were not friends. Friends are also likely to compare the treatment that they receive from other parties that they are affiliated with as well (Ho, 2002). Therefore, employees may compare their beliefs concerning the extent to which they are supported by the organization to friends' beliefs about organizational support.

Role Model Ties. While advice ties and friendship ties have been the focus of much social networks research in the past, the relationship between an employee and another individual whom the employee considers to be a role model has not been conceptualized as a network tie. Such a relationship is similar to a friendship or advice relationship; the only difference is the content of the relationship. In advice or friendship ties, the content is advice or friendship; in an employee-role model tie an employee admires the success or attributes of another employee.

Therefore, I argue that a role model tie exists when an employee admires another employee and believes that the employee is a good example of what the organization represents. Such a tie does not need to be reciprocated because a role model does not need to know that he or she is regarded as a role model by another in order to influence that individual (Crosby, 1999; Gibson, 2003; 2004). As Crosby (1999) states, “the role model may not be aware that he or she is a role model for the (other) person and may not even know of the existence of the (other) person (Crosby, 1999: 15).” Thus, an employee-role model relationship may be conceptualized as a non-reciprocated social network tie.

Role models have become increasingly important in today’s organizations because changes to the employment contract and organizational structure have made it difficult for employees to receive developmental support from organizationally-sponsored mentoring relationships and supervisory relationships (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Hall & Mirvis, 1996; Higgins & Kram, 2001). Individuals utilize informal developmental relationships, such as role model relationships, to acquire information regarding what behaviors and attitudes will help them to succeed in the organization.

Traditionally, role models have been viewed as individuals in influential role positions, such as supervisors or mentors, who serve as examples for others to emulate (Erickson, 1985). For instance, Kram (1985) defines role modeling as a function performed by a mentor for a protégé. Crosby (1999) considers role modeling a function that is performed by a senior person for a junior person in a developmental relationship. She defines a role model as “a senior person with whom a more junior person identifies emotionally and whom the junior person wishes to emulate in some way” (Crosby, 1999: 15). Crosby’s definition is different than Kram’s because

it does not require that the role model interact with the employee who considers him or her to be a role model.

More recently, however, researchers have recognized that employees consider coworkers who are at the same or lower hierarchical levels in the organization to be role models. For instance, Gibson defines role models as “person(s) an individual perceives to be similar to some extent, and because of that similarity, the individual desires to emulate (or specifically avoid) aspects of that person’s attributes or behaviors” (2003: 592). Gibson’s definition highlights the fact that employees select other employees who are not mentors or other senior organizational members as role models. Gibson’s qualitative study, which required employees to describe the characteristics of their role models, revealed that employees do indeed select other employees who are at the same level of the organization to be their role models. Overall, these definitions of role models agree that role models are organization members who are emulated by others because they have admirable attributes or useful skills. Indeed, the definition of role models offered by Shapiro and colleagues may best capture all of the definitions presented above; these researchers described role models “as individuals whose behaviors, personal styles, and specific attributes are emulated by others” (52).

In this study, I define a role model in an organizational context as an individual who is perceived by another employee to have a high level of performance and serve as an excellent example of the goals and values of the organization. I emphasize that the employee is a role model in the context of the organization and that the employee is knowledgeable and successful within that context. This definition also allows for employees to select role models from any level of the organization, rather than just supervisors or mentors. In addition, my focus is not on whether or not an individual is or is not a role model, but whether or not he or she is perceived to

be a role model by each other individual in the organization. Thus, role model ties, like an advice or friendship ties, are conceptualized at the dyadic level.

Role models are important because employees learn from interacting with or observing them (Gibson, 2003; Gibson, 2004) through processes described in social learning theory. An excellent example of how role models can help employees to learn in organizations is provided in Ibarra's (1999) study of thirty-four investment bank and management firm employees making the transition from junior to senior positions. Ibarra argued that individuals adapt to new professional roles by temporarily holding images of "provisional selves" (765). Essentially, employees try on the identities of individuals they identify as role models. If they believe that these identities help them to effectively perform their jobs, they adopt them. Through interaction and observation, employees acquire the tacit knowledge, attitudes, routines, and impression management techniques that are useful in making role transitions (Ibarra, 1999: 774).

In order to explain the importance of role models in shaping organization-related beliefs of employees, I draw on opinion leadership research. Opinion leaders are individuals who informally influence the attitudes or perceptions of others in an intended direction (Reynolds & Wells, 1977), often as a "word of mouth" information source in interpersonal communications (Verette, 2004).

Marketing studies show that individuals consult opinion leaders in their social networks before purchasing a product; opinion leaders are often more influential than the media because of the impact of word-of-mouth communication (Price & Feick, 1984). Studies on opinion leadership in organizations also reveal that opinion leaders can be influential in promoting positive attitudes towards organizational initiatives. For instance, Lam and Schaubroeck (2004) conducted a quasi-experiment in three bank branches implementing a service quality initiative

among tellers. In one branch, no service quality leaders were used. In the second branch, tellers were randomly selected as service quality leaders. In the third branch, tellers who were opinion leaders were utilized as service quality leaders. Tellers in the branch utilizing opinion leaders as service quality leaders had significantly better attitudes towards the initiative and also had higher self and supervisory ratings of performance. The results of this study indicate that opinion leaders are very important in change efforts because they are credible sources of information capable of influencing other employees. This point is illustrated by Leonard-Barton's (1985) study in which opinion leaders viewed a new technology negatively and therefore made adoption of the new technology more difficult because others adopted their negative beliefs.

There are important similarities between opinion leaders and role models. Rogers (1995) contends that employees who are from the same hierarchical level and occupation as their followers are more often regarded as opinion leaders due to the fact that they are accessible and have similar socioeconomic status. Both opinion leaders and role models are trusted sources of information, are accessible to employees, and may be in similar hierarchical positions. I argue that employees who are considered to be role models by their peers will play a role similar to that of opinion leaders in an organization. When employees are uncertain about how to interpret what is happening in an organization, they will go to role models to get their opinions on the issue. The more employees seek out their role models for information on events occurring in the organization, the more their opinions concerning organizational events will become similar to those of their role models. As a result, role models will be an important source of social influence in organizations – and will influence the perceptions of employees who interact with them.

Multiplex Ties. While it is important to recognize that network ties have different content, some ties overlap and contain multiple types of content (such as friendship and advice). Multiplexity refers to “overlapping social networks where the same people are linked together across different roles” (Portes, 1998: 16). Coleman (1988) suggests the wholesale diamond market in New York City functions effectively due to the presence of multiplex ties. Merchants in this market do business together, attend the same synagogues, and live in the same community. Therefore, the relationships between merchants are multiplex, or characterized by more than one type of tie. As a result, merchants do not fear that their diamonds will be stolen or replaced with less valuable diamonds because an individual who cheats the system will suffer consequences in a number of different contexts. A study by Meyer (1994) showed that attitudinal similarity was usually higher when multiplex ties existed between individuals.

In this dissertation, I examine several different types of multiplex ties: role model-advice ties and role model-friendship-advice ties. Consistent with Meyer (1994) and the observations of Coleman (1988), I expect that employees’ perceptions of organizational support will be similar to those of other employees with whom they maintain multiplex ties.

Tie Strength. Ties vary in strength along a continuum from weak to strong. Tie strength is defined as “the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding) and reciprocal services that characterize the tie” (Granovetter, 1973: 1361). Strong ties are more intimate, involve more self-disclosure and provide more than just instrumental exchange (Granovetter, 1982; Marsden & Campbell, 1984). Individuals who maintain strong ties are likely to have similar attitudes, background, experiences, and access to resources (McPherson & Smith-Lovin, 1987). In contrast to strong ties, exchanges that occur through weak ties are less frequent and less intimate. Weak ties are based on infrequent interaction, usually with individuals who

reside outside of the focal individual's network. Weak ties are significant because they have access to different sources of information or resources that an individual does not receive through strong ties (Burt, 1992; Granovetter, 1973).

Accordingly, research reveals that both strong and weak ties are beneficial to individuals, albeit in different ways. Strong ties are more likely to facilitate the sharing of more complex information and provide timely access to resources (Granovetter, 1982). Weak ties provide access to unique resources which may not be accessible through strong ties (Burt, 1992; Granovetter, 1973, 1987). For instance, Granovetter (1973) demonstrated that individuals were more likely to find new jobs through weak ties than through strong ties.

Studies have assessed the effects of both strong and weak ties. For example, Morrison (2002) found that strong advice ties were related to task mastery and role clarity among newly-hired accountants, but weak ties were not. Hansen (1999) found that weak ties were best for transferring noncomplex knowledge, while strong ties were better for transferring complex knowledge between departments in an organization. While these studies do not directly assess the role of tie strength on social influence, the general pattern of results suggest that weak ties are less influential and less useful in transferring information than are strong ties.

While studies reveal that it is important to consider the strength of ties, there is no consensus as to just what is the best indicator of tie strength. Nelson argued that frequent contact approximates all components of Granovetter's (1973) tie strength definition (time, emotional intensity, intimacy, and reciprocal services). He notes that ideally, all of these dimensions would be measured, but that such a process would create too much strain on respondents completing surveys. On the other hand, Marsden and Campbell's (1984) study revealed that intimacy and reciprocity were effective predictors of outcomes expected to be related to tie strength. In order

to integrate these views, I consider the strength of ties under two different assumptions: the assumption that only frequent contact is an indicator of tie strength, and the assumption that both frequent contact and reciprocity represent tie strength.

Hypotheses

In this dissertation, I argue that advice ties between employees will be related to similarity in POS because they serve as a source of social information. Friendship ties, on the other hand, will result in similarity in POS because they are utilized for social comparison. When an employee’s friend shares his or her beliefs about how he or she is treated by the organization with the employee, that information may serve as signal to the employee about how the employee is treated by the organization (Felson & Reed, 1986). Finally, role models will result in similarity in POS because employees learn from the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of role models. In addition, ties that are strong should be more highly associated with POS because they are characterized by frequent interaction, and, when reciprocal, information sharing. I also expect that multiplex ties, such as advice-role model ties and friend-advice-role model ties, will be particularly influential with respect to similarity in POS because they will serve as a source of social information, social learning, and/or social comparison (See Table 1 for a summary of the hypothesized relationship in this study).

