

BRIDGING FORMAL AND INFORMAL ROLES IN WORKGROUPS: MOVING BEYOND  
FOLLOWERSHIP TOWARDS SUPPORTERSHIP, A CASE STUDY

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## Acknowledgment

“The task is not so much to see what no one yet has seen, but to think what nobody yet has thought about that which everyone sees.”

- Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*

This sounds like such a lofty and daunting ability, “to think what nobody yet has thought about that which everyone sees” and it sounds like such a solitary task, and in many ways, thinking is a solitary task. But I know that how I think did not evolve because I think and live and experience in a vacuum. Each of the individuals recognized below has pushed me to be better, helped me to think clearer and more critically, and encouraged me to blossom even when I felt that I had already gone to seed. When I read the work I did prior to starting this doctoral program I can see how I have grown. Each of these individuals has taught me in their unique way that it is possible to think what others may not yet have thought, but more importantly, they have taught me how to do it.

“The best kind of people are the ones that come into your life, and make you see the sun where you once saw clouds... The once in a lifetime kind of people.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

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myself, “just go in and see what you find” and I always found something. I still use that little bit of philosophy and I still find it comforting. Mahalo.

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For everything!

“The heights by great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight, but they, while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night.”

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

## **Abstract**

The formal structure of an organization outlines its workflow and decision-making hierarchy, who reports to whom, and is embodied in the formal roles of its employees. However, as important as formal roles are there also exists another set of roles that will not be found on any organizational chart but that resides on an alternative informal social structure and can often be just as influential-- informal roles. This paper explores the interconnected nature of formal and informal roles within workgroups by identifying the informal social structure of the workgroup, how group members fit within that structure, and how this dynamic express influence and productivity within the workgroup. This is a 2-part exploratory case study that focuses on workgroups within organizations. Observations and informal interviews took place in 2 different organizations. The Constant Comparative Method was used throughout the entire process. The result is a 4-part framework in which to: 1. Systematically identify individual informal roles within the workgroup context. 2. Explore how those roles correspond to each other within the informal social structure with attention to their influence, alternative flows of information, and leadership. 3. When examined together, how those informal roles contribute or detract from formal workgroup productivity. 4. How to apply the framework. This paper introduces the concept of Supportership as an alternative to followership.

# Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgment</b> .....	i
<b>Abstract</b> .....	v
<b>Chapter 1. Introduction</b>	
Chapter Overview: Introduction.....	1
1.1 Introduction .....	1
1.2 Research Problem .....	2
1.3 Purpose of Study .....	3
1.4 Overview of Study .....	5
1.4.1 Review of Literature .....	5
1.4.2 Methods and Data Collection .....	6
1.4.3 Findings .....	7
1.4.3.1 Overview of Notable Observations .....	12
1.4.4 Discussion .....	15
1.4.5 Conclusion .....	15
1.5 Research Questions .....	15
1.6 Definition of Terms .....	16
<b>Chapter 2: Review of Literature</b>	
Chapter Overview: Review of Literature.....	25
2.1 Understanding the Workgroup .....	25
2.2 Culture: The Context of the Workgroup’s Social Structure .....	28
2.2.1 Culture and Workgroups .....	33
2.2.2 Organization and Workgroup Culture .....	34
2.3 The Nature of Roles: Distinguishing Between Formal and Informal Roles .....	35
2.4 Formal and Informal Leadership .....	37
2.4.1 Formal Leadership and the Informal Social Structure .....	39
2.4.2 Informal Leadership .....	41
2.5 Followership Theory .....	44
2.6 Networks and the Informal Social Structure .....	49
2.7 Uncovering the Informal Social Structure: The Social Network Perspective .....	51
2.8 Bridging the Formal and in the Informal .....	54
<b>Chapter 3. Methods and Data Collection</b>	
Chapter Overview: Methods and Data Collection .....	56
3.1 Introduction .....	56
3.2 Summary of the Process .....	57
3.3 Duration of Observations .....	59
3.4 Confidentiality .....	59
3.5 The Pilot: Rationale and Benefits .....	61
3.6 The Setting .....	62
3.6.1 Part 1: The Pilot, Matlock Engineering & Consulting .....	62
3.6.2 Part 2: The Primary Study, Freight Services International .....	64
3.7 The Workgroups .....	66

3.7.1	Part 1: The Pilot: .....	66
	3.7.1.1 Project Management Group .....	66
	3.7.1.2 Planning Group .....	67
3.7.2	Part 2: The Primary Study: Freight Services International .....	68
	3.7.2.1 Transportation Group .....	69
	3.7.2.2 Interisland Shipping Group .....	71
3.8	Data Collection and Analysis .....	72
	3.8.1 Observation & informal interview Data Collection & Analysis: CCM .....	72
	3.8.2 Coding .....	73
	3.8.3 Memos .....	75
 <b>Chapter 4: Findings and Results</b>		
	Chapter Overview: Findings and Results .....	77
4.1	Introduction and Findings Overview .....	78
	4.1.1 Four-part Framework Overview .....	79
4.2	Part 1: Identifying the Individual Informal Roles, Social Processes, and Environment within the Workgroup .....	82
	4.2.1 Supportership Informal Role Identification Spectrum (SIRIS) .....	82
	4.2.1.1 SIRIS Roles .....	86
	Informal Leader (IL) .....	86
	Key Advocates (KA) .....	89
	Advocates (AD) .....	93
	Non-Advocates (NA) .....	95
	Followers (FR) .....	96
	Disconnects (DC) .....	98
	Indifferents (ID) .....	99
	Diminished Standings (DS) .....	101
	Shirkers (SR) .....	104
	Impeders (IP) .....	106
	4.2.1.2 Sociograms and the SIRIS Organizational Pyramid of Informal Roles and Influence .....	107
	4.2.2 Relational Categories .....	110
	4.2.3 Bonding Rituals .....	119
	4.2.4 The Social .....	123
	4.2.5 Social Currency Exchange .....	127
	4.2.6 Perceived Social Need .....	129
	4.2.7 Perceived Social Flaw .....	133
	4.2.8 Perceived Social Strength .....	134
4.3.	Part 2: Gauging an Individual's Informal Role's Productivity in their Formal Role's Workgroup Context .....	135
	4.3.1 Informal Role Productivity Analysis (IRPA) .....	135
	4.3.2 IRPA Roles Overview .....	137
	On-Task oriented roles (A) .....	137
	Relationship building and maintenance roles (B) .....	137
	Self-serving Oriented Role (C) .....	140



	Obstructing Oriented Role (D) .....	141
	On-Task Oriented/ Self-Serving oriented roles (AC) .....	143
	Relationship building & maintenance/ Self-Serving oriented roles (BC).....	144
	On-task Oriented /relationship building and maintenance roles (AB).....	145
	On-Task Oriented/relationship building & maintenance/ self-serving roles (ABC) .....	146
	4.3.3 Informal Roles Productivity Analysis Score .....	147
	4.3.3.1 Two IRPA scores: Individual and Workgroup .....	147
4.4	Part 3: Examining the Workgroup as a Whole .....	149
	4.4.1 Healthy Versus Struggling Evaluation (HVSE) .....	149
4.5	Part 4: Bringing It All Together in a Practical Application .....	160
	4.5.1 Individual Subject Profiles .....	160
	4.5.2 Healthy VS Struggling Workgroup Assessment Profile Worksheet .....	160
	4.5.3 Generalized Organizational Hierarch Pyramids Worksheet Applied .....	161
4.6	Visual Conceptualization of SIRIS and IRPA Roles .....	166
4.7	Chapter Summary .....	167

## Chapter 5: Discussion

	Chapter Overview: Discussion .....	173
5.1	Introduction .....	173
5.2	Implications for Theory or General Concepts: Patterns of Informal Leadership ...	174
	5.2.1 Not all workgroup social structures have an informal leader.....	174
	5.2.2 When a workgroup has a formal leader as well as a strong informal leader it could indicate internal problems within the workgroup .....	175
	5.2.3 Informal leadership is not always explicit .....	177
	5.2.4 Informal Leadership in formal workgroups can be similar to informal leadership in emergent groups & identifying informal leaders... ..	179
	5.2.4.1 Emerging informal leaders in workgroups with existing formal leaders identified .....	180
	5.2.4.2 The difference between the literature and this study .....	181
5.3	Addressing the Informal Roles of Indifferents, Shirkers, & Job Satisfaction .....	181
5.4	Implication of Findings .....	185
	5.4.1 The framework .....	185
	5.4.2 Practical implications: A systematic framework .....	186
	5.4.2.1 Observed example .....	188
	5.4.3 Flexibility of the framework .....	190
5.5	Developing the Informal Roles Productivity Analysis Model and Moving Beyond the Literature .....	191
5.6	Symbolic Interaction Theory .....	192
5.7	Moving Beyond Followership Theory towards Supportership: Another Lens .....	199

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

	Chapter Overview: Conclusion .....	205
6.1	Limitations .....	205

6.1.1	Safety Concerns .....	205
6.1.2	Employees' perceptions of my relationship with upper management ....	206
6.1.3	Getting it right .....	208
6.2	Contributions .....	208
6.2.1	Literature contributions .....	208
6.2.2	Practical contributions .....	208
6.2.3	Conceptual contributions .....	209
6.2.4	Theoretical contributions .....	209
6.3	Future Directions .....	209
6.3.1	Additional workgroups & more informal roles .....	209
6.3.2	Added perspective through a questionnaire .....	210
6.4	Conclusion and Reflection .....	211
<b>References.....</b>		<b>215</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>		<b>229</b>
	Appendix A: Terms and Definitions.....	229
	Appendix B: Action Plan & Proposal Sent to Organization.....	234
	Appendix C: Consent to Participate in Research Project.....	236
	Appendix D: IRB Approval Letter.....	238
	Appendix E: Samples from Field note Books.....	239
	Appendix F: Sample Transcripts.....	242
	Appendix G: Sample of Typed Notes Further Narrowing of Categories.....	245
	Appendix H: Sample Codebook: Further Narrowing of Categories.....	249