Table 1: Hypothesized Relationships Between Network Ties and POS

	Tie Type	Strength	Theoretical Framework	Outcome
H1	Advice	Strong	Social Information Processing	Positive Relationship w/POS
H2	Advice- Role Model	Strong	Social Information Processing and Social Learning	Positive Relationship w/POS
H3	Friendship	Strong	Social Comparison	Positive Relationship w/POS
H4	Friendship- Advice- Role Model	Strong	Social Information Processing, Social Comparison, and Social Learning	Positive Relationship w/POS

To test the effects of social influence, I examine interpersonal similarity in POS between employees and their weak and strong friendship ties, weak and strong advice ties, weak and strong role model ties, weak and strong role model-advice ties, weak and strong role model-friendship ties, and weak and strong role-model-friendship advice ties. While all of these ties are considered, I only offer hypotheses for strong ties that exist between employees. This is because research on social networks shows that because weak ties characterized by infrequent interaction are unlikely to be related to similarity in perceptions (Erickson, 1988). I provide hypotheses only for strong advice ties, strong advice-role model ties, and strong friend-advice role model ties because I was most interested in how the exchange of information related to the job and the organization was related to similarity in POS among employees. I included a hypothesis for strong friendship ties to test the associative and comparative functions of social comparison theory. Chapter 4 contains the results for all different combinations of strong and weak ties relevant to the study.

In addition, I examine employees' relationships with coworkers rather than their relationships with supervisors (although I control for the effects of employees who occupy leadership positions in the organization). This is not to imply that supervisors are not a source of information for employees. Morrison (1993) argues that supervisors are an important source of information for feedback, role demands, and expectations. However, employees are less likely to ask their supervisors questions about the extent to which they are supported by the organization because they would likely believe that responses from supervisors related to this issue are biased. Further, employees will likely discuss perceptions of support with coworkers because they are more easily accessible (Morrison, 1993; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992) and will serve as a better comparison for employees because they are at similar levels in the

organization's hierarchy (Levine & Moreland, 1986). Therefore, I examine the impact of advice, friendship, and multiplex role model ties that employees maintain with coworkers on similarity in POS. Figure 2 provides a graphical depiction of the expected relationships between different social network ties and similarity in POS.

In accordance with social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), I expect that employees will have POS that is similar to the POS of their strong advice ties because employees will use advice ties to better understand what is happening in the organization. Organizational members perceive and make sense of organizational policies, practices, and procedures, as well as specific occurrences such as firings of specific employees, in ways that are psychologically meaningful to them (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Rentsch (1990) explored the relationship between accounting firm employees' memberships in interaction groups and the meanings they attach to organizational events. She interviewed employees to find out what types of events were occurring in the organization and asked them to describe the events. Six weeks later, she came back and administered a survey in which employees were asked to match adjectives with the different events discussed in interviews. Following the survey, she gave employees a roster containing the names of all employees in the organization and asked them to indicate which employees they interacted with. She found that employees who interacted with one another frequently (interaction groups) assigned the same adjectives to the same organizational events, and that employees who were in different interaction groups assigned different adjectives to the same organizational events.

While Rentsch's study provided important results concerning the relationship between interaction and employees interpretations of organizational events, she did not measure the content of the ties between individuals in her study. Given the importance of advice ties in

disseminating organizational information, I argue that advice ties that will be most important in shaping employees' interpretations of what happens in organizations, and therefore will be important in shaping employees' POS. This is because employees go to their advice ties to get information that helps them to make sense of the organization, while they go to friends for counseling and companionship (Fisher, 1982). Indeed, a study of newly-hired accountants showed that employees' advice ties were related to their knowledge of the organization, while friendship ties were not (Morrison, 2002). Further, advice ties were related to employees' perceptions regarding the fairness of organizational policies and procedures as well as their beliefs about how fairly they were treated by supervisors (Umphress et al., 2003). By interacting with others in an advice network, beliefs about the organization will be shared either directly through discussion of organizational support or indirectly through conversations concerning other work-related topics. Through this interaction, individuals involved in advice relationships are exposed to others' beliefs about organizational support.

Hypothesis 1: An employee's perceived organizational support will be positively related to the perceived organizational support of coworkers with whom that employee has strong advice relationships.

Like advice ties, I argue that employees will adopt similar perceptions of support to those of their role-model advice ties. Such ties provide information about treatment provided by the organization. However, the fact that these advice ties also serve as role models is significant because employees emulate the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of role models. When employees are uncertain about how to interpret the treatment that they receive from the organization, the evaluations of role model advice ties will be influential, even more influential than advice ties. The more employees seek out their role models for information or advice related to organizational treatment in the organization, the more similar employees' evaluations

of organizational treatment will become to those of their role model-advice ties. As a result, role models will be an important source of social influence in organizations – and will influence the perceptions of support of employees who interact with them.

Hypothesis 2: An employee's perceived organizational support will be positively related to the perceived organizational support of role models with whom that employee has strong advice relationships.

Friendship Ties and Similarity in POS

Like strong advice ties and role model advice ties, I contend that strong friendship ties will be positively related to similarity in POS. I draw on social comparison theory to provide the rationale for this hypothesis. POS is subjective; that is, there is no objective standard for employees to evaluate their POS against. Social comparison theory contends that when an outcome is subjective, individuals (or in this case, employees) will turn to individuals who are similar to themselves, such as friends, as a reference point when evaluating subjective outcomes (Wheeler & Miyake, 1992). Therefore, it is likely that employees will compare their perceptions of support to the perceptions of support of strong friendship ties.

Social comparison can create association or comparison between individuals. Association would result in similarity in POS between employees who have strong friendship relationships. When a focal employee's friend is treated positively or negatively by the organization, the focal employee may take the positive or negative treatment as a signal that the organization favors or disfavors him/her as well. Therefore, both employees' POS would increase as a result of one employee receiving favorable treatment. On the other hand, comparison would result in dissimilar perceptions of support between a focal employee and a strong-tie friend. When the focal employee's friend receives positive treatment from the organization, this may cause the focal employee to believe that the treatment s/he has received is

less positive. Thus, the POS of the friend who received positive treatment will increase, and the POS of the focal employee, who perceived less positive treatment, will decrease following comparison with his/her friend. Since ego's POS decreases, and ego's friend's POS increases, the POS of the two friends will become less similar.

Tesser (1988) stresses that the outcome in question determines whether or not the occurrence of an association or comparison function is likely. When considering POS, then, a focal employee's POS would increase (and become more similar to the similar other's POS) if the similar other received a training opportunity that the focal employee was not interested in having for him/herself, or if all employees received an across-the-board raise or a new benefit from the organization. On the other hand, if the similar other received a promotion that the focal employee desired, his or her POS could become dissimilar to the POS of the similar other. However, it is also very possible that friends could be happy for a friend who is treated favorably by the organization, even if they were competing for an outcome. In such a case, even when employees are competing, an employee's POS may become similar to the POS of his or her friendship ties.

Research on justice perceptions and POS is useful in predicting whether or not a comparison or association function will occur between friends. Specifically, researchers have shown that the relationship between procedural justice and POS is stronger than the relationship between distributive justice and POS (Masterson et al., 2000; Tekleab et al., 2005; Wayne et al., 2002) because employees deal with procedural justice on a daily basis while promotions and raises occur infrequently. This suggests that the organization's policies (procedural justice) are more important to employees' perceived support than are the rewards that they themselves receive (distributive justice). Thus, it is policies and procedures, which Tesser (1988) would

describe as noncompetitive, that drive POS. Accordingly, I expect that employees will likely engage in association rather than comparison when discussing perceptions of organizational support. This reasoning yields the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: An employee's perceived organizational support will be positively related to the perceived organizational support of coworkers with whom that employee maintains strong friendship relationships.

Employees may develop role model-friendship-advice ties with coworkers. Such multiplex ties may be extremely influential because they are a source of social information processing and social learning. However, they also may be a source of social comparison, which could lead to dissimilarity in POS, as hypothesized in the preceding section. However, some social comparison research indicates that employees will avoid making social comparisons with individuals who are extremely successful because they recognize that they will never obtain such success themselves, and therefore making such comparisons will lead to reduced self-concept (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997; 1999). As a result, employees may avoid making social comparisons with high-performing role models. Therefore, I expect an employee's POS will be positively related to the POS of role model-friendship-advice ties, as such ties will be a source of social information processing and learning, but may not suffer because employees protect their self-concepts by avoiding comparison with friend-role models.

Hypothesis 4: An employee's perceived organizational support will be positively related to the perceived organizational support of role models with whom they have strong advice and friendship relationships.

Finally, although I offer this only as an exploratory hypothesis and do not formally test it, I expect that consideration of strong friendship and advice ties (and other combinations of strong friendship and advice ties) which require both frequency of contact and reciprocity will be more strongly associated with similarity in POS than will consideration of strong friendship and advice

ties (and other combinations of strong friendship and advice ties) that only require frequent contact (and not reciprocity). This is because reciprocal ties will be characterized by information exchange between employees. Employees may discuss their views with one another, and when they do this, both employees in the dyad may come to adjust their perceptions of support so that POS in the dyad becomes more similar. On the other hand, non-reciprocated (one-way) ties will not be as strongly related to similarity in POS because only one employee is providing information to another employee regarding their perceptions of support. As a result, the employee who receives advice or information from this individual may try to adjust their own POS as a result of the influence of the employee who provides information, but it is unlikely that the employee receiving information will really understand what level of POS the other employee actually has. This may occur because employees who are more powerful may provide socially desirable information to others, hiding their true beliefs.

Hypothesis 5: The overall pattern of results will show that strong ties characterized by frequent contact and reciprocity will be more strongly associated with similarity in POS than will strong ties characterized by only frequent contact.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The objective of this dissertation is to explore the effects of social influence on employees' POS. To test the hypotheses, a field study was conducted utilizing student-employees from a section of the admissions department at a large university in the eastern United States. The unit is regarded as a specific organization in and of itself. Organization members completed a sociometric survey which consisted of a roster including the names of all employees in the organization. On this survey, they indicated whether or not they considered their coworkers to be friends, sources of advice, and/or role models, and assessed the strength of their relationships with these individuals. In addition, employees completed the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support and provided information regarding their tenure in the organization, race, gender, and whether or not they held leadership positions in the organization. All data was collected at one point in time.

This dissertation utilized social networks analysis. While traditional social science methodologies focus on individual attributes to explain phenomena, social networks analysis examines relationships among actors in order to explain social phenomena (Bonacich, 1972; 1987; Burt, 1992; Freeman, 1979; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Social networks research can focus on the individual level, the dyadic level, and the group level (Raider & Krackhardt, 2001). In this dissertation, I focused on the dyadic influence that occurs when two individuals have a relationship with each other. Accordingly, Quadratic Assignment Procedure regression was utilized to test all hypotheses.

Research Setting

Hypotheses were tested in a field study of a recruiting department at a large university. Marsden (1990) suggests that membership in a specific organization, such as a work organization, is a natural boundary for a social network. Consistent with this suggestion, many social networks studies utilize single organizations as samples for research (e.g. Ibarra & Andrews, 1993; Meyer, 1994; Umphress et al., 2003). Further, I am interested in how individuals' relationships within their organization are related to their POS. Accordingly, it makes sense to test the hypotheses in a single organization.

This setting meets data requirements for social networks research. First, the organization is comprised of 138 members, a sample large enough for meaningful social networks analysis. Samples in social networks studies generally are not as large as other social science studies because of the length of the surveys participants must complete (Marsden, 1990). Usually, sociometric surveys require that an individual provide information related to his or her relationship(s) with every other member of their organization, a rather cumbersome process in larger organizations (Marsden, 1990). It is also important that a relatively high response rate be achieved to ensure that significant portions of the network are not missing (Marsden, 1990). Generally, social networks studies have response rates ranging between 65% and 90% (Stork & Richards, 1992).

Participants

The sample in this study consists of student-employees who are members of the recruiting organization mentioned previously. This organization is run by a group of five elected leaders with the assistance of an admissions sponsor. This organization is responsible for

coordinating over 80 campus tours a week. Over the course of a year, the organization conducts over 4,000 walking tours of the campus and 300 bus tours. During tours, employees provide information and answer questions related to the university. In addition, employees perform telemarketing duties including calling students admitted to the university to congratulate them and answering any questions that they have. Employees also help with two or three admissions programs per year, host prospective students for overnight programs, attend weekly organizational meetings, and represent the university on recruiting trips.

All hiring decisions are handled by the organization itself. Employees, mainly undergraduate students, could be described as “contract employees” – if they perform well for a year, they are asked to return the next year. About one quarter of the employees work year-round, while the other three quarters work during the fall and spring semesters. On average, these employees work 25 hours per week.

Procedures

Data were collected as part of a larger survey given during a regular retreat sponsored by the organization. In addition to the data utilized in this dissertation, other measures were collected which were not utilized in the present research. Respondents were told that the purpose of the survey was to investigate their experiences and the knowledge they had gained while performing their jobs. Employees were assured that their responses would remain confidential. To encourage participation, six \$50 gift certificates to local businesses were provided to randomly selected employees who completed the survey.

The sociometric portion of the survey measured employees’ network ties. Employees were given a roster including the names of all employees and asked questions about their relationships with them. According to Marsden (1990), a roster increases the reliability of

network data concerning recurring interactions compared to other procedures such as having employees recall the individuals with whom they maintain relationships. Pictures of all employees were provided along with the survey so that employees were more confident that they were answering questions about the correct individuals. Employees were asked to indicate if they considered another employee to be a friend, a source of advice, a role model, and someone with whom they had frequent contact (see below for more description of the measures). Employees were instructed to write “skip” across the line in the survey containing their own name. This allowed the researcher to identify respondents without formally requesting that they provide their names.

In the remaining part of the survey, employees were asked about their perceptions of organizational support as well as demographic information including gender and tenure. All measures are explained in greater detail in the following section. The survey itself is provided in the Appendix.

Measures

In the following section, the measures utilized in this study are described in detail.

Similarity in Perceived Organizational Support. The dependent variable in this study is similarity in perceived organizational support. Similarity is the extent to which the participant’s POS is similar to those of each of his/her network ties. The similarity in POS measure was created by completing the following steps. First, each participant was asked about his or her POS using Eisenberger et al.’s (1997) eight-item version of the Short Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (see Appendix for actual items). Participants responded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. Next, each participant’s responses to the SPOS were averaged to create a mean POS score in which higher

scores represented higher levels of POS. The composite scores were then used to create a POS dissimilarity matrix. Consistent with past research on social influence (e.g. Meyer, 1994), the degree of dissimilarity was computed by taking the absolute difference between individual *i*'s mean POS score and individual *j*'s mean POS score. For example, if individual *i* rated their level of POS as 5 and individual *j* rated their POS to be 3, the cell entry X_{ij} in the similarity matrix for POS would be 2. Therefore, smaller numbers represented greater interpersonal similarity in POS.

Social Network Ties. Social network ties were measured using the sociometric survey described previously. Each question on the survey explored whether or not a certain type of tie existed between employees.

In this dissertation, two different sets of measures were utilized. Thus, a different set of regression analyses was conducted for each of these assumptions. The first set of measures included reciprocated strong ties (reciprocated ties analysis), as well as all other ties shown in Table 1 and described in the following section. A second set of measures included non-reciprocated strong ties (non-reciprocated ties analysis) as well as all other ties described in Table 2. Each set of measures represented different assumptions about the way tie strength is represented in social network research. In the reciprocated ties analysis, both reciprocity and frequent contact were necessary for a strong friendship or advice tie to exist between actors. In the non-reciprocated ties analysis, only frequent contact (*not* reciprocity) was required for strong friendship and advice ties. I did not apply the reciprocity requirement to role model ties, as such ties by definition do not need to be reciprocal (Gibson, 2003; Ibarra, 1999).

I explored these different requirements for strong friendship and advice ties for several reasons. In the reciprocated ties analysis, which required both frequent contact and reciprocity for strong friendship and advice ties, both employees in a dyad needed to acknowledge that a tie

Table 2: Reciprocated Ties Measure Descriptions

Variable	Description
Strong Ties	
Friend	Friendship Matrix (reciprocated) + Frequent Contact Matrix
Advice	Advice Matrix (reciprocated) + Frequent Contact Matrix
Friend-Advice	Friendship Matrix (reciprocated) + Advice Matrix (reciprocated) + Frequent Contact Matrix
Role Model	Role Model Matrix + Frequent Contact Matrix
Friend-Role Model	Friendship Matrix (reciprocated) + Frequent Contact Matrix + Role Model Matrix
Advice-Role Model	Advice Matrix (reciprocated) + Frequent Contact Matrix + Role Model Matrix
Friend-Advice-Role Model	Friendship Matrix (reciprocated) + Advice Matrix (reciprocated) + Frequent Contact Matrix + Role Model Matrix

Table 3: Non-Reciprocated Ties Measure Descriptions

Variable	Description
Strong Ties	
Friend	Friendship Matrix + Frequent Contact Matrix
Advice	Advice Matrix + Frequent Contact Matrix
Friend-Advice	Friendship Matrix + Advice Matrix (reciprocated) + Frequent Contact Matrix
Role Model	Role Model Matrix + Frequent Contact Matrix
Friend-Role Model	Friendship Matrix + Frequent Contact Matrix + Role Model Matrix
Advice-Role Model	Advice Matrix + Frequent Contact Matrix + Role Model Matrix
Friend-Advice-Role Model	Friendship Matrix + Advice Matrix + Frequent Contact Matrix + Role Model Matrix

existed for it to be included as a strong friendship or advice tie in the analysis. This methodology increases the accuracy of the measurement of social networks (Hammer, 1985), because it is more likely that a tie actually exists when it is acknowledged by both parties. The reciprocity requirement also decreases single-source bias because reciprocal measures are not derived solely from the perceptions of one employee, but rather are verified by another individual in the organization. However, a potential shortcoming of this approach is that it does not account for employees' perceptions of the network, which may be more relevant than ties that actually exist in some cases (Kilduff & Krackhardt, 1994). These authors found that being perceived as having a powerful friend, not actually having a powerful friend, was related to reputation for performance among employees. Thus, it may be that employees who perceive that they have a tie with is more important than who they actually have ties with when perceptions of support are considered. As a result, employees who have different beliefs about what a friend or advice tie entails may respond to these questions in different ways. While these potential shortcomings are noteworthy, including reciprocity as a requirement for a strong tie is consistent with Granovetter's (1973) definition of tie strength.

The non-reciprocated ties analysis tested employees' perceptions of their own social networks. That is, if an employee believed that s/he had a strong friendship tie or an advice tie with another employee, that tie was included in the analysis, regardless of whether or not the tie was acknowledged by both employees. Defining ties in this fashion is beneficial because it includes all of the relationships that an employee considers to be relevant, regardless of whether

or not the employees with whom they claim to have relationships acknowledge having relationships with them (Krackhardt, 1990). However, a limitation of utilizing this methodological approach is that it is less rigorous. Common method bias is a concern because employees' perceptions of their social networks are utilized as an independent variable, while the dependent variable also consists of a perceptual measure (similarity in POS).

Another important point regarding measurement of social networks variables in this study is that, in both analyses, non-overlapping ties were utilized¹. That is, each employee was assumed to have one (or no) relationship with each other employee in the organization. For example, if employee A indicated that employee B was a friend and a role model, employee B would be considered a friend-role model tie of employee A. However, employee B would not be considered a friendship tie and a role model tie as well; such a tie would only be counted as a friend-role model tie. Thus, ties are only counted once in this type of analysis, which reduces multicollinearity associated with counting the same tie in several different networks.

The following friendship, advice and role model ties are the building blocks for all of the variables in this study.

Friendship Ties. Consistent with previous research (Ibarra, 1992; Ibarra, 1995, Ibarra & Andrews, 1993; Krackhardt, 1990; Morrison, 2002), friendship ties were measured by asking each respondent to identify coworkers “who you see as an organization member as well as socially – outside of activities related to the organization.” Employees were instructed to circle “yes” if they considered an individual to be a friend, and “no” if they did not.

Advice Ties. Advice ties were measured by asking each respondent to identify those employees who “provide job-related advice, meaning that this person has been a source of

¹ Results of descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and QAP regression analysis are also available for overlapping ties.

information related to your job as a member of this organization (yes/no).” Employees were instructed to circle “yes” if they considered an individual to be an advice tie, and “no” if they did not.

Role Model Ties. Role model ties were assessed in a manner similar to friendship and advice ties. Each employee was asked to identify whether or not each other individual in the organization was a “role model” to them, described as “an employee who has a high level of performance and serves as an excellent example of the goals and values of the organization.”

Data on employee friendship ties, advice ties, and role model ties were compiled into a friendship matrix, an advice matrix, and a role model matrix respectively. Friendship, advice, and role model matrixes were created according to the following procedure (explained here in terms of friendship ties): If person i selected person j as a friend, or person j selected person i as a friend, cell entry X_{ij} in the friendship matrix was 1. If both persons i and j did not indicate that a friendship tie existed, 0 was entered into cell X_{ij} in the friendship matrix. These matrixes were utilized to create strong and weak friendship ties, strong and weak advice ties, strong and weak role model ties, strong and weak friend-role model ties, and strong and weak advice-role model ties, and strong and weak friend-advice-role model ties. The procedure utilized to create these ties is explained below.

The general procedure used for measuring tie strength in this dissertation is as follows. First, I created a frequent contact matrix. Nelson (1989) suggested that tie strength could be measured by asking respondents how frequently they interacted with others in the network. To build the frequent contact matrix, each employee was asked whether or not they interacted with every other employee “at least once a week (yes/no).” If person i indicated that they had

frequent contact with person j, or person j indicated that they had frequent contact with person i cell entry X_{ij} in the frequent contact matrix was 1.