## List of Tables

### Chapter 1

Table 1.1 Supportership Framework Overview .....	8
--------------------------------------------------	---

### Chapter 3

Table 3.1: Primary Workgroup Members: FSI .....	68
-------------------------------------------------	----

### Chapter 4

Table 4.1 Supportership Informal Roles Profile Framework Overview .....	79
Table 4.2 Supportership Informal Roles Identification Spectrum Abbreviated Description.....	85
Table 4.3 Relational Categories and Descriptions.....	118
Table 4.4 Informal Roles Productivity Analysis Labels & Scores .....	148
Table 4.5 Framework Overview Revisited .....	168

### Chapter 5

Table 5.1 Understanding “My Dissertation” Through the Lens of Symbolic Interaction...	198
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

## List of Figures

### Chapter 1

Figure 1.1 Healthy Versus Struggling Workgroup Assessment Scale .....	11
-----------------------------------------------------------------------	----

### Chapter 4

Figure 4.1 Sociogram FSI Formal Roles Structure .....	107
Figure 4.2 Sociogram FSI Informal Roles Structure .....	108
Figure 4.3 SIRIS Organizational Pyramid of Informal Roles and Influence Instrument ...	109
Figure 4.4 Informal Roles Productivity Analysis Diagram & Chart .....	136
Figure 4.5 Healthy Versus Struggling Assessment Scale .....	150
Figure 4.6 IRPA Diagram: Vikki .....	153
Figure 4.7 IRPA Diagram: Tracy .....	156
Figure 4.8 Visual Conceptualization of SIRIS and IRPA Roles .....	166

## **List of Instruments**

Sample Worksheet 1: Individual Subject Profiles .....	162
Sample Worksheet 2: Healthy VS Struggling Workgroup Assessment Profile Worksheet .....	164
Sample Worksheet 3: Generalized Organizational Hierarch Pyramids Worksheet .....	165

# Chapter 1. Introduction

## Chapter Overview

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Research Problem
- 1.3 Purpose of the Study
- 1.4 Overview of the Study
  - 1.4.1 Review of Literature
  - 1.4.2 Methods and Data Collection
  - 1.4.3 Findings
    - 1.4.3.1 Overview of Notable Observations
  - 1.4.4 Discussion, Reflections, & Conclusion
- 1.5 Research Questions
- 1.6 Definition of Terms

## 1.1 Introduction

Each organization is made up of a formal organizational structure that outlines its workflow and decision-making hierarchy or who reports to whom based on individuals' formal roles. It is generally assumed that the "higher up" the hierarchy someone's formal role is on that organizational chart the more decision-making power and influence that person has. To a large degree that is true, they do have greater formal decision-making sway than those lower on the organizational hierarchy chart, however, influence and decision-making power are not the same things. The power to make organization-based decisions does not guarantee that those decisions will always be accepted, followed willingly, or even followed diligently. As important as formal roles are, there also exists another set of roles that will not be found on the formal organizational chart but that can be just as important and influential-- informal roles. Informal roles function on an alternative social structure or the informal social structure. This informal social structure has the potential to reveal alternative flows of information, influence, and key players, such as informal leaders and other informal roles that either aid or hinder formal decision implementation and productivity, that may not be reflected in the formal organizational

decision-making flow chart. Informal roles have the unique ability to express both how an individual perceives his or her place within the organization's social structure as well the ability to express how others view them. Informal roles can sometimes be more revealing, then formal roles alone, about an individual's place within an organization and their reach of influence. Influence has the power to stretch beyond just the decision-making aspect embodied in formal roles. Influence can affect how those decisions may be followed and maybe even embraced or rejected. Just as decision-making power resides in the formal structure of an organization this paper seeks to explore ways in which influence can be explained by examining the informal social structure—where the organization's informal roles reside. The dynamics of these informal roles can be studied in an organization's workgroups which are a microcosm of the larger organization. This dissertation identifies the informal social structure of workgroups and the informal roles of group members within an organization and examines how individual members of the workgroup affect productivity and the workgroup dynamic.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

This study addresses two primary issues, one as noted in the literature and the second as an alternative to the current paradigm on the term followership. First, there is a noted gap concerning the interconnected relationship between the formal aspect of an organization and that organization's informal social structure. This study seeks to explore that connection through workgroups and by examining workgroup members' formal roles in relation to their informal role as well as their formal and informal roles in relation to the other workgroup members within their workgroup and their formal and informal roles. As McEvily et al. (2014) note, "understanding how formally designed elements (macro and micro) and emergent informal

social structures are related is key in obtaining a richer and more realistic portrayal of organizations” (McEvily, Soda, & Tortoriello, 2014, p. 302). They explain that there is a lack in the literature that offers an integrated understanding of how the formal organization and the informal social structure function together.

Second, this paper highlights some of the obstacles the term “followership” creates and introduces the notion of Supportership. This new term, Supportership, can broaden our understanding of the relationship between formal leadership and informal roles as well as influence in the informal social structure with a specific emphasis on workgroups. The uniqueness of this paper lies in its exploration of formal leadership, informal leadership, followership, and Supportership as it pertains to each other within the same social process and not as separate entities.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

This dissertation seeks to explore the interconnected relationship between the formal and informal social structure and the roles that reside there by observing and analyzing the unfolding social process of the individuals in their workgroups with a focus on how they manage their relationships. Relationships are a key aspect in organizations but much more in the narrow interconnectedness of many workgroups. Every interaction between workgroup members and how they relate to those outside of their group implies how they view each other, the organization, leadership, authority, influence, and productivity. All of these elements come together to culminate in shaping their perceptions of each other and the environment around them and contribute to the building blocks of the informal social structure. By considering individuals’ formal and informal roles within the same social process every interaction has the



potential to become a continual and dynamic creation and negotiation and contributes to a fuller view of the organization and workgroup. The purpose of this study is to explore the social process within workgroups and identify links that express possible associations between formal and informal roles specifically:

1. How workgroup members manage and negotiate their informal roles with others within the workgroup.
2. How those managements and negotiations might affect their formal positions within the workgroup.
3. How to present a framework in which to examine how the reflective and sometimes dialectic nature of the formal and informal roles of workgroup members collectively impact the workgroup.
4. How to diminish some of the stigma associated with the notion of followership by presenting a new term and notion, Supportership.
5. To explore the idea of influence in the informal structure and how it might then manifest itself in the formal structure.

The context of this study is the workgroup. Unlike laboratory settings, workgroup members have a shared history and usually interact with each other on a consistent and sometimes long-term basis in real life and consequential situations. When people's jobs and livelihood are on the line those factors may have the ability to change a person's motivation and commitment level that might not be captured as fully in a laboratory setting.

## **1.4 Overview of the Study**

The overall purpose of this study was to acquire knowledge that would contribute to our understanding of the relationship between informal roles that develop in the informal social structure and their formal role counterparts. The remainder of this section will give a summary and overview of the following chapters:

1.4.1 Review of Literature

1.4.2 Methods and Data Collection

1.4.3 Findings

1.4.4 Discussion, Reflections, & Conclusion

### **1.4.1 Review of Literature**

Chapter 2, the Review of Literature, begins with *Understanding the Workgroup* and outlines the growing importance workgroups are becoming within the workplace. In many organizational environments workgroups are increasingly becoming the “fundamental unit of [the] organizational structure in an effort to decentralize decision making and respond more flexibly to their environment” (Oh, Chung, & Labianca, 2004, p. 860). In *The Nature of Roles: Distinguishing between Formal and Informal Roles* and *Formal and Informal Leadership* the differences between formal and informal roles are outlined as well as the differences between formal and informal leadership.

*Followership* offers an overview of the Followership concept and highlights how the literature points out the notable lack of followership literature which is most likely attributed to the stigma associated with the term followership. *Networks and the Informal Social Structure* and *Uncovering the Informal Social Structure: The Social Network Perspective* looks at the

importance the informal social structure is in understanding the dynamics between people and groups. This section also looks at the underlying concepts of the social network perspective.

Lastly, *Bridging the Formal and in the Informal* discusses notable gaps in the literature that this paper seeks to address. As McEvily et al (2014) state, “[...] understanding how formally designed elements (macro and micro) and emergent informal social structures are related is key to obtaining a richer and more realistic portrayal of organizations. In our view, informal social structure and formal organization have been studied, both conceptually and empirically, like “ships passing in the night” (2014, p.302). They point out that the literature on the formal organization and the informal social structure are “largely disconnected, independent, and rarely integrated with each other” (McEvily, Soda, & Tortoriello, 2014, p. 302)

#### **1.4.2 Methods and Data Collection**

This dissertation was a two-part exploratory case study of workgroups that took place in two different companies. Part one, the pilot took place at Matlock Engineering & Consulting and part two, the primary study, took place at Freight Services International. The main reason these companies were chosen for this study was because of their use of workgroups and accessibility. I spent one month at the pilot site, going in twice a week and observing two workgroups, and 10 months at the primary study site going in twice a week and focusing observations primarily on two workgroups as well as their relationship to one other peripheral workgroup. Efforts were taken to disguise personally-identifying information as much as possible without compromising the meaning and results of the collected data including name changes of people and organizations.