Strong Friendship Ties. The next step was to compute the strong friendship matrix. In the reciprocated ties analysis, the strong friendship matrix was computed by multiplying the frequent contact matrix and the friendship matrix which contained only reciprocated friendship ties. In the non-reciprocated ties analysis, the strong friendship matrix was computed by multiplying the frequent contact matrix and the friendship matrix which included all ties regardless of whether or not they were reciprocated. The same procedure was utilized to create all other network ties assessed in this study as well.

As is the case in most social networks research, all network measures were assessed using a single measure. This is typical because assessing each type of tie with multiple measures would be time-consuming and impractical for respondents. If each network was measured using multiple items, each respondent would have had to respond to multiple items for each network and for each of 137 other employees. A drawback to single-item measures is that they do not allow for the assessment of reliability, but our methods (roster, recurring ties) allows for the highest possible reliability (Marsden, 1990).

Control Variables

In addition to the independent variables, information on tenure, gender and leadership positions held was collected to rule out other possible explanations for results. Similarity matrixes were constructed for each of these variables and utilized in the analysis².

² Quadratic Assignment Procedure analysis requires that similarity with respect to variables, not the absolute value of the variables, be utilized (See Umphress et al., 2003).

Tenure. Tenure was utilized as control variable because research has shown that individuals with higher levels of POS tend to remain in an organization longer than other employees who have lower POS (note the strong relationship between POS and turnover in Rhoades & Eisenberger's (2002) meta-analysis). Tenure was operationalized as the number of years that an employee worked in the organization. A tenure similarity matrix was constructed based on absolute difference values between employees' tenure. Similarity in tenure between employees was determined by subtracting the tenure of individual *i* from the tenure of individual *j*. The difference between the tenure of these individuals was entered in cell X_{ij} in the tenure matrix.

Gender. Gender was also utilized as a control variable because research indicates that gender can influence an individual's position in informal networks (Brass, 1984; Brass, 1985; Ibarra, 1993) and in some cases, employees' perceptions of support (Liaoi, Joshi, & Chung, 2005). Gender was utilized as a dummy variable in which 0 = male and 1 = female. A gender similarity matrix was constructed which represents the difference between the gender of two employees, similar to the tenure matrix. With respect to gender, two females would have similar gender because (dummy variable) 1 – (dummy variable) 1 = 0, indicating similarity in gender. However, a female (dummy variable 1) – and a male (dummy variable 0) would have a difference of 1 entered into the corresponding cell in the gender similarity matrix.

Leadership Positions. Whether or not an employee held a leadership position in the organization was also utilized as a control variable because POS research shows that perceived supervisor support (Eisenberger et al., 2002) and leader-member exchange (Wayne et al., 1997; Wayne et al., 2002) are positively related to POS. Leadership was utilized as a dummy variable in which 0 indicated that an employee did not hold a leadership position and 1 indicated that an

employee held a leadership position. A leadership similarity matrix was constructed which captured the difference between employees who were leaders and employees who were not. With respect to leadership positions, a leader and a non-leader would have a dissimilar leadership score because $(\text{dummy variable}) 1 - (\text{dummy variable}) 0 = 1$, indicating dissimilarity in whether or not a leadership position was held. However, a leader (dummy variable 1) – and another leader (dummy variable 1) would have similarity in leadership as 0 was entered into the corresponding cell in the leadership matrix.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Analysis

Unlike most social science research in which the individual level of analysis is examined, the level of analysis in this study is the dyad. Therefore, each variable is represented as a matrix in which rows and columns represent actors and cells represent a relational state between actors (Raider & Krackhardt, 2001: 68). The fact that the level of analysis in this study is the dyad requires special analysis techniques because dyadic relations are not independent of one another, as are observations in most social science research (Raider & Krackhardt, 2001). As a result, there may be high levels of autocorrelation among the error terms in regular statistical models of this data. Accordingly, it is inappropriate to analyze data such as this using Ordinary Least Squares Regression, PLS or LISREL. Social networks researchers suggest utilization of a test that is robust against autocorrelation. Krackhardt (1988) suggests using Quadratic Assignment Procedure (QAP) regression to deal with autocorrelation problems associated with network data. QAP offers permutation-based tests of significance which are more resistant to autocorrelation problems than are ordinary least-squares regression models³ (Raider & Krackhardt, 2001).

Therefore, data analysis was conducted using UCINET 6 for Windows, a network analysis program developed by Borgatti, Everett, and Freeman (2002). Quadratic assignment procedure correlation analysis was utilized to generate a bivariate correlation matrix and quadratic assignment procedure regression (QAP) will be used to test the hypotheses. QAP

³ Currently there is some debate between Krackhardt and Wasserman regarding the extent to which QAP regression is resistant to autocorrelation problems (Butler; personal communication; Madhavan, personal communication). Wasserman advocates utilization of the p* model (Wasserman & Pattison, 1996). Somewhat like QAP, p* analysis consists of “generating a set of predictor variables from a network and then employing logistic regression analysis to fit a series of nested models in which the response variable is the presence or absence of a tie between each pair of actors” (Madhavan, Gnyawali, & He, 2004). I selected QAP regression for this study as it is more commonly utilized in the management literature at this time (e.g. Hinds, Carley, Krackhardt, & Wholey, 2000; Umphress et al., 2003).

correlation analysis has two steps. In the first step, Pearson's correlation coefficients for corresponding cells in the two matrices are computed. Then the program permutes the rows and columns of one matrix and calculates the correlation between the matrices. This is repeated 1000 times; each correlation from step 1 is compared with step 2 in an effort to determine the number of times the correlation generated by random permutations is larger or equal to the step 1 correlation.

To test all hypotheses, the POS similarity matrix was regressed on the social network matrices and control variable matrices using multiple regression QAP analysis. Multiple regression QAP analysis works in much the same way that QAP correlation analysis works. Initially, the program conducts standard multiple regression across corresponding cells of the POS matrix, the social networks matrices, and the control variable matrices (Borgatti et al., 2002). Next, the all rows and columns from the POS matrix are permuted randomly and the regression coefficient is recomputed. This step occurs 1,000 times in an effort to estimate the standard error. The results from this second step are in the form of R-squared values and regression coefficients. Each of the coefficients from step 2 is compared to the coefficient produced in step 1. Following this, the procedure computes the number of random permutations needed in step 2 to produce results as extreme as those produced in the first step. If a low proportion of similar results are found in step 2 when compared with step 1, a significant relationship is indicated.

As mentioned previously, two different analyses were utilized in this dissertation, each with a different set of measures that represented different assumptions concerning the manner in which tie strength is measured in social networks research. Thus, a separate set of regression analyses was conducted for each of these analyses. The results of these analyses are presented in

this chapter. The first set of measures included reciprocated strong ties and a second set of measures included non-reciprocated strong ties. In the reciprocated ties analysis, both reciprocity and frequent contact were necessary analysis for a strong friendship or advice tie to exist between actors. In the non-reciprocated ties analysis, only frequent contact (*not* reciprocity) was required for strong friendship and advice ties. I did not apply the reciprocity requirement to role model ties, as such ties by definition do not need to be reciprocal (Gibson, 2003; Ibarra, 1999).

In the following sections of this chapter, the sample is described and descriptive statistics for control and dependent variables are presented. Next, the descriptive statistics, correlations and regression results testing the hypotheses for the reciprocated ties analysis and the non-reciprocated ties analysis are presented.

Sample and Descriptive Statistics for Control and Dependent Variables

Table 4 presents descriptive statistics for the control and dependent variables assessed in this dissertation. Of the 138 members of the organization, 101 were present at the meeting and complete, usable data was obtained from 93 employees yielding a response rate of 92% of the available employees, or 67% of the entire organization. Although a higher response rate would have been desirable, many network studies are published with response rates ranging between 65% and 90% due to the difficulty associated with getting employees to complete such a long and cumbersome survey (Stork & Richards, 1992). The sample was 60.2% female and 80.6% Caucasian, 11.8% African-American, 5.4% Asian, and 2.2% other. Mean tenure was 1.94 years (Range = 0 to 6.33). Finally, respondents held, on average, .05 leadership positions. Mean POS was 3.21 (Range = 1.25 to 4.50). Cronbach's alpha for the eight-item Survey of Perceived

Organizational Support was .84, which is consistent with past research which reveals alphas that range from .77 (Eisenberger et al., 1997) to .90 (Ambrose & Schminke, 2003).

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Control and Dependent Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Control Variables				
Female	60%	.49	0	1
Tenure	1.94	1.26	0	6.33
Leadership Positions	.05	.23	0	1
Dependent Variable				
Perceived Organizational Support	3.21	.67	1.25	4.50

Results for Reciprocal Ties Analysis

Descriptive Statistics. Table 5 presents descriptive statistics for the reciprocal ties analysis. On average, respondents reported that they had .43 weak friendship ties (Range = 0 to 8), 3.16 weak advice ties (Range = 0 to 26), and 8.61 weak role model ties (Range 0 to 82). With respect to weak multiplex ties, respondents reported that they had, on average, .29 weak friend-advice ties (Range = 0 to 10), .32 weak friend-role model ties (Range 0 to 4), 4.46 weak advice-role model ties (Range 0 to 44), and .45 weak friend-advice-role model ties (Range = 0 to 6).

Respondents indicated that they maintained an average .14 strong friendship ties (Range = 0 to 3), 1.61 strong advice ties (Range = 0 to 20), and 8.41 strong role model ties (Range = 0 to 56). With respect to multiplex ties, respondents reported, on average, .18 strong friend-advice

ties (Range = 0 to 3), .87 strong friend-role model ties (Range = 0 to 11), 7.27 strong advice-role model ties (Range = 0 to 47), and 3.16 strong friend-advice-role model ties (Range = 0 to 15).

Table 5 presents descriptive statistics for variables in the non-reciprocated ties analysis. On average, respondents reported that they had .75 weak friendship ties (Range = 0 to 13). Respondents also indicated that they maintained more weak advice ties (Mean = 5.19; Range = 0 to 41) than friendship ties. Respondents also maintained weak relationships with an average of 8.61 role models (Range = 0 to 82). With respect to multiplex ties, respondents reported that they had an average of .75 weak friend-advice ties (Range = 0 to 12), 1.16 weak friend-role model ties (Range = 0 to 18) and 6.67 weak advice-role model ties (Range = 0 to 72). Finally, respondents reported an average of 2.44 weak friend-advice-role model ties (Range = 0 to 18).

Not surprisingly, individuals generally reported having fewer strong ties with their coworkers than weak ties. On average, respondents reported having .23 strong friendship ties (Range = 0 to 6), 2.06 strong advice ties (Range 0 to 31), and 2.25 strong role model ties (Range = 0 to 46). Strong multiplex ties were also less common than weak multiplex ties, as respondents indicated that they maintained an average of .47 strong friend-advice ties (Range = 0 to 7) and an average of 4.90 strong advice-role model ties (Range = 0 to 65). However, on average, respondents indicated that they had more strong friend-role model ties (Mean = 1.63, Range = 0 to 19) and strong friend-advice-role model ties (Mean = 11.26, Range = 0 to 85) than weak friend-role model ties and weak friend-advice-role model ties.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Reciprocated Ties

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Weak Ties				
Friend	.43	1.21	0	8
Advice	3.16	4.99	0	26
Friend-Advice	.29	1.09	0	10
Role Model	8.61	14.87	0	82
Friend-Role Model	.32	.72	0	4
Advice-Role Model	4.46	6.81	0	44
Friend-Advice Role Model	.45	1.08	0	6
Strong Ties				
Friend	.14	.56	0	3
Advice	1.61	2.80	0	20
Friend-Advice	.18	.62	0	4
Role Model	8.41	10.11	0	56
Friend-Role Model	.87	1.66	0	11
Advice-Role Model	7.27	7.23	0	47
Friend-Advice-Role Model	3.16	3.61	0	15

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics for Non-Reciprocated Ties

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Weak Ties				
Friend	.75	2.03	0	13
Advice	5.19	7.70	0	41
Friend-Advice	.75	1.46	0	12
Role Model	8.61	14.87	0	82
Friend-Role Model	1.16	2.50	0	18
Advice-Role Model	6.67	10.77	0	72
Friend-Advice Role Model	2.44	4.32	0	18
Strong Ties				
Friend	.23	.97	0	6
Advice	2.06	4.13	0	31
Friend-Advice	.47	1.08	0	7
Role Model	2.25	5.46	0	46
Friend-Role Model	1.63	3.59	0	19
Advice-Role Model	4.90	8.76	0	65
Friend-Advice-Role Model	11.26	13.89	0	85

Correlations. Two different types of correlation analyses, standard Pearson correlation analysis and QAP correlation analysis, were conducted. Standard Pearson correlations demonstrate the relationships between variables, not the relationship between similarity in the variables. For example, the correlation between strong advice-role model ties and POS represents the correlation between the number of strong advice-role model ties that an employee maintains and that employee's POS. These correlations were conducted to test whether or not having more (or fewer) social networks ties in the organization in and of itself was related to POS (not similarity in POS). Pearson correlations (presented in Table 5) revealed that, to some extent, some of the social network ties were significantly correlated, like friend-advice ties and friendship ties ($r = .51, p \leq .01$). However, none of these relationships were strong enough to suggest that multicollinearity existed between measures, as no correlations approached .70. Further, correlations between social networks variables and POS revealed that only the number of strong friend-advice role model ties was significantly related to POS ($r = .25, p \leq .05$), indicating that, for the most part, having more social network ties with coworkers was not related to POS.

Table 7 presents results of QAP correlation analysis for the reciprocated ties analysis. QAP correlations measure the extent to which two matrices overlap, or the similarity that exists between the matrices. These correlations revealed that a number of the social networks matrices were significantly related, but none of the correlations were high enough to suggest that multicollinearity existed. Several social networks matrices were positively and significantly related to the POS dissimilarity matrix, including the strong role model matrix ($r = .07, p \leq .01$),

the strong friend-advice matrix ($r = .04, p \leq .05$), and the strong friend-advice-role model matrix ($r = .10, p \leq .01$).

As in the reciprocated ties analysis, standard Pearson correlation analysis and QAP correlation analysis were conducted for the non-reciprocated ties analysis. Pearson correlations (Table 8) revealed that social network ties variables were significantly correlated, including strong friend-role model ties and strong friend-advice ties ($r = .51, p \leq .01$). However, none of these correlations were so high that multicollinearity would be suspected. As in the reciprocated ties analysis, only strong friend-advice-role model ties was significantly related to POS ($r = .25, p \leq .05$). No other social networks variables were significantly correlated with POS, suggesting that the absolute number of different social network ties employees maintain is not related to POS.

Results of QAP correlation analysis (Table 9) demonstrated that a number of the social networks matrices were significantly related, as was the case in the reciprocated tie analysis. However the strongest correlation (weak friendship and strong friendship; $r = .20, p \leq .01$) was still well below the common threshold for multicollinearity. As was the case when the reciprocated ties analysis was conducted, the strong friend-advice-role model matrix ($r = .10, p \leq .05$) was significantly related to similarity in POS. Somewhat surprisingly, weak friendship ($r = -.03, p \leq .05$) ties and weak advice ties ($r = .03, p \leq .05$) were significantly related to similarity in POS.

Table 7: Pearson Correlations for Reciprocated Ties

Variables	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>17</i>
Control Variables																	
1. Gender	---																
2. Tenure	-.13	---															
3. Leadership Position	-.00	.33**	---														
Weak Ties																	
4. Friend	.11	.01	.03	---													
5. Advice	-.16	.14	.04	-.07	---												
6. Friend-Advice	.08	-.02	.02	.31**	.24*	---											
7. Role Model	.12	.03	-.05	-.15	-.24*	-.08	---										
8. Friend-Role Model	.06	-.05	-.04	-.01	-.12	-.02	.12	---									
9. Advice-Role Model	.09	.09	-.00	-.18	.08	-.10	.12	.14	---								
10. Friend-Advice Role Model	.06	.07	.03	-.00	-.04	-.01	.08	.48**	.38**	---							
Strong Ties																	
11. Friend	.12	.03	.20	.50**	-.13	.09	-.12	.02	-.12	.06	---						
12. Advice	-.10	.01	.02	-.05	.42**	-.05	-.27**	-.10	-.14	-.12	.11	---					
13. Friend-Advice	.06	.03	.08	.36**	.01	.00	-.13	-.01	-.16	-.04	.51**	.23*	---				
14. Role Model	.02	-.02	.26*	-.04	-.27*	-.06	.06	.04	-.27**	-.01	-.05	-.18	-.03	---			
15. Friend-Role Model	.20	-.02	-.04	.41**	-.23*	.01	.00	.07	-.19	.15	.48**	-.06	.44**	.34**	---		
16. Advice-Role Model	-.13	.00	.30**	-.14	-.20	-.10	-.11	.08	-.10	.07	-.12	.01	-.06	.43**	.08	---	
17. Friend-Advice-Role Model	.12	-.04	.20	.02	-.23*	.04	-.01	.28**	-.11	.18	.22*	-.12	.01	.38**	.36**	.43**	---
Outcome																	
18. Perceived Organizational Support	-.07	-.29**	-.17	.07	-.13	-.03	.11	.11	-.15	-.14	-.02	.12	.03	.08	.09	.17	.23*

Note. N = 93 for all variables; $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table 8: QAP Correlations for Reciprocated Ties

Variables	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>17</i>
Control Variables																	
1. Gender	---																
2. Tenure	.05*	---															
3. Leadership Position	.00	.18*	---														
Weak Ties																	
4. Friend	.00	-.01	.00	---													
5. Advice	.01	.00	.00	-.01	---												
6. Friend-Advice	-.02	.03	.01	.00	-.01	---											
7. Role Model	-.01	-.01	-.01	-.03**	-.08**	-.02*	---										
8. Friend-Role Model	.00	.00	-.02	.03	.00	.00	.00	---									
9. Advice-Role Model	.00	-.06**	.01	-.02	-.01	-.01	-.01	-.01	---								
10. Friend-Advice Role Model	.01	-.01	.03	-.01	-.01	.00	-.03*	.00	-.02	---							
Strong Ties																	
11. Friend	.00	-.18	.02	.00	-.01	.00	-.02	.00	-.01	.00	---						
12. Advice	-.01	.00	.03	.00	.00	.19**	-.02	.00	-.05*	.00	.00	---					
13. Friend-Advice	.00	.00	.02	.00	-.01	.00	-.01	.00	-.01	.00	.00	.00	---				
14. Role Model	.02	-.04	.15**	-.02*	-.06**	-.02	-.02	-.02	-.07**	-.02	-.01	-.01	-.01	---			
15. Friend-Role Model	-.03*	-.02	-.01	-.01	-.02	-.01	-.13**	-.01	-.02*	-.01	.00	.00	.00	-.03**	---		
16. Advice-Role Model	.03*	-.06**	.14**	-.02	.06**	-.01	-.04**	-.01	-.07**	-.02*	-.01	.03	-.01	-.09**	-.03**	---	
17. Friend-Advice-Role Model	-.02	-.08**	.03	-.01	-.04**	.00	-.08**	-.01	-.04**	-.01	-.01	.06**	-.01	-.06**	-.02	-.05**	---
Outcome																	
18. Perceived Organizational Support	-.01	.05	.07	-.01	-.03	.00	.06	-.03	.01	-.02	.00	.02	.01	.07**	.00	.04*	.10**

Note. N = 93 for all variables. * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01

Table 9: Pearson Correlations for Non-Reciprocated Ties

Variables	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>17</i>
Control Variables																	
1. Gender	---																
2. Tenure	-.13	---															
3. Leadership Position	-.00	.33**	---														
Weak Ties																	
4. Friend	-.06	.05	.05	---													
5. Advice	-.12	.08	.034	-.12	---												
6. Friend-Advice	.06	-.05	.04	.31**	.19	---											
7. Role Model	.12	.03	-.05	-.08	-.26*	-.14	---										
8. Friend-Role Model	.10	.08	-.07	.16	-.23*	.04	.12	---									
9. Advice-Role Model	.12	.07	-.02	-.19	.07	-.17	.05	-.17	---								
10. Friend-Advice Role Model	-.09	-.02	-.07	.16	-.16	.05	.13	.34**	.12	---							
Strong Ties																	
11. Friend	.05	-.05	.04	.58**	-.10	-.05	-.12	.00	-.12	-.12	---						
12. Advice	-.15	.03	.12	-.09	.38**	-.09	-.23*	-.15	-.11	-.18	-.01	---					
13. Friend-Advice	.15	.03	.16	.39**	-.12	.04	-.15	.19	-.22*	.01	.51**	.04	---				
14. Role Model	-.11	.16	.40**	-.04	-.09	.11	.12	-.02	-.13	-.05	-.04	-.08	-.06	---			
15. Friend-Role Model	.27**	-.12	-.06	.27**	-.26*	.02	.07	.50**	-.23*	-.11	.38**	-.15	.51**	.09	---		
16. Advice-Role Model	-.15	.18	.41**	-.15	-.01	-.10	-.15	-.17	.03	-.17	-.11	.33**	-.11	.12	-.16	---	
17. Friend-Advice-Role Model	.09	-.16	-.02	-.09	-.26*	-.02	.00	.11	-.17	.25*	-.08	-.17	.04	-.04	.07	-.07	---
Outcome																	
18. Perceived Organizational Support	-.07	-.29**	-.17	-.13	-.12	-.06	.11	.10	-.13	-.05	-.11	.10	.06	-.20	.03	.02	.25*