The Constant Comparative Method (CCM) was used throughout the entire process. CCM is a comparative method in which observed incidents are continually compared to one another and that “as your ideas take hold [you] compare incidents to your conceptualizations of incidents coded earlier. That way you can identify properties of your emerging concept” (Charmaz, 2006, p.53). With CCM there are three parts to the coding process. This is not a rigid process, instead, its fluidity allows the researcher to flow back and forth while observing and analyzing. The three parts are 1. Initial coding, 2. Focused coding, and 3. Memo writing. Data was collected through on-site observations and informal interviews. The data was first recorded into field journals with some informal interviews being audio recorded and then were later transcribed and analyzed.

### **1.4.3 Findings**

Figure 1.1 Supportership Framework Overview, is a general overview of the framework I developed for this dissertation. It is a four-part framework with each part’s contribution adding to the overall understanding and analysis of the whole. Part 1: Identifying the individual informal roles, social processes, and environment within the workgroup.

Part 2: Gauging an individual’s informal role’s productivity in their formal role’s workgroup context. Part 3: Examining the workgroup as a whole, and Part 4: The Application.

Table 1.1

*Supportership Framework Overview*

<b>Part 1</b>	Identifying the Individual Informal Roles, Social Processes, & Environment within the Workgroup
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportership Informal Roles Identification Spectrum (SIRIS)</li> <li>• Contextual Relational Categories &amp; Descriptions</li> <li>• Bonding Rituals</li> <li>• The Social</li> <li>• Social Currency Exchange</li> <li>• Perceived Social Needs</li> <li>• Social Flaws, and Social Strengths</li> </ul>	
<b>Part 2</b>	Gauging an Individual's Informal Role's Productivity in their Formal Role's Workgroup Context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal Roles Productivity Analysis (IRPA)</li> </ul>	
<b>Part 3</b>	Examining the Workgroup as a Whole
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Healthy Versus Struggling Evaluation (HVSE)</li> </ul>	
<b>Part 4</b>	The Application
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group Member Profiles</li> <li>• Supportership Informal Roles Group Assessment</li> <li>• The Generalized Organizational Hierarchy Pyramid</li> </ul>	

***Part 1: Identifying the individual informal roles, social processes, and environment within the workgroup***

Part 1 of the framework identifies the informal roles that workgroup members have adopted and the context for those informal roles. This includes understanding the environment that the workgroup functions in and observing the social processes that they participate in. Included in Part 1 is the Supportership Informal Role Identification Spectrum (SIRIS). The SIRIS is a spectrum of ten informal roles that were observed to take place during this study within the workgroup. By identifying group members' informal roles and then their roles in conjunction with each other we strive to have a better understanding of the workgroup's informal social structure in which workgroup members navigate daily. The primary interest of part 1 of

the framework is to understand the social connections between the informal roles which could then extend to answering other questions such as who may be more influential and why despite their formal titles? How might the dynamics of their relationships result in alternative flows of information, informal leaders, and ineffective gaps in information flow due to an individual's diminished standing among workgroup members?

In addition to the Supporter Informal Roles Identification Spectrum (SIRIS), six other strategies were identified during this study are also included in part 1. These six strategies can assist in determining workgroup members' SIRIS placements within the informal social structure as well as lend understanding to the relational nature of the workgroup and its members, they are:

- Relational Categories & Descriptions
- Bonding Rituals
- The Social
- Social Currency Exchange
- Perceived Social Needs
- Social Flaws and Social Strengths

These strategies can also help identify workgroup members' SIRIS roles.

### ***Part 2: Gauging an Individual's Informal Role's Productivity in their Formal Role's Context***

While Part 1 of the framework, specifically SIRIS, focuses on identifying the informal social structure and social standing of group members, Part 2 of the framework aims at understanding how productive individuals are within their informal SIRIS roles and how their actions may be contributing on a formal level in an informal capacity. Part 2 of the framework introduces the Informal Role Productivity Analysis (IRPA). IRPA is made up of three central

informal role type categories from which five other informal role categories emerge. IRPA roles work in conjunction with SIRIS roles and is the process of analyzing the formal productivity of the informal structure. Whereas SIRIS roles seek to understand an individual's informal hierarchical standing within the group's social structure, IRPA roles seek to understand how productive that specific individual is within that informal role in accomplishing organization and workgroup objectives.

Three central IRPA roles laid the foundation to understanding the other categories observed, those central roles are: (A) On-Task oriented roles, (B) Relationship building and maintenance roles, and (C) Self-centered roles. These were initially based on the work of Benne and Sheats (1978). Although similar in many ways to the central three of Benne and Sheats' (1978) categories the categories applied in this study were slightly altered. From these three main categories emerge five others: (AB) On-Task oriented /Relationship building and maintenance roles; (AC) Task-oriented/ Self-Centered role; (BC) Relationship building and maintenance roles/ Self-Centered roles; and (ABC) On-Task oriented/ Relationship building and maintenance/ Self-Serving roles and lastly (D) Obstructing Oriented roles.

### ***Part 3: Examining the Workgroup as a Whole***

In part 3 of the framework, the Healthy Versus Struggling Assessment (HVSA) section, each person's SIRIS and IRPA roles are examined together and in conjunction with the others in their workgroup and seek to understand how workgroup members' informal roles are affecting the productivity and overall health of the workgroup.

On their own SIRIS and IRPA roles each help to aid in understanding different aspects of an individual within the workgroup setting. A SIRIS role, when examined on its own does not necessarily shed light on how productive an individual is at staying on task and an IRPA role

alone may not necessarily explain an individual’s social position within the workgroup’s informal social structure. However, when examined together SIRIS roles and IRPA roles can help to explain different aspects of an individual’s informal social position within the workgroup’s social structure and how that person’s role may be contributing to the formal productivity of the workgroup or organization. The Healthy Versus Struggling Assessment (HVSA) examines individual roles as well as the workgroup as a whole. This chapter suggests a way in which to analyze the group as a whole using the Healthy Versus Struggling Assessment and provides an assessment worksheet in which to include all workgroup member’s IRPA and SIRIS scores in order to determine the workgroup’s overall health to then be plotted along the Healthy Versus Struggling Assessment scale as illustrated in Figure 1.2: *Healthy Versus Struggling Workgroup Assessment*.

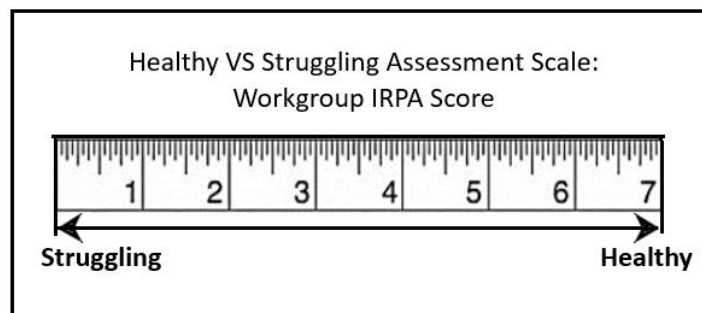


Figure 1.1. Healthy Versus Struggling Workgroup Assessment Scale

The HVSA spectrum ranges from a healthy work-group environment on one end to a struggling work-group environment on the other. They are considered healthy as opposed to ineffective or unproductive because the “health” of the group suggests an overall sense of perceived well-being of group members and their relationships with each other. It was also observed that some struggling workgroups are still able to accomplish workgroup objectives and produce results regardless of their health status out of sheer necessity. However, in struggling workgroup environments collaboration tends to be strained, productivity is based on just “getting the job



done,” group members are tense about other group members, group members do not feel they fit in, and there is apprehension about taking risks or making unpopular suggestions. It was also observed that the tone of the workgroup environment, healthy or struggling, can be greatly attributed to the formal leader of the workgroup.

#### ***Part 4: The Application***

Part 4 of the framework includes three worksheets in which to organize and assess the collected data:

1. Worksheet 1: Individual Subject Profile
2. Worksheet 2: Healthy VS Struggling Workgroup Assessment Profile Worksheet
3. Worksheet 3: Generalized Organizational Hierarch Pyramids Worksheet

The purpose of the Individual Subject Profile worksheet is to gain a better understanding of each group member individually. The Healthy VS Struggling Workgroup Assessment Profile Worksheet assesses all workgroup member’s IRPA and SIRIS scores together, as a group, to determine the workgroup’s Healthy Versus Struggling score. The Generalized Organizational Hierarchy Pyramids Worksheet plots the organization or workgroup’s formal official reporting relationships alongside its informal social structure and allows the two to be examined together.

##### ***1.4.3.1 Overview of notable observations***

This framework is the result of the culmination of many observations and analysis during the course of this study but some specific observations contributed to specific developments within the framework. The following are notable observations that are associated with their results. Some of the findings listed are touched upon earlier in this chapter in section 1.4.3 Findings. Although the meaning of each contribution listed will become clearer in the following

chapters they are included here to give a general idea of the findings and their relationship to the fieldwork.

**Notable Observation 1:**

- The nature of subject's relationships with each other could extend an individual's influence, facilitate alternative flows of information, give the researcher added insight into understanding why certain individuals were in certain informal roles, as well as help the researcher understand why some individuals may be treated differently than their peers of the same status.

**Contributed to the development of:**

- The *Relational Categories Chart* found in Part 1 of the framework.