Note. N = 93 for all variables. * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01

Table 10: QAP Correlations for Non-Reciprocated Ties

Variables	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>17</i>
Control Variables																	
1. Gender	---																
2. Tenure	.05*	---															
3. Leadership Position	.00	.18*	---														
Weak Ties																	
4. Friend	.00	-.04	.01	---													
5. Advice	.00	.00	.03	.16**	---												
6. Friend-Advice	-.01	.01	.04	.21**	.68**	---											
7. Role Model	.01	-.01	.03	.27**	.39**	.41**	---										
8. Friend-Role Model	.01	-.06**	.02	.75**	.13**	.18**	.27**	---									
9. Advice-Role Model	.01	-.02	.04*	.16**	.72**	.64**	.33**	.21**	---								
10. Friend-Advice Role Model	.01	-.01	.04*	.19**	.63**	.78**	.32**	.25**	.08**	---							
Strong Ties																	
11. Friend	.01	-.12**	.14**	-.22**	-.06**	-.03**	-.10**	-.16**	-.05**	-.04**	---						
12. Advice	-.02	-.10**	.08*	-.18**	-.05**	-.02*	-.04**	-.13**	-.04**	-.03**	.67**	---					
13. Friend-Advice	-.01	-.10**	.08*	-.17**	-.05**	-.02	-.06**	-.12**	-.04**	-.03**	.75**	.91**	---				
14. Role Model	.00	-.11**	.17*	-.14**	-.05**	.31**	-.08**	-.10**	-.03**	-.07**	.56**	.52**	.91**	---			
15. Friend-Role Model	.01	-.10**	.14*	-.20**	-.06**	-.03**	-.09**	-.15**	-.04**	-.03**	.92**	.71**	.71**	.62**	---		
16. Advice-Role Model	-.01	-.10**	.08*	-.18**	-.05**	-.02*	-.06**	-.13**	-.04**	-.03**	.67**	.97**	.97**	.55**	.74**	---	
17. Friend-Advice-Role Model	-.01	-.10**	.07*	-.16**	-.05**	-.02	-.05**	-.12**	-.03**	-.03*	.74**	.89**	.89**	.51**	.81**	.92**	---
Outcome																	
18. Perceived Organizational Support	-.01	.05	.07	-.03	.02	.00	.02	-.02	-.01	-.01	.08**	.10**	.10**	.07**	.09**	.10**	.10**

Note. N = 93 for all variables. * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01

Results of Hypotheses Tests using QAP Regression Analysis. Table 10 presents the results of QAP regression analysis used to test the hypotheses for the reciprocated ties and non-reciprocated ties analyses.

Hypothesis 1 states that an employee's perceived organizational support will be positively related to the perceived organizational support of coworkers with whom that employee has strong advice relationships. QAP regression analysis provided marginal support for this hypothesis ($\beta = .009$, $p \leq .10$) when reciprocated ties were utilized, indicating that employees do have similar perceptions of support to those of coworkers with whom they maintain strong, reciprocated advice ties. However, the relationship between these variables was not as strong as expected, as the beta coefficient was not significant at the $p \leq .05$ level. In the analysis which utilized non-reciprocated ties, in which frequent contact was the only requirement for strong ties, this hypothesis was not supported ($\beta = .087$, $p = n.s.$). This suggests that when one-way advice ties were considered in the analysis, employees' beliefs are not similar to those of their strong advice contacts.

Hypotheses 2 states that an employee's perceived organizational support will be positively related to the perceived organizational support of role models with whom that employee has strong advice relationships. Results of regression analysis provided support for this hypothesis when reciprocated ties were considered, as strong role-model advice ties were positively and significantly related to similarity in perceived organizational support ($\beta = .231$, $p \leq .01$). This indicates that employees have similar perceptions of organizational support to those of their coworkers with whom they 1) consider to be role models; and 2) frequently share advice. However, in the non-reciprocated ties analysis, no support was found for this hypothesis ($\beta =$

.092, $p = n.s.$). Thus, reciprocity was an important requirement for strong advice-role model relationships when similarity in POS is the outcome variable.

Hypotheses 3 states that an employee's perceived organizational support is positively related to the perceived organizational support of coworkers with whom they have strong friendship relationships. No support was found for this hypotheses in the reciprocated ties analysis ($\beta = .020$, $p = n.s.$), although the direction of the relationship was in the predicted direction. In addition, this hypotheses was not supported when non-reciprocated ties were considered ($\beta = -.126$, $p = n.s.$). Thus, employees' POS was not significantly and positively related to similarity in POS among reciprocal friendship ties.

Hypotheses 4 states that an employee's perceived organizational support will be positively related to the perceived organizational support of role models with whom they have strong advice and friendship relationships. QAP regression results provided support for this hypotheses in both the reciprocated analysis ($\beta = .138$, $p \leq .01$) and non-reciprocated analysis ($\beta = .330$, $p \leq .01$), indicating that employees adopted similar POS to role models with whom they maintain strong friendship and advice relationships regardless of whether or not reciprocity was a requirement.

Additional Results from QAP Regression Analysis. All three control variables were significantly related to similarity in perceived organizational support. Gender was negatively related to similarity in perceived organizational support ($\beta = -.004$, $p \leq .05$), indicating that employees with similar gender had dissimilar perceptions of organizational support. Similarity in tenure was positively related to similarity in perceived organizational support ($\beta = .012$, $p \leq .01$), which suggests that employees who had been in the organization for the same amount of time had similar beliefs about organizational support. Finally, employees who held leadership

positions had perceptions of organizational support that were significantly different than those of employees who did not hold leadership positions ($\beta = -.083, p \leq .01$).

Besides the control variables, a number of unhypothesized significant relationships emerged. In the reciprocated ties analysis, weak role model ties were positively related to similarity in perceived organizational support ($\beta = .211, p \leq .05$) as were strong role model ties ($\beta = .310, p \leq .01$). These results that employees had perceptions of organizational support to other employees whom they considered to be role models, but were 1) not friends, and 2) not advice contacts. Since both weak and strong role models were influential, these results indicate that even role models whom employees interacted with relatively infrequently were influential in terms of similarity in POS.

Several unhypothesized significant relationships emerged in the non-reciprocated ties analysis as well. Interestingly, weak friendship ties between employees were negatively related to similarity in perceived organizational support among employees ($\beta = -.301, p \leq .10$), although this relationship was only marginally significant. This finding suggests that employees perceptions of support were dissimilar than those of friends whom they interacted with infrequently. Weak role model ties were also marginally significantly related to similarity in perceived organizational support ($\beta = .217, p \leq .10$), indicating that employees developed similar perceptions of support to those of employees they considered role models and interacted with infrequently.

Table 11: Results of Hypotheses Tests Using QAP Regression

Dependent Variable	Similarity in POS	
	Reciprocated Ties Analysis	Non-Reciprocated Ties Analysis
Independent Variables		
Control Variables		
Gender	-.004**	-.004**
Tenure	.012***	.012***
Leadership Positions	-.083***	-.083***
Weak Ties		
Friend	.018	-.301*
Advice	-.061	-.072
Friend-Advice	-.037	.030
Role Model	.211**	.217*
Friend-Role Model	.243	.006
Advice-Role Model	-.045	-.013
Friend-Advice-Role Model	-.137	.146
Strong Ties		
Friend (<i>H3</i>)	.020	-.126
Advice (<i>H1</i>)	.009*	.087
Friend-Advice	-.035	.179
Role Model	.310***	.033
Friend-Role Model	.072	.233
Advice-Role Model (<i>H2</i>)	.231***	.092
Friend-Advice-Role Model (<i>H4</i>)	.138***	.330***

Unstandardized beta coefficients are displayed. Coefficient signs indicate greater (+) or lesser (-) interpersonal perceptual similarity.

*Significant at .10 level

**Significant at .05 level

***Significant at .01 level

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation addresses the effects of social influence on employees' beliefs concerning the support that they receive from their organization. In the past, POS has been conceptualized by researchers as a perception which forms only as a result of an employee's relationship with the organization or key organizational representatives, such as supervisors. Contrary to this perspective, the results of this dissertation indicate that an employee's POS may also be influenced by coworkers' beliefs regarding the support that they are provided by the organization, particularly when those coworkers are regarded by the focal employee as role models. Specifically, when reciprocated ties are considered, employees tend to have similar POS to the POS of their strong role model ties, strong advice-role model ties, and strong friend-advice-role model ties. However, when reciprocity was not a requirement for strong ties between employees, only strong friend-advice-role model ties were related to similarity in POS. This pattern of results suggests that strong multiplex ties in which two-way information sharing occurs are more likely to lead to similarity in beliefs about POS. Therefore, this dissertation offers some new insights into the relationship between social influence and POS, as well as the importance of role models as a social influence agent.

Reciprocal Ties Analysis

Consistent with expectations, overall, employees' perceptions of organizational support were similar to the perceptions of other employees with whom they maintained strong multiplex ties characterized by reciprocity. Strong friend-advice role model ties and advice-role model ties were significantly related to similarity in POS. These findings suggest that employees come to have similar beliefs about their relationship with the organization to those employees who 1)

they admire, and 2) provide them with job-related advice. Therefore, although not directly tested, these findings offer some support for social information processing and social learning as theoretical underpinnings of social influence.

Interestingly, strong friendship ties were not significantly and positively related to similarity in POS. Thus, results of this study did not offer support for either the associative or comparative function of social comparison, at least with respect to friendship ties. Social comparison could have played a role in the effects of advice and role model ties. As mentioned previously, employees who associated with friends would tend to develop perceptions similar to those of friends, while employees who compared perceptions of support to those of their friends would be expected to have perceptions that were dissimilar to those of their friends. Regression results generally showed that strong ties characterized by friendship were positively, although not significantly, related to similarity in POS. For instance, strong friendship ties were only related to similarity in POS when such friends were also role models who provided advice.

Although strong friendship ties were not related to similarity or dissimilarity in POS, role model relationships were. I expected that in order for role models to be influential, it would be necessary for an employee to maintain an advice or friendship relationship with the role model. However, the findings indicate that this was not the case. Employees had similar POS to those of role models with whom they had frequent interaction, regardless of whether or not that interaction included the exchange of advice or friendship. This suggests that role models may serve a role similar to that of opinion leaders in organizations as well (Reynolds & Wells, 1977). While these role models may not have been considered friends or advice ties by their colleagues, other employees may have gone to them occasionally to request their opinions on matters related to the organization, or perhaps others even became aware of their opinions second hand. Such a

relationship may not have been considered classic advice provision by employees in this study, and thus it may not have been captured in the advice tie measure.

The fact that strong role model ties (that were not characterized by friendship or advice) and strong advice-role model ties were both significantly related to similarity in POS while strong friend-role model ties were not is also interesting. Consistent with research on social comparison theory (Crosby, 1984), I predicted a positive relationship between strong friendship ties and similarity in POS. My expectation was that because friends are likely to share their opinions with one another in great detail, they would be very aware of how much support they perceive relative to one another, and when one employee was supported (or not supported) by the organization, that would indicate whether or not friends of that employee would feel supported.

The absence of the hypothesized positive relationship between strong friendship ties and similarity in POS may stem from some employees' tendency to compare their outcomes with other friends (and thus have dissimilarity with respect to POS), while some friends tended to associate. The comparison function may be particularly strong when a friend compares his or her own POS to the POS of another friend who is regarded as a role model, as the role model may receive more support from the organization (as role models were defined partially by how successful they had been in the organization).

It may also be important to consider the nature of the support provided by the organization when examining friendship ties and similarity in POS. For instance, in her study examining the effects of social influence on employee perceptions of psychological contract breach, Ho (2002) argued that promises related to competitive resources would result in dissimilar perceptions of breach among employees, while promises related to non-competitive resources would result in similarity with respect to perceptions of breach. However, she did not

find support for this hypotheses. Rather, she found that similarity or dissimilarity in perceptions resulted from the specific psychological contract term evaluated, regardless of whether or not that term was competitive or not. Eisenberger et al. (1986) proposed that organizational actions that are non-reciprocated towards individual employees may be more strongly associated with POS than support provided to all employees in the organization. He explained that this could occur because individual support, such as promotions or pay raises etc., may be a stronger signal to an individual that their contributions are valued and that they are cared for by the organization. At the same time, not receiving such individual rewards may lead to lower levels of support. When friends compete over such rewards, and one wins and one loses, it seems logical that their perceptions of support would become dissimilar. On the other hand, friends may associate (and thereby have POS that is more similar) when the organization provides beneficial treatment for all employees in the organization, or when the organization provides favorable treatment to an employees' friends.

A third possible explanation for the absence of findings for hypotheses regarding strong friendship ties is that the measure of friendship ties was inadequate. This is discussed further in the limitations section of this chapter.

As was expected, employees generally did not have similar perceptions of organizational support to those of employees with whom they maintained weak ties, with the exception of weak role model ties. Weak role model ties – role models whom employees interacted with infrequently and did not consider friends or advice-providers, were significantly related to similarity in POS among employees. A possible explanation for this finding is that the behaviors of these role models were observed by other employees who admired them. Based on watching the way role models behaved, employees could have inferred their perceptions, consistent with

social learning theory (Bandura, 1986). Gibson (2003) defines role models such as this who influence other employees with low or no levels of interaction as “distant” role models.

Non-Reciprocated Ties Analysis

While a number of different network ties were related to similarity in POS among employees in the reciprocated ties analysis, fewer such relationships emerged in the non-reciprocated ties analysis. Overall, ties characterized by frequent contact between employees were not nearly as influential when reciprocity was not a requirement for tie strength. Only strong friend-advice-role model ties were significantly related to similarity in POS. This suggests that one-way ties were not as influential as reciprocal ties, unless a strong tie with a role model who was acknowledged as both a friend and a source of advice was considered. Strong advice-role model ties, friend-role model ties, role model ties, friend-advice ties, and friend-advice ties were all positively related to similarity in POS, but these relationships were not significant. Interestingly, strong friendship ties were negatively (albeit not significantly) related to similarity in POS.

Among weak ties in this model, weak friendship ties and weak role model ties were marginally significantly related to similarity in POS ($p \leq .10$). With respect to the results for weak friendship ties and similarity in POS, there were a very small number of weak friendship ties present in non-reciprocated ties analysis ($n = 19$). This small sample size could explain this result. The results for weak role model ties can be interpreted using the same explanation as in the reciprocated ties analysis, because the way that weak role model ties were operationalized did not differ across analysis.

Reciprocal and Non-Reciprocated Ties Analysis

Overall, three of the four hypotheses received support in the reciprocated ties analysis, while only one of the four hypotheses received support in the non-reciprocated ties analysis. This suggests that friendship and advice ties characterized by both frequent contact and reciprocity are more influential than strong ties characterized by only frequent contact when similarity in POS is the dependent variable. These results also provide some support for the exploratory hypothesis which proposed that strong ties characterized by reciprocity would be more strongly associated with interpersonal similarity in POS than would strong ties characterized by only by frequent contact. There are several explanations for this finding that ties characterized by reciprocity and frequent contact are more strongly related to similarity in POS than are ties characterized by frequent contact. It could be that reciprocal ties were more influential because they were characterized by information sharing. Thus, each employee in the dyad, to some extent shared his or her opinion related to treatment offered by the organization. Since there is no objective measure of POS, employees may have utilized information obtained from one another to determine the extent to which they were supported by the organization. This is consistent with Deutsch and Gerard's (1955) interpretation of Sherif's (1935) experiment in which subjects estimated the distance that randomly moving points of light had moved. After hearing each other's estimates, the subjects in this experiment provided estimates that were very similar. Thus, it is possible that people "accept information from another as evidence about reality" (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955: 629) when situations are ambiguous, such as determining the extent to which they are supported by the organization.

A second plausible explanation for this result is provided by Hammer (1985). Hammer suggests that reciprocal ties provide more accurate measures of what ties actually exist in a social network because they are verified by a second source. Thus, the chance that employees are able

to provide false information is less when reciprocated ties are utilized for social networks analysis.

Contributions

The results of this study make several important contributions to the organizational literature. First, results of this dissertation move POS research beyond the traditional employee-organization dyad by demonstrating that the beliefs of an employee's coworkers are related to their beliefs regarding treatment to them provided by the organization. This is an important contribution because existing research is driven by the assumption that employees' beliefs about their exchange relationship with the organization are formed in a vacuum. The results suggest that this one-dimensional view of the employee-organization relationship needs to be reconsidered, especially in today's decentralized, team-intensive organizations. Therefore, future research on the antecedents of POS should not only consider supervisory relationships, fairness perceptions, and human resource practices, but relational factors as well.

Second, the results of this dissertation extend research on social influence in organizations in several ways. For one, prior social influence research reveals that employees' social ties are related to perceptions of and attitudes towards organizations, including perceptions of organizational justice (Umpress et al., 2003), attitudes towards technology (Burkhardt, 1994; Rice & Aydin, 1991); decisions regarding job interviews (Kilduff, 1990); and beliefs about organizational coordination (Meyer, 1994). However, prior research had not explored the possibility that employees' global beliefs regarding the extent to which the organization supports them may be influenced by the social ties that they maintain. This dissertation shows that they are.

A second contribution this dissertation makes to social influence literature is its attention to reciprocated vs. non-reciprocated ties. The results suggest that Nelson's (1989) observation that all elements of Granovetter's (1973) definition of tie strength are captured by frequent contact may not be the case when social influence is the outcome. In this study, frequent contact and reciprocity were not synonymous. It may be important to pay attention to the reciprocal nature of ties in the future research.

Third, results of this study suggest that role models are an important source of social influence. Past social influence research has largely considered the effects of friendship and advice ties, but had not considered the possibility that whether or not an employee was considered by others to be a role model could make that employee more or less influential. The results of this study indicate that advice ties regarded as role models are more influential than advice ties that are not regarded as role models. This is significant because employees today change jobs more frequently than they have in the past, or have collocated work arrangements in which they spend a great deal of their time away from their organization at client sites. Because employees do not remain with their organizations long enough to develop a meaningful relationship with a mentor, or because they are unable to interact frequently with a supervisor, employees create their own developmental relationships to quickly acquire the information and learn the norms and behaviors that will make them successful in the organization (Higgins & Kram, 2001). Some researchers suggest that role models are one example of such a developmental relationship (Ibarra, 1999; Gibson, 2003; 2004). The results of this research show that employees' role models can influence their beliefs about the treatment that they receive from their organizations.

Fourth, when studying social influence, it is important to consider not only whether or not ties are present, but also how strong these ties are and whether or the ties are multiplex. Most social influence studies do not consider tie strength, but the results of this study demonstrate that, overall, strong ties are more influential than are weak ties. Therefore, future social influence studies should pay attention to tie strength.

In addition, results of this study indicate that in general, multiplex ties are more influential than simplex ties. Most social influence studies in organizations pay little attention to multiplex ties, despite the fact that researchers such as Portes (1998) and Coleman (1990) have emphasized how potentially influential such ties can be. Understanding the fact that multiplex relationships are influential is important, as it suggests that future social influence studies should utilize measures that not only differentiate friendship and advice ties, but also examine the effects of combinations of ties. This may have implications for managers as well; if managers can devise strategies to develop advice relationships between employees and their role models, role models may have a stronger positive effect on employee learning.

Fifth, this study offers a new way to measure role model ties in an organization, and highlights the usefulness of a social networks methodology as a way to assess their effects on outcomes. Previous research on role models has utilized experimental methodologies in which subjects are exposed to hypothetical role models in laboratory settings (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997; 1999) and qualitative methodologies such as interviews (Gibson, 2003; Ibarra, 1999). While these methodologies can generate a great deal of useful information, experimental methodologies are difficult to apply in field settings, and it may be difficult to measure some outcomes with qualitative methods, especially when large samples are needed. Operationalizing role models as a social network tie allows researchers to answer a number of questions about role

models, such as what outcomes are associated with having role models, what characteristics or attributes are related to an employee being perceived as a role model, how many role models do employees have, whether or not role models are influential with respect to certain outcomes, etc.

Finally, this research has important implications for reciprocity and social exchange in organizations. The norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) provides the basis for many conceptualizations of social exchange. When a person does a favor for another person, it is expected that the person receiving the favor will help the person who helped them. Gouldner argues that reciprocity, the belief that people should help (and not injure) those who help them, is a generalized moral norm. Further, Gouldner makes predictions as to what conditions make it more or less likely that the favor will be reciprocated. He argues that repayment of a favor is contingent upon the perceived value of the benefit received, the intensity of the recipient's need, the motive attributed to the donor, and the nature of the constraints that are perceived to exist. When a favor provided by another is believed to be valuable, discretionary, and provided despite constraints, that favor is more likely to be repaid.

The results of this research suggest that social influence can have an important effect on beliefs about reciprocity, particularly concerning beliefs about obligations of repayment as specified by Gouldner (1960). Employees' social ties may influence employees' beliefs regarding whether or not the treatment provided by the organization is positive or negative. Objective information regarding the value of treatment provided by the organization is generally, if not always, unavailable. Employees turn to social relationships in order to determine whether or not the treatment that they receive from the organization is favorable or unfavorable.

Further, the fact that social relationships characterized by mutual information exchange were most strongly associated with similarity in POS may not be surprising given that the

theoretical foundation of POS is social exchange. Employees who exchange information may have higher POS because of this exchange of information with coworkers. This effect could be accentuated if employees feel that coworkers are representatives of the organization.