**Notable Observation 2:**

- Some individuals were more influential with peers and management in ways that extended beyond their formal title than others.
- Some individual's influence was limited despite their formal title.

**Contributed to the development of:**

- The *Social currency exchange*, *Perceived Need States*, and *Potential Social Flow* found in Part 1 of the framework.

**Notable Observation 3:**

- Informal role categories were observed.

**Contributed to the development of:**

- The *Supportership Informal Roles Identification Spectrum (SIRIS)* found in Part 1 of the framework.

**Notable Observation 4:**

- Repeated patterns of a specific group of people have the ability and potential to bring them closer together and facilitate alternative flows of information not prescribed by formal channels.
- When those repeated patterns stopped it indicated a shift in the sociality of that group.

**Contributed to the development of:**

- *Bonding rituals* found in Part 1 of the framework.

**Notable Observation 5:**

- The tone of the workgroup and the informal roles that workgroup members decide to “take on” is greatly influenced by the formal leader.

**Contributed to the development of:**

- *Healthy Versus Struggling Assessment (HVSA)* found in Part 3 of the framework

**Notable Observation 6:**

- Not all organizations have a formal organizational chart or an updated one that outlines who reports to whom.

**Contributed to the development of:**

- The *Generalized Organizational Hierarchy Pyramids Worksheet* in Part 2 and 4 of the framework.

**Notable Observation 7:**

- When a formal leader is already in place, the identification of an Informal Leader, as defined by the Informal Role Identification Spectrum, is a red flag indicating that formal roles are not adequately being fulfilled and that the workgroup may need to be evaluated.
- How informal roles were affecting the productivity and overall health of a workgroup should be addressed.

#### **1.4.4 Discussion**

Chapter 5, discusses the findings from chapter 4 specifically focusing on informal leader observations, an alternative narrative to addressing indifferents and shirkers; how the framework, in general, can be used in alternative and useful ways, and how IRPA roles can be used beyond the current literature from which they were initially conceived. Chapter 5 concludes by applying Symbolic Interaction to the findings of this study and lastly, focuses on the need to introduce an alternative term to the limiting idea of followership-- Supportership and the potential power words have on our assumed realities.

#### **1.4.5 Conclusion**

Chapter 6 outlines some of the limitations I encountered during this study, my literature, practical, conceptual, and theoretical contributions, possible future directions and lastly my conclusion and reflections.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

#### **Research Question # 1**

What are the social processes that surround those identified as having prominent informal roles and supporting informal roles within the informal social structure?

#### **Research Question # 2**

What evidence suggests that there is a relation between how a subject manages his or her informal role and his or her place in the informal social structure? If so what is it?

### **Research Question # 3**

How is the influence of a subject's formal role dependent on how that subject manages his or her informal role?

#### **1.6 Definition of Terms**

**Advocates (AD):** Advocates for the formal or informal leader actively showing their support for someone. They feel that who is leading them and their workgroup makes a difference and matters. They differ from Key Advocates in that they do not have the same degree of influence

**Bonding Rituals:** A reoccurring pattern signified by the participation of two or more individuals involved in the same shared experience. Bonding rituals promoted camaraderie, a certain level of community, a sense of fitting in, and a shared experience. It was also observed that a change in bonding rituals could indicate a shift in the norm or general social of the workgroup.

Continual participation in the bonding ritual could also potentially lead to opening channels of communication not previously accessible to certain individuals. This study observed two types of Bonding Rituals: Spontaneous Bonding Rituals and Organizationally Organized Bonding Rituals.

**Diminished Standings (DS):** When an individual is treated less than their formal title would suggest they be treated and those who report to him or her show them less respect despite their formal title.

**Disconnects (DC):** Disconnects tended to come across to others as aloof and very work-oriented, even driven to accomplish their work tasks. They failed to adequately connect interpersonally with others, yet were highly productive, placing a higher value on work tasks than those around them.

**Followers (FR):** Tend to go along with the majority of the group. They are not invested in who is leading as long as the job is getting done and things are working out. This is not a negative category. Followers are not necessarily bad workers and they can contribute much to getting things accomplished. It just doesn't matter to them who is managing the workgroup as long as the work is getting accomplished.

**Formal Roles:** With formal roles, there is an emphasis on the behavior associated with a particular position in the organization or group (Salazar, 1996).

**Healthy Versus Struggling Evaluation (HVSE):** Part 3 of the framework that examines the workgroup as one functioning system, each group member a part of the whole. This is done by plotting the workgroup IRPA score onto the Healthy Versus Struggling Assessment (HVSA) chart to determine the health of the workgroup. The HVSA spectrum ranges from a healthy workgroup environment on one end to a struggling workgroup environment on the other. All results are then examined using the *Healthy Struggling Workgroup Assessment Profile Worksheet* and the *Generalized Organizational Hierarch Pyramids Worksheet*.

**Impeders (IP):** Negative roles that disrupt productivity or the tone of the group in impeding or bad ways and can be characterized as hostile and disruptive, and use deliberate forms of intimidation. Ultimately, they are roles that are negative and impede the group effort.

**Obstructing Oriented roles (D):** Behavioral patterns that result in blocking productivity and other positive roles, sometimes even in malicious ways that can be overly aggressive or passive-aggressive. Some of these impeding communicative patterns are fueled with the intent of showcasing themselves over the needs of the group and at the expense of productivity. Not all obstructing oriented roles are self-centered. Sometimes even too much relational building and maintenance behavioral patterns can become a hindrance, for instance, excessive socializing.

**Indifferents (ID):** Indifferents do not care about the group and may even be disenchanted with the group for some reason. However, they cannot afford to get kicked out, fired, or do not want to leave the group because their leaving may result in a pay cut, loss of seniority, affect a potential future promotion or a personal reason. They have lost the fire of the vision, never had it, or no longer relates to it. They are basically there for the paycheck. Has no desire to better the group. Just wants to get their job done and will usually go along with whatever direction the rest of the group members want to pursue. They have no real opinion about who the leader is or how they are doing. Indifferents are no real harm to a workgroup as long as they understand what their formal role's responsibilities are and are productive, however, too many Indifferents in a group could lead to underachievement in overall group performance.

**Informal Leader (IL):** Informal leaders were observed to have the ability to key into what group members perceive as lacking and somehow provide that need. Like most leaders, they can be motivational for the group, fill in where formal leadership falls short and can be the driving force to move the group towards productive goals and outcomes

**Informal Role Productivity Analysis (IRPA):** In part 2 of the framework IRPA aims to understand how productive an individual's informal role is in accomplishing organization and workgroup formal objectives and is made up of eight role categories: (A) On-Task oriented roles, (B) Relationship building and maintenance roles, and (C) Self-centered roles. (AB) On-Task oriented /Relationship building and maintenance roles; (AC) Task-oriented/ Self-Centered role; (BC) Relationship building and maintenance roles/ Self-Centered roles; and (ABC) On-Task oriented/ Relationship building and maintenance/ Self-Serving roles and lastly (D) Obstructing Oriented roles.

**Informal Roles Productivity Analysis Score:** After IRPA informal roles are assessed two IRPA scores are assigned: an individual IRPA score and a workgroup IRPA score. Each IRPA role has a corresponding IRPA score to indicate how productive that role is in relation to the other roles. The higher the IRPA score the more productive it is. The workgroup IRPA score is determined by calculating all of the individual group members' IRPA scores and finding the average for the workgroup. That score can then be plotted along the Healthy Versus Struggling measurement chart to determine the overall health of the workgroup.



**Informal Roles:** Informal roles are adopted or bestowed upon by actors who have decided either at a conscious or subconscious level to take on for themselves or to categorize another in. The perspective adopted for this paper “views roles as the enacted behavior of individuals in a particular context” (Salazar, 1996, p. 477).

**Key Advocates (KA):** Potential informal leaders, individuals that have resources such as knowledge, specific or specialized skills, connections, or experience --this list is not exhaustive-- that result in them having a degree of influence in their own right. They have the capacity to contribute to the group in very significant ways and because of this they are recognized by others as key, or important in some way, they have the ability to legitimize the standing of an Informal Leader with their support.

**Non-Advocates (NA):** Non-Advocates are open about their disfavor for either a formal leader or an informal leader. This does not mean that they are hostile or unproductive like Impeders (IP), but they are not shy about voicing their concerns with the current leadership that may be contrary to the current norm

**On-Task oriented roles (A):** Task-oriented communicative patterns assist in focusing the group as well as interpersonal efforts in goal achievement and productivity. Task-oriented roles are productive in that these roles are task-focused and the work will most likely get accomplished. However, alone, it lacks the relationship-building aspect that can potentially add to the effective longevity of the group.

**Perceived Social Flaws:** Negative behavioral patterns that individuals repeated until others began to associate that behavior with that individual's character. These patterns of perceived weakness detract from an individual's influence can result in a diminishing of their Social Currency Exchange.

**Perceived Social Needs:** A way of identifying an individual's social values, or what they perceive as socially important. Needs are specific to each person and can move beyond demographics or the physical exchanges of material goods. Perceived Social Needs are about understanding what it is an individual desires socially or perceives as important such as feeling a sense of belonging, the need to connect with others, intellectual stimulation, or to feel appreciated. Within the scope of this paper Perceived Social Needs function under the premise that each person has a preconceived notion of their level of social comfort or homeostasis in each situation that they desire to reach or be at socially. This homeostasis is not static and may differ in different situations. An individual is able to reach homeostasis, a state of general comfort, when they perceive that their social needs are satisfied or are being met in some way. This perceived social need can sometimes be fulfilled by another individual or individuals or themselves as they perceive it.

**Perceived Social Strengths:** Positive behavioral patterns that individuals repeated until others began to associate that type of behavior with that individual's character. These patterns enhance an individual's influence and may result in the boosting of an individual's Social Currency Exchange with their co-workers.

**Relational Categories:** Possible types of relationships that exist between workgroup members that shed light on how workgroup members may be connected beyond the formal structure. The context of these relational categories is the workgroup and its purpose is to identify and characterize the relationships between individuals and analyze what the nature of that relationships might imply for the workgroup dynamic. The findings of this study suggest that it is possible that the nature of the relationship itself can sometimes add or diminish the strength of an individual's influence.

**Relationship building and maintenance roles (B):** Roles oriented towards the functioning and strengthening of the group as a group and can occur at either the group or interpersonal level. Individuals engaging in positive relationship building and maintenance communicative patterns on a regular basis can cultivate a "safe" environment and context in which contribution and risk-taking are accepted and encouraged, tend to be friendly with others, sometimes talk about things non-work related, and engage in positive rapport.

**Self-serving Oriented Role (C):** Role patterns are mainly directed towards satisfying the needs of an individual above the betterment of the group. When taken to the extreme these patterns can be counter-productive and a detriment to the group. Self-serving behavior can be perceived by other group members as distrustful and distasteful and can be an obstacle on the road towards productive collaboration.

**Shirkers (SR):** Shirking, social loafing, and free riding are essentially withholding effort, or the propensity to withhold effort due to motivation and or circumstance which can be equated with unproductive behavior (Kidwell & Bennett, 1993).

**Social Currency Exchange:** What is being exchanged in everyday interactions that either boost, maintains, or degrades relationships. Social currency is not a set item or value but differs for each person, context, and relationship based on the Perceived Social Needs of the individuals involved. These exchanges can be viewed as a type of economy of influence and relationship management. Possible currencies include but are not limited to companionship, status, validation, reliability, knowledge, security, comfort, and stability. Individuals that are perceived by others as already having a degree of influence may have a stronger Social Currency Exchange than those who do not. In an exchange withholding, social currency may also be a path to influence.

**Supportership Informal Roles Identification Spectrum (SIRIS):** The first section of the four-part framework. SIRIS can be used to identify and understand the informal social structure of the workgroup by identifying the informal roles that group members hold, keying into the overall sociality of the group, identifying group member dynamics or how they interact and analyzing the informal relationships between group members. SIRIS can be useful in identifying alternative flows of information, the workgroup's hierarchy of influence, and information bottlenecks. SIRIS is made up of nine informal roles: Informal Leader (IL), Key Advocates (KA), Advocates (AD), Non-Advocates (NA), Followers (FR), Indifferents (ID), Diminished Standings (DS), Shirkers (SR), Impeders (IP).

**Supportership:** An alternative perspective to followership in which group members are recognized to have agency in their choice of who they want to give their support to. Supporters conscientiously decide who is worth supporting and throw their lot in with them and informal as well as formal leaders benefit greatly from their support.

**The Social:** All things occupying or within that particular space and time including animate and inanimate objects and all interactions with them.

**Workgroup:** For this paper, workgroups will be identified by the following indicators:

1. The group consists of at least two or more group members the maximum number is flexible and depends on the nature of the workgroup and their purposes.
2. Group members communicate formally concerning work-relevant topics.
3. Group members have opportunities to communicate informally on a regular basis.
4. Group members share common overarching objectives or purposes.
5. Group members share the same physical environment. This study is interested in groups that have common physical spaces with opportunities to interact face to face such as a breakroom, commons room, or shared cubicles.

## Chapter 2. Review of Literature

### Chapter Overview

- 2.1 Understanding the Workgroup
- 2.2 Culture: The Context of the Workgroup's Social Structure
  - 2.2.1 Culture and Workgroups
  - 2.2.2 Organization and Workgroup Culture
- 2.3 The Nature of Roles: Distinguishing Between Formal and Informal Roles
- 2.4 Formal and Informal Leadership
  - 2.4.1 Formal Leadership and the Informal Social Structure
  - 2.4.2 Informal Leadership
- 2.5 Followership
- 2.6 Networks and the Informal Social Structure
- 2.7 Uncovering the Informal Social Structure: The Social Network Perspective
- 2.8 Bridging the Formal and in the Informal

### 2.1 Understanding the Workgroup

Oh, Chung, & Labianca (2004) state that as the business environment has become more complex and uncertain “organizations have responded by increasingly using groups as their fundamental unit of organizational structure in an effort to decentralize decision making and respond more flexibly to their environment” (Oh, Chung, & Labianca, 2004, p. 860; Manz & Sims, 1993; Mohrman, Cohen, & Mohrman, 1995). As more groups are granted greater autonomy within these organizational structures so too has the need for groups to better manage their cooperation and coordination with other organizational units and management (Oh et al., 2004). Oh et al. (2004) states:

An increasingly complex and uncertain business environment has made understanding how individual group members manage this delicate balance of social relationships within their group, across organizational units, and across hierarchical levels increasingly important...people and groups of people are connected to certain others (and not connected to yet others), and this pattern of connection creates a network of

interdependent social exchanges wherein certain people become trusted exchange partners who can be called upon for resources and support (p.860).

Oh et al. (2004) explores the concept of social capital within workgroups and explain that people or groups with the “right” types of social connections can more effectively use other types of capital to achieve their goals with those with the right “connections”. They define social capital as, “The configuration of a group’s members’ social relationships within the social structure of the group itself, as well as the broader social structure of the organization to which the group belongs, through which necessary resources for the group can be accessed” (Oh, Chung, & Labianca, 2004, p. 861). It is possible for group members to be simultaneously embedded in both the social structure of a group and an overall organization (Oh, Chung, & Labianca, 2004). However, Oh et al. (2004) explain that despite the fundamentally relational and embedded nature of groups, most group research “has lacked a multilevel perspective that focuses simultaneously on the social structure of a group and its members’ relationships within the larger social structure of an organization (Firebaugh, 1980; Manson, 1993)...recently researchers have begun to explore how differences in group members’ position in their groups and their broader organization’s social structures affect phenomena of interest...but this more multilevel view remains in its infancy” (Oh, Chung, & Labianca, 2004).

It is important to note that workgroups are not a homogeneous entity. Labianca, Brass, & Gray’s (1998) study suggested that researchers cannot assume that all members in a group are homogeneous in their perceptions, “Each individual’s unique social network creates heterogeneous perceptions...and those perceptions, in turn, affect the nature of the interpersonal relationships that constitute each individual’s social network” (Labianca, Brass, & Gray, 1998, p. 65). In their study, they focused on intergroup conflict, but this finding can be generalized to

other aspects of interpersonal relationships within groups. The social structure of workgroups has the ability to affect the greater organization in consequential ways.

There are many definitions of what a workgroup is Hare (1992) offers a concise and effective explanation, “A group is defined as two or more persons who are interacting with one another in such a manner that each person influences and is influenced by each other person” (p. 17). Kozlowski and Bell (2003) acknowledge that although some scholars distinguish between work teams and workgroups (technically all teams are groups, just a more specific type), Kozlowski and Bell note that they do not make a distinction and use the term interchangeably. “Work teams and groups come in a variety of types and sizes, cutting across different contexts, functions, internal processes, and external linkages, however, several features provide a foundation for a basic definition” (Kozlowski & Bell, 2003, pp. 5-6).

Work teams and groups:

- (a) Are composed of two or more individuals,
- (b) Exist to perform organizationally relevant tasks,
- (c) Share one or more common goals
- (d) Interact socially
- (e) Exhibit task interdependencies (i.e., workflow, goals, outcomes),
- (f) Maintain and manage boundaries
- (g) Are embedded in an organizational context that sets boundaries, constrains the group/team, and influences exchanges with other units in the broader entity

In addition to the list, Hare points out that group members also participate in a system of interlocking roles. Workgroups are a very important aspect of organizational life and practices.



As Katzenbach and Smith (2006, p. 91) explain, workgroups “are both prevalent and effective” in organizations.

## **2.2 Culture: The context of the workgroup’s social structure**

The concept of culture can at times seem very abstract and it has been said that although we cannot see culture, we can observe the residue of it. Within the workgroup, culture is part of what continually creates and recreates the context of the group a backdrop in which group members navigate through. It works in part to form the social structure in which communicative patterns or informal roles, are decided upon.

Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939) are attributed to being the first to coin the term “organizational climate” in their 1939 study *Patterns of Aggressive Behavior in Experimentally Created ‘Social Climates’* (Bellot, 2011). Climate research continued to gain momentum and by the 1970s the term climate and culture were being used interchangeably. Although this research represented a convergence of psychological and sociological epistemologies (Bellot, 2011) they were still not considered well defined conceptually (Bellot, 2011; Reichers & Schneider, 1990). However, by the mid-1970s there was a growing sense that “the climate construct was not capturing the holism of the work environment” (Bellot, p. 29). This was filled with the introduction of anthropologic epistemology which represented the “beginning of defining culture, acknowledging its intangibility and integrating psychologic, sociologic, and anthropologic methods and philosophies” (Bellot, 2011, p. 29). It was not until 1979 that the term organizational culture was formally introduced by Pettigrew with distinct anthropological overtones. The term organizational culture continued to develop throughout the ’80s, still with much disagreement among scholars and disciplines on an appropriate definition, including the

debate on what the definition should and should not include and the best assessment method.

Although many theorists throughout the 1980s attempted to advance their own conceptual understandings of organizational culture, Bellot (2011) lists six that dominated a majority of the culture research. It is widely accepted that there is no singular correct definition of culture, however, sifting through their differences, there are key consistencies, a sort of “consensus of principles [that] has guided much inquiry about organizational culture” (Bellot, 2011, p. 30).

Bellot lists these:

1. Organizational culture exists.
2. Cultures are inherently fuzzy in that they incorporate contradictions, paradoxes, ambiguity and confusion. This is a recognition that culture is not merely a surface phenomenon but instead infused with symbols and symbolism.
3. Organizational culture is socially constructed, the product of groups not individuals, and based on shared experiences, culture provides an organization’s members with a framework for understanding and making sense of their work environment and experiences (Bellot, 2011; Siehl & Martin, 1983).
4. Each organization’s culture is relatively unique, malleable, and subject to change.

The overall understanding is that culture is not static, it can be influenced to some degree, and some believed even controlled. Although some measuring instruments have been used to generally categorize organizational culture, it is an overall belief that each organization’s culture is distinct (Bellot, 2011), as Schein and Schein (2016) have noted concerning culture, “[...] you will find that many groups of various sizes with different shared patterns that must be understood on their own terms” (Schein & Schein, 2016, p. 5). However, despite differences and the

accepted fact that there is not one “right” definition, literature on culture either cites or uses a derivation of Schein’s definition (Bellot, 2011). Schein writes:

Organizational culture is the pattern of basic assumptions which a given group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaption and internal integration, which have worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems...it is the assumptions which lie behind values and which determine the behavior patterns and the visible artifacts such as architecture, office layout, dress codes, and so on (Schein, 1987, p. 383).

In their 2016 book, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* Schein along with Schein (2016), in an effort to revise and develop a more encompassing definition of culture that includes macro cultures (cultures such as nations, occupations and large organizations) and micro cultures (subcultures), presented an updated version of his definition which they refer to as “A Dynamic Definition of Culture”:

“The culture of a group can be defined as the accumulated shared learning of that group as it solves its problems of external adaption and internal integration; which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, feel, and behave in relation to those problems. This accumulated learning is a pattern or system of beliefs, values, and behavioral norms that come to be taken for granted as basic assumptions and eventually drop out of awareness.” (Schein & Schein, 2016, p. 6)

Schein and Schein (2016) explain that after examining the many ways in which to define culture (e.g. shared meanings, habits of thinking, mental models, linguistic paradigms, etc.) that “culture

covers pretty much everything that a group has learned as it evolved [...] This definition is deliberately focused on the general process of how *any culture* is learned and will evolve, but in practice you will have to focus on different elements of that definition to make sense of the particular organizational situation you encounter” (Schein & Schein, 2016, p. 6). Schein and Schein (2016) emphasize that the most important element of their updated definition of culture is that culture is a shared product of shared learning which in turn makes culture complex. They explain that “To fully understand a given group’s culture, we need to know what kind of learning has taken place, over what span of time, and under what kinds of leadership” (Schein & Schein, 2016, p. 6). They elaborate on what culture means to a group:

If learning is shared, all the group forces of identity formation and cohesion come into play in stabilizing that learning because it comes to define for the group who we are and what is our purpose or “reason to be.” The various components of what is learned then become a pattern of beliefs and values that give meaning to the daily activities and work of the group. If the group is successful in achieving its purpose and is internally well organized, it will come to take these beliefs and values along with the accompanying behavioral norms for granted and will teach them to newcomers as the way to think, feel, and behave. In many ways, this can be thought of as the group’s sense of identity, which has both an external component of how the organization presents itself to the outside and an internal component of what its inner sense of itself is” (Schein & Schein, 2016, pp. 6-7).

As complex as trying to understand a culture may seem, it is not impossible. In their article Chatman et al. (2014) examine the relationship between organizational culture and financial performance in technology firms. They parsimoniously define culture as a “pattern of shared

assumptions, beliefs, and expectation that guide members' interpretations and actions by defining appropriate behavior within an organization" (Chatman, Caldwell, O'Reilly, & Doerr, 2014, p. 787; Fiol, 1991; Schein, 1985). In identifying high and low-intensity cultures, a way in which to identify the strength of an organization's culture, they parsed organizational culture and the identification of it in terms of norms and consensus in a succinct approach:

Importantly, an organization does not have to embrace very many norms intensely to have a culture characterized by high intensity. Typically, only one or two central norms characterize strong-culture firms (O'Reilly, 1989). What is critical is that these norms are so intensely held that members of the organization are willing to tell one another when they are not living up to a core belief and norm enforcement is predictable and consistent (Bernhard, Fehr, & Fishbacher, 2006). Thus norm intensity needs to be understood in terms of how forcefully members embrace a particular norm [...]. In contrast, culture consensus has been a unifying element of many definitions of culture reflecting its shared nature (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). In defining culture consensus as agreement among members across a broad set of attributes, it represents a structural property of culture, and as such, it is possible to observe culture consensus independently of any particular content [...]. Thus, intensely held norms are likely to emerge as highly salient and identity-defining, whereas culture consensus about a comprehensive set of norms can be viewed as a structural feature of an organization's culture" (Chatman, Caldwell, O'Reilly, & Doerr, 2014, p. 788).

Understanding what makes up a culture and what it results in helps to clarify what needs to be observed and considered to better understand and identify the culture of a group.

**2.2.1 Culture and workgroups.** Each organization has its own distinct culture but it does not always stop there, entities within the organization such as workgroups, departments, and teams, over time, can also develop their own variation of the primary culture resulting in their own workgroup culture. It should not be assumed that all organizations are a cultural homogeneous entity.

For their study on organizational culture Ingram, Paoline, and Terrill (2013) studied patrol officer workgroups. They determined that patrol officers were ideal subjects because they were salient organizational entities whose jobs involved structured interaction patterns that exposed officers to similar features in their primary work environments. They found that despite officers' exposure to a similar primary organizational work environment there were "cultural variations across workgroups" (Ingram, Paoline III, & Terrill, 2013, p. 387) but "similarity in outlooks within workgroups" (Ingram, Paoline III, & Terrill, 2013, p. 387) within that environment. Their results showed a:

Similarity in outlooks within workgroups and cultural variations across workgroups. Furthermore, the between-group variability analysis revealed that several attitudes that embody police culture varied significantly across workgroups. Overall, our findings indicate that monolithic characterizations of police culture might have overstated the widespread attitudinal homogeneity among occupational members, as we find that officers are adapting to the strains of the job in different ways. Such adaptations also shared by those in the same workgroup, suggesting that the fragmentation in occupational attitudes is not so individualized that there are no commonalities among officers [...] to the extent that workgroups demonstrated a degree of cultural homogeneity and to the extent that significant cultural differences between workgroups were found"

Ingram, Paoline, and Terrill (2013) explain the prevailing idea of the “traditional depiction of police culture as a monolithic phenomenon shared by all officers through a common socialization process” (Ingram, Paoline III, & Terrill, 2013, p. 366) stems from prior foundational studies on police culture and has been a primary limitation in viewing the police culture in alternative ways. They point out that although those previous studies were useful in many ways they were limiting in that they “often ignore important variations that might exist regarding the way(s) in which officers ply their craft” (Ingram, Paoline III, & Terrill, 2013, p. 366). Although police officers may initially share a common socialization process when they are eventually put into their workgroups they learn and adapt to the ways of those around them.

**2.2.2 Organization and workgroup culture.** This paper will make a distinction between two levels of organizational culture:

1. Overarching organizational culture
2. Workgroup culture

The overarching culture of the organization can have a direct effect on the effectiveness and productivity of workgroups. In one example of this Dyer, Dyer, and Dyer (2007) found that a workgroup that is highly interdependent can be affected by an organization’s overarching reward system and that some organization’s formal structures and reward systems can become barriers to effective teamwork:

Reward systems that provide strong individual incentives often create strong disincentives to engage in cooperative behavior within a work team. Unfortunately, many organizations, while paying lip service to the importance of teamwork, do little to

encourage and support those who work in teams. Thus, they do not foster a culture in which teams can succeed” (Dyer, Dyer, & Dyer, 2007).

Organizational culture and workgroups cultures exist and they affect each other. Workgroups can develop their own cultures oftentimes by taking the overarching culture and reinterpreting aspects of it in ways that are meaningful to their workgroup members. Like states within countries, smaller workgroups within an organization will have various cultures dissimilar in degrees from each other due to group dynamics, interpersonal relationships between group members, context, workgroup area environment, and so on. A symbiotic relationship between organization and workgroup affecting each other and in turn supporting environments that affect informal roles either negatively or positively with each workgroup becoming a microcosm with the ability to develop their own cultures, rituals, and rules.

### **2.3 The Nature of Roles: Distinguishing between formal roles and informal roles**

Whether an individual realizes it or not they are managing two or more roles: their formal role(s) and their informal role(s). Each person within the organization has a formal role. Formal roles are roles that have been established by the organization or workgroup and are officially recognized throughout the organization such as a general manager, group manager, project manager, secretary or project coordinator to name only a few. These formal roles can typically be found on an organizational chart or roster “which details prescribed re-orting or communication lines” (Tichy, Tushman, & Fombrun, 1979, p. 5) and are associated with specific expectations and duties, Salazar (1996) states that for formal roles there is “an emphasis on the behavior associated with a particular position in the organization or group” (p. 477). At the same time all individuals whether intentionally or unintentionally are managing an informal role.



Typically, informal roles are adopted or bestowed upon by actors who have decided either at a conscious or subconscious level, to take on for themselves' or categorize another in. The perspective adopted for this paper "views roles as the enacted behavior of individuals in a particular context" (Salazar, 1996, p. 477). The difference between formal and informal roles within workgroups reach beyond merely their appointment, but to a distinct difference in their nature and meaning to the workgroup. Formal roles tend to be static and are usually predefined. When an individual's formal role changes it is made known throughout the organization or at least to those who it is of a consequence too. Informal roles, on the other hand, are not always as explicit or concrete.

There are two general facets concerning informal roles and perception: 1) roles that an actor takes on for themselves and 2) roles that other actors apply to another actor. They are not always the same and how we perceive ourselves is not necessarily how others perceive us.

Unlike formal roles within a group or organization that exist whether someone "occupies" them or not, it is an underlying assumption in this paper that informal roles are not merely empty "slots" or "vacancies" waiting to be filled; neither are they necessarily recognizable by a specific predetermined script or set of behaviors. Instead, they are approached as communicative patterns that an actor adopts at particular times within a certain context and moment; a time when either at a conscious or subconscious level they feel the need to negotiate the current context of the situation as they perceive it. Turner (2005) stated that "the unity of a role cannot consist simply in the bracketing of a set of specific behaviors since the same behavior can be indicative of different roles under different circumstances. The unifying element is to be found in some assignment of purpose or sentiment to the actor" (p. 91); he continues, "it is the nature of the role that it is capable of being enacted by different actors but remains recognizable

in spite of individual idiosyncrasies. While people tend to be given stable classifications according to the major roles they play, the specific referent for the term ‘role’ is a type of actor rather than a type of person” it is this distinction that allows “for the contingency that one individual may adopt even conflicting roles on occasion, and that otherwise quite different people may play the same role” (Turner, 2005, p.88). People have the agency of versatility playing different roles in different groups at different times, as well as different roles within the same group based on a variety of factors such as comfort levels within the group, history with the other participants, situational context and so on.

The various informal roles that emerge at different times within the workgroup can be seen as a more intimate manifestation of the group’s social structure and context. These elements are not independent of or separate from the formal roles in place as if acting within a separate sphere but are at times a result of how a group’s member views his or her place in the group. The roles that actors take on are a way of managing their place in a social structure that is influenced not only by the organization as a whole, but also by the workgroup’s relationship to the organization, formal leadership within the group, and the interpersonal relationships among group members. All of these elements culminate to create a perceived context in which group members negotiate meaning and interactions, which are as a result expressed in their determining of which communicative patterns are appropriate at what times. These communicative patterns are the concrete representation of what this paper will refer to as “roles”.

## **2.4 Formal and Informal Leadership**

The words leader and leadership are relatively modern concepts and its meaning has evolved (Bass, 1990). The term “leader” first appeared in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1933

with the word “leadership” debuting in the first half of the nineteenth century “in writings about the political influence and control of British Parliament Throughout the literature there are varying and sometimes conflicting definitions of leadership...the word did not appear in...modern languages until recent times” (Bass, 1990, p. 11). Yet the definition of what a leader is and what defines leadership has not come to a definitive answer. Brodbreck (2001) noted that “the many definitions of leadership reflect serious disagreement, especially about the identification of leaders and the leadership process. Researchers who differ in their concepts of leadership are likely to investigate different phenomena and to interpret empirical results differently.” Bass (1990) states that there are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept, he recognizes Pfeffer (1977) who notes that many of the definitions are ambiguous. Alvesson and Spicer (2012) point out that there is notoriously little agreement about how to define leadership, “two-thirds of leadership texts do not define the subject...while the other third tend to provide quite different definitions” (p. 369). However, Bass does state that there is “sufficient similarity among definitions to permit a rough scheme of classification” he lists the following:

Leadership has been conceived as the focus of group processes, as a matter of personality, as a matter of inducing compliance, as the exercise of influence, as particular behaviors, as a form of persuasion, as a power relation, as an instrument to achieve goals, as an effect of interaction, as a differentiated role, as initiation structure, and as many combinations of these definitions (Bass, p. 11).

Brodbreck cites Yukl (2001) who argues that it is neither feasible nor desirable to attempt to resolve all of the controversies on the appropriate definition of leadership (Brodbreck, 2001).

Creating an all-encompassing definition of leadership is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is necessary to have a starting place to build dialogue upon.

In this paper, there is a distinction between two types of leadership roles: formal leadership and informal leadership. Formal leadership roles are formally appointed in some way by the organization or institute and typically carry with them organizationally ordained authority that other employees formally recognize. On the other hand, informal leadership roles are roles that generally emerge naturally due to circumstance, history, context, interactions, communication, and environment and are not always recognized by the overall organization. These two types of leadership are not necessarily the consequence of each other; having one type of leadership role does not mean that an individual by default has the other. Yet each plays an important role within an organization and workgroup. This paper seeks to gain a better understanding of both the formal and the informal and what patterns may link, weaken, or fortify them.

**2.4.1 Formal leadership and the informal structure.** The functioning of workgroups is often related to how the group perceives the formal leadership, others within their workgroup and their place within that group. Schein (2004) emphasized the importance of formal leaders within groups and the reach of their influence:

Cultures begin with leaders who impose their own values and assumptions on a group. If that group is successful and the assumptions come to be taken for granted, we then have a culture that will define for later generations of members what kinds of leadership are acceptable. The culture now defines leadership. But as the group runs into adaptive difficulties, as its environment changes to the point where some of its assumptions are no

longer valid, leadership comes into play once more. Leadership is now the ability to step outside the culture that created the leader and to start evolutionary change processes that are more adaptive... (Schein, 2004, p. 2)

Here Schein is specifically addressing the culture of an organization or group, but also the importance of leadership and the consequences leadership, good or bad, can have on the culture of the workgroup. The culture creates the social context in which group members negotiate their relationships and communicative patterns, or informal roles. Group members do not often recognize or link leadership and culture in these terms, however, that does not mean that they are not affected by it. The formal leader of a group has the distinct ability to set the “tone” of the group and in turn how group members see themselves within that group, how they view each other, and how they interact. From this perspective, we see a tie between the formally established leadership and its relation to the informal structure or context of the group.

Smart defines formal leaders as those individuals who hold official titled positions (Smart, 2010). Often associated with these titles is organizationally sanctioned authority. The power and influence that they are granted and are recognized to “have” are bound within the formal structure of the organization. The formal structure could be thought of as having three major elements (Cross & Parker, 2004):

1. Boundaries: organizing units such as functions, products, and geography
2. Decision rights: the authority to influence behavior and the allocation of resources in an organized unit
3. Integrating mechanisms: methods for coordinating activities across units

Employees are bound to the authority and influence of formal leaders as dictated by the formal structure. For instance, in decision rights, formal leaders such as workgroup leaders and

managers can promote the usage of newly introduced technologies or programs, even mandate that certain employees participate. That does not, however, automatically include the ability to influence employees to embrace and accept new programs or technologies. Informal leaders such as opinion leaders may more likely have the ability to influence acceptance and sometimes even success. In a small local construction business of about 20 employees, employees clocked in their time by turning in a written time card sheet. The owner thought it would be more efficient to have them clock their time by using a swipe card. In this small organization, longtime employees felt that this change meant that management did not trust them. Some senior employees talked about their discontent over the new program with newer employees. As a result, employees did not consistently use the card swipe and some refused to use it at all. Within a few months of implementation, the program quietly faded due to disuse. One employee noted, "Just another thing they try to make us do, waste money". By addressing informal leaders, such as, key opinion leaders and getting them "on board", this situation could have more likely led to a more favorable outcome for the organization.

Formal leadership and the informal structure of an organization are important. It is through the formal structure and leadership whereby the boundaries of the organization are set and organizational mechanisms are put into place, however, beneath it all is the informal structure and the informal roles that create the context.

**2.4.2 Informal leadership.** Informal leaders have been defined as individuals who do not necessarily have a formal title or formal authority "who serve as advocates for the business, and heighten the contributions of others as well as their own primarily through influence, relationship-building, knowledge and expertise" (Downey, Parslow, & Smart, 2011, p. 518). The

intriguing aspect of informal leaders is that they exercise an authentic leadership, their influence has the ability to reach beyond the boundaries and decisions of the formal structure of the organization and is independent of their formal rank or title. Their influence will not be found on any formal organization chart and it is not always easy to determine who these informal leaders are. Downey, Parslow, and Smart (2011) pointed out that in identifying informal leaders it is often assumed that the person who is out in "the front", speaks up more and or "seems to have the most overt relationship with management would be an informal leader" (Downey, Parslow, & Smart, 2011, p. 519) but that is not necessarily the case. Although informal leaders do not have official management positions or titles as defined by their organizations Smart (2010) points out that informal leaders:

Have become adept at using their influence to shape task strategies, establish teams' basic norms and values, allocate resources, coordinate group efforts, and negotiate with outsiders on behalf of the group...they learn to manage and bring together groups of people with common interests or networks, and foster and cultivate relationships within, across, and outside their teams. These leaders do not only build networks, they also act as catalysts for others to build community in the larger organization...informal leaders have displayed the unique ability to inspire and motivate their peers to action, bring people together, and create sustainable relationships and connections. They also tend to have a wealth of process and organizational information and know-how to apply their skills to get results. This has led to employees to look to these individuals for leadership, rather than to their formal manager (Smart, 2010, pp. 27-29).

The critical distinction of an informal leader is influence, the capacity to affect other people's thinking and or actions (Downey, Parslow, & Smart, 2011; Smart 2010). Smart explains that

within an organization influence can be defined as the capacity to affect other people's thinking, values, or behavior and having the ability to persuade people to choose to do or see things your way. Smart writes, "In practical terms, influence is the means through which power and authority are translated into action" (p. 79).

There are different ways in which informal leaders can be identified. Downey, Parslow, and Smart identified informal leaders in the nursing community through interviews and observation. Social network analysis literature identifies key roles through surveys and sociograms as a way of capturing the informal or "hidden" network and its influential players. Neubert and Taggar point out that informal leaders emerge through a complex process of role-taking and peer perceptual processes that determine who becomes the leader (Neubert & Taggar, 2004; Taggar, Hackett, & Saha, 1999). They also point to Mann (1959) who in early leadership research offered three possible explanations for leadership emergence: 1) through contributing to satisfying the needs of others 2) through fulfilling roles necessary for a group to function successfully, and or 3) through exhibiting traits that are associated with or trigger socially defined leadership expectations of others (Neubert & Taggar, 2004; Mann, 1959). Neubert and Taggar later streamlined Mann's three possible explanations for leadership emergence by integrating it with Aronoff and Wilson's (1985) theory of sources and status as either ascribed or achieved. The integration of Mann (1959) and Aronoff and Wilson's (1985) explanations were simplified into two pathways for informal leadership in teams: 1) team members are ascribed emergent leadership status by means of identifiable individual differences; or 2) team members achieve emergent leadership status by fulfilling valued roles within the team and/or providing valuable contributions (Neubert & Taggar, 2004). However, Neubert and Taggar (2004) point



out that although these explanations for informal leadership emergence are distinct they are not mutually exclusive.

## **2.5 Followership Theory**

Previous leadership literature has focused on leaders as “the heroic leader”. The flaws of this approach have been addressed in such works as Yukl & Lepsinger, 2004; Bolman & Deal, 2003; and McCauley, 2010. McCauley (2010) writes that perhaps the biggest criticism of current concepts in regards to leadership is their failure to fully depict leadership as a social process happening within a social system. McCauley continues, “because of their focus on the individual leader, they tend to oversimplify the leadership process. One might assume in examining popular models of leadership that followers play a more passive role, waiting to be influenced or motivated” (McCauley, 2010, pp. 7-8). McCauley acknowledges that practicing leaders are aware that this is far from reality, however, “Even in theories where followers are more explicitly a part of the equation ...the dynamic interplay between leaders and followers is rarely closely examined...in practice, leadership is also rarely an individual activity...at any point in time, many people are both leading and following” (McCauley, 2010, p. 8).

Social scientists in other fields are continually looking at alternative expressions and possibilities of leadership and or leadership indicators, opting to move away from simple and rigid authoritarian patterns, open to the concept that leadership may not be embodied in one particular individual but instead as anything that serves to move the group forward (Young 1985). This perspective looks to the group itself and the interactions occurring within them for understanding. The leader as a sole individual determining the fate of all under him or her is an idea that is being re-evaluated. Burns (1978) noted that one of the most serious failures in the

study of leadership has been the bifurcation between the literature on leadership and the literature on followership. Hollander (1992) later added that our understanding of leadership is incomplete if we do not recognize its unity with followership, he writes:

There are many reasons to attend to the unity of leadership and followership. Yet by convention, these phenomena are treated apart. Both leadership and followership both represent active roles, given the reality that organizational functions require them at every level. The usual expectation of the leader role as active and the follower role as passive is misconceived even in traditional hierarchies. Barnes and Kriger (1986) observed that leadership does not rest with a single individual but is pluralistic and fluid, in part due to the crossing of the formal structure by informal networks. In short, leadership is a process, not a person (Hollander, 1992, p. 71).

It has been pointed out that the effectiveness of a leader is dependent to a great extent on the willingness and consent of the followers. Without followers, there can be no leaders because without the eyes, ears, minds, and hearts of the followers' leaders are unable to function effectively (Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson, & Morris, 2006). Yet the literature on followership is relatively minimal, especially when compared to the literature on leadership. Oc & Bashshur (2013) point out that the focus on leaders as drivers of organizational performance has resulted in a long tradition of leader-centered research "the impact of followers on leaders (also called a followership perspective) has largely been ignored" (Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010, p. 919).

Baker (2007) did a search of 26 electronic databases on followership. The result was approximately 480 unique citations between 1928 through September 2004 and from 2004 to 2006, 50 more were added. Baker (2007) found that about half of the citations were relevant to

the field of management and the majority of the citations were written by American authors about American organizations, including opinion pieces, articles published in popular trade magazines and academic and scholarly journals. The followership theory was developed in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, “with limited exception, the few dissertations and articles written about followership in the first few years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have explored facets of followership theory posited in earlier decades” (Baker, 2007, p. 50). Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson, & Morris (2006) point out two reasons followers have not been researched: First, the stigma associated with the term “follower” and second, the misconception that leadership is more important than followership.

Although the definition for the term followership, the ability to effectively follow directives and support the efforts of a leader to maximize a structured organization, is not demeaning, Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson, & Morris explain that the term followership is often linked to “negative, and demeaning words like passive, weak, and conforming” (2006, p. 304). Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson, & Morris explain:

According to Alcorn (1992) followers have been systematically devalued and, for many, the very word itself conjures up unfavorable images. This stereotype has caused people to avoid being categorized as followers. Research done by Williams and Miller (2002) on more than 1,600 executives across a wide range of industries indicated that over one-third of all executives are followers in some fashion. Yet, rarely did any of the executives concede that they were followers. The statement “Always be a leader, never a follower!” has gone a long way towards adding to the stigma of being a follower (Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson, & Morris, 2006, p. 305).

In 1974 Hollander pointed out that it is commonly assumed that there are those who lead and those who follow and that being a follower means not being a leader. Although some followers may have leadership qualities, followers are essentially treated as a passive and non-essential category. Hollander posited that followers and leaders influence each other in a two-way process in a leader-followership type situation (Baker, 2007). Although the idea of an active followership has since emerged, it seems that the stigma still lingers, and maybe even still hinders (Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson, & Morris, 2006).

Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson, & Morris (2006) explain that another reason why there is so little research on followership is that there is a misconception that leadership is more important than followership. A drawback is the commonly held “assumption that good followership is simply doing what one is told, and that effective task accomplishment is the result of good leadership, doesn’t amplify the merits of the follower role” (Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson, & Morris, 2006). The image of the powerful lone leader has been romanticized. As a result the idea that the leader takes on a larger than life role has become a strong image in the minds of many (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

All of this is not to say that leadership is not important. Instead, Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson, & Morris (2006) point out that the organizational literature is full of studies of leadership characteristics that reflect the belief that good or bad leadership largely explains organizational outcomes. The underlying idea behind their study is not to undermine the importance of leadership but to highlight the significant lack of followership discussion. Currently, more attention is paid solely to the leader role and what makes a leader successful assuming that when a leader succeeds so too does the organization. This school of thought “ignores the fact that leaders need followers to accomplish their goals... [and that] the

effectiveness of a leader is to a great extent dependent on the willingness and consent of the followers...without followers, there can be no leaders” (Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson, & Morris, 2006, p. 305). When there is an active followership it means that the leader’s authority is accepted by the followers giving the leader’s vision and direction legitimacy (Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson, & Morris, 2006; Hansen, 1987).

As technology and our society changes, so too does the role of followership within the organization. Due to the growth and usages of social networks internet followers are being empowered more and more. For instance, they now have the ability to easily access more information than they have ever been able to in the past (Cross & Parker, 2004; Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson, & Morris, 2006) about their company as well as competitors (Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson, & Morris, 2006). Brown (2003) wrote that leaders are “no longer the exclusive source of vital information about their companies or fields; therefore they can no longer expect to be followed blindly by their now well-informed, more skeptical ranks” (Brown, 2003, p.68); and that an entire interpersonal system must now be included in the evaluation of a leader’s effectiveness (Baker, 2007; Hollander, 1974; Hollander & Julian, 1969). As followers become more informed and empowered organizational leadership scholarship has recognized that the maintenance of interpersonal relationships is a key component in the overall ideal of leadership, (Mintzberg, 1973 in: Schneider, 2002, p.213). Strang (2007) also points out that cultivating relationships across the organization has an impact on leadership and “can result in a reputation for effectiveness by meeting the various expectations of supervisors, subordinates, and peers” (p. 426). Essentially, we may have much to gain in observing and understanding the idea of leadership and what that means in conjunction with other roles.

## 2.6 Networks and the Informal Social Structure

Kilduff and Tsai (2003) illustrate the importance of social networks when they describe the events of a well-known historical event that took place on April 17, 1775, the ride of Paul Revere and William Dawes. The two men rode different routes from outside Boston to Lexington, both men delivering identical messages warning communities of the oncoming threat of the British army, “both Revere and Dawes carried identical messages through just as many towns over just as many miles. Paul Revere’s message spread like wildfire across communities[...] but Dawes’ message failed to catch fire, with the result that [...] local militia leaders weren’t even aware of the British moves...Evidence suggests that Paul Revere was connected to an extensive network of strategic relationships whereas William Dawes’s connections were less useful ” (Kilduff & Tsai, 2003, p. 1). It was noted that Paul Revere knew everybody and that when he came to a town he would have known exactly whose door to knock on including who the local militia leader was and who the key players were. As a result, not only were each towns’ leaders alerted of the oncoming threat, but the leaders in each of those towns sent riders out to alert the surrounding areas. As a consequence