In addition to conceptual and theoretical implications, this dissertation has practical implications for managers. While many organizations view the employer-employee relationship as solely a dyadic relationship, our findings indicate that this relationship is more complex. Therefore, companies must be concerned not just with how they treat individual workers, but rather with how they treat all workers in the organization. Even small numbers of employees who believe that the organization does not support them, if those employees are widely regarded as role models, could lead to a pervasive belief among other organizational members that the organization does not care for the well-being or value the contributions of employees. For example, when the organization fails to support an employee who is regarded as a role model and frequently provides advice to other employees, this employee's beliefs that the organization is unsupportive may spread throughout the organization. However, if this employee feels supported, a multiplicative effect may pervade the organization, and employees who have lower POS will adjust their perceptions of support to be consistent with the focal advice-providing employee.

This suggests that managers should pay close attention to how they handle situations which could create low POS among employees, such as downsizing and pay cuts. Perhaps managers should do their best to ensure that the organization's role models maintain their beliefs about organizational support. If this is impossible, managers should at least ensure that highly influential employees understand that the negative treatment that they are providing is beyond their control so that the POS of these employees is not damaged to a great extent.

A second benefit that may accrue to managers who pay close attention to informal employee networks such as the advice network and to which employees are perceived to be role models by coworkers relates to mentoring programs. Employees who provide advice for many other employees, or are widely regarded as role models may be highly effective peer mentors early in their careers. Employees who are admired and emulated by their coworkers may someday make for effective mentors in an organization.

Limitations

This study has a number of important weaknesses which bear mentioning. First, the cross-sectional nature of this study makes it impossible to rule out the possibility that similarity in POS among individuals actually drives whether or not they have ties. It is conceivable that employees who are dissatisfied with the way that they are treated by the organization would commiserate together, consistent with the idea that “misery loves company.” However, most research reveals that relationships are formed as a result of similarity that exists between individuals with respect to variables such as gender, race, or religious affiliation (e.g. Brass, 1985). These variables are probably more salient than are beliefs regarding organizational support when it comes to relationship formation. Indeed, most network studies that utilize perceptual similarity as a dependent variable consider it to be the result of interaction between employees, not a force that drives interaction between employees. Burkhardt’s (1994) longitudinal study on social network positions and attitudes towards technology provides some support for this position.

Second, friendship ties may have been defined in a manner that is too stringent. The measure of friendship ties utilized in this dissertation specified that employees select only friends that they see both inside and outside of their role in the organization. While this measure is

consistent with past research (Ibarra, 1992; Ibarra, 1995, Ibarra & Andrews, 1993; Krackhardt, 1990; Morrison, 2002), it may have limited the number friends who employees selected. Certainly, employees indicated that they had few friends in the organization relative to advice ties. The stringent definition of friendship ties may have limited the effect of friendship ties on similarity in perceived organizational support. Employees who are only friends in the context of the organization may actually spend more time discussing their perceptions of the organization than employees who are friends both inside and outside of the organization, because individuals who are friends outside the organization may have more to talk about that does not concern the organization. In recent studies, some social networks researchers allowed employees to select whomever they considered to be their friends, reasoning that employees have different definitions of what a friend is, and that employees' personal definition was most relevant (e.g. Dabos & Rousseau, 2004). Therefore, the results concerning friendship ties in this study should be interpreted with caution.

A third potential limitation of this dissertation is its utilization of a sample consisting of employed undergraduate students who worked 25 hours per week. These employees differ from more traditional employees because they do not view the organization for which they work as a long-term employment option. However, as employees adopt more careerist attitudes towards the organizations that they work for (Feldman, 1991), voluntary turnover increases as employees job-hop, and contingent workers become more common in organizations (Tekleab et al, 2003), this may not be as great a concern, as the employees in this sample may be quite similar to contingent employees or careerist employees who have no intention of remaining with the organization in the long term. However, these employees may not have the same expectations

regarding POS than do more traditional employees. For that reason, the generalizability of the results of this study may be limited.

Another limitation of this study is that it did not explicitly measure the social information processing, social comparison and social learning perspectives that were utilized to build theoretical linkages. While similarity in perceptions is a commonly used outcome for social network studies testing a social information processing model (for examples, see Ibarra & Andrews, 1993; Umphress et al., 2003), few network studies have assessed social comparison. Those that did (Shah, 1998; Ho, 2003) explicitly asked employees whether or not other employees were utilized as social referents for the dependent variables of interest. For instance, in examining employee perceptions of psychological contract fulfillment, Ho (2002) asked employees with which other employees they discussed perceptions of psychological contract fulfillment. Similarly, few if any network studies have assessed social learning as an outcome variable. In fact, one of the only studies directly assessing a social learning perspective examined similarity in performance of organizational citizenship behaviors in a workgroup as an outcome variable (Bommer et al., 2003). However, because the outcome variables of social information processing, social comparison and social learning are usually similarity with respect to an attitude or behavior, it is difficult to separate the effects of each social influence process in a given study.

Future Research

This dissertation presents a number of opportunities for future research. First, while this study explored the role that a number of different ties play in influencing employees' POS, it likely that other network ties may also influence employees' POS. For instance, Sparrow et al. (2002) investigated the role that hindrance networks play in organizations. They found that

employees who were widely regarded as individuals who made it more difficult for others to accomplish their goals generally received lower performance evaluations. It is possible that employees' perceptions of organizational support are negatively related to the POS of employees with whom they have hindrance ties. Also, some researchers have investigated the role that "workflow ties," defined as individuals who employees interact with through the completion of their work (Umphress et al., 2003), have on perceptual similarity. Workflow ties may also play a role in shaping employees' POS.

Second, future research could more thoroughly investigate the directionality of advice ties. In this dissertation, employees were only asked from whom they receive advice. It would have been interesting to also ask employees to identify whom they give advice to as well. It could be argued that "advice-givers" perceptions are important in shaping the perceptions of advice-receivers.

Third, recognizing that employees' POS is influenced by coworkers who are not agents of the organization suggests that perhaps other individuals who an employee interacts with may influence their perceptions of support as well. For instance, it is possible that the opinions of family and friends may affect an employee's beliefs regarding organizational support when they offer their own opinions regarding the extent to which the employee is supported or discuss the treatment that they receive from their own organizations. For example, an employee who feels valued by the organization as a result of receiving a 5% raise may not feel quite as important upon learning that friends and family members have received 10% wages from their organizations. Such a perspective is consistent with recent research by Stoner and Gallagher (2005), who found that emotional family support moderates the relationship between psychological contract violations and turnover intentions.

Fourth, by extending the reasoning presented above, it is also possible that an organization's reputation for global business citizenship (Wood & Logsdon, 2002), reputation for corporate social performance (Wood, 1991) or reputation as an employer may affect employees' perceptions regarding the treatment that they receive from the organization. For example, employees who enter an organization believing that their organization is one of Fortune's 100 Best Companies to Work For or is a renowned global business citizen may be more inclined to believe that positive organizational treatment is discretionary, and thus have increased levels of POS. On the other hand, if the organization has a poor reputation as an employer or does not make an effort to be a conscientious global business citizen, positive treatment provided to employees by the organization may be attributed to situational factors. As a result, this positive treatment would fail to influence employees' POS and as a result would not yield improved employee attitudes and performance.

Conclusion

The objective of this dissertation was to explore the effects of social influence on employees' perceptions of organizational support. The results of the study suggest that past research which has conceptualized POS as a perception which forms only as a result of an employee's relationship with the organization or key organizational representatives, such as supervisors, should be reconsidered. In addition to fairness perceptions, human resource practices, and supervisory relationships, POS may be influenced by coworkers' beliefs regarding the support that they are provided by the organization, particularly when those coworkers are regarded by the focal employees as role models. Specifically, employees tend to have similar POS to the POS of their strong role model ties, strong advice-role model ties, and strong friend-advice-role model ties. However, when reciprocity was not a requirement for strong ties

between employees, only strong friend-advice-role model ties were related to similarity in POS. This pattern of results suggests that ties in which two-way information sharing occurs are more likely to lead to similarity in beliefs about POS. Therefore, this dissertation offers some new insights into the relationship between social influence and POS, as well as the role that role models play in social influence.

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APPENDIX

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Welcome to this study of the (organization name)! This research is sponsored by the office of Admissions and Financial Aid, The College of Business Administration (CBA), and the University Honors College. Thank you for your willingness to participate. Our research looks at the experiences you have and the knowledge you have gained as a member of the (organization name). You will complete a series of questions for which there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. We would like to know honestly how you think about each of these issues. Please do not place your name on this sheet. All information will be provided at the group level, no individual responses will be identified as part of this research. This study is divided into several parts. Each section has specific instructions for you to follow. If at any time you have questions, please see one of the facilitators present.

Part 1: Who Do You Know?

Instructions: Please indicate the people within the (organization) that you know. We have provided photos for all current (organization members) just in case you need them. You can find the photos on the back pages of your survey booklet. When you get to your own name, please write “SKIP” across the row.

Keep in mind that:

A friend is someone who you see as a (member of the organization) as well as socially – outside of activities related to the (organization).

Provides job-related advice means this person has been a source of information related to your job (in the organization).

Have frequent contact means that you interact (in person, via phone, email, letters, etc.) *at least once a week.*

Is a role model for (organization members) means that this person is someone you judge to be an excellent performer and example of the goals and values of the organization.

<i>Is this person someone who...</i>	Is a friend? <i>(circle one)</i>	Provides Job-Related Advice? <i>(circle one)</i>	You have Frequent Contact? <i>(circle one)</i>	Is a role model for (organization members)? <i>(circle one)</i>
Name of employee	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Name of employee	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No

Name of employee	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Name of employee	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Name of employee	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No

(continued for all employees in the organization)

Part II: Attitudes and Experiences about being a (organization member)

Instructions: Now, please tell us something about how you feel and think about your work as (a member of this organization). Please use the following scale and *circle* your response:

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree
1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

Question	Scale				
1. The organization values my contribution to its well-being.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The organization fails to appreciate any extra effort from me. (R)	1	2	3	4	5
3. The organization would ignore any complaint from me. (R)	1	2	3	4	5
4. The organization really cares about my well-being.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Even if I did the best job possible, the organization would fail to notice. (R)	1	2	3	4	5
6. The organization cares about my general satisfaction at work.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The organization shows very little concern for me. (R)	1	2	3	4	5
8. The organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work.	1	2	3	4	5

(R) indicates that the item will be reverse-scored

Part III: Information About You

Instructions: Please provide us with some information about you. This information will be kept confidential.

Sex: Male Female Age: _____ years

Year in School: _____ Major: _____

Year Hired as (Organization Member) _____

Thank you for your participation and support! Please give your ticket to one of the facilitators and select your ticket for the prize lottery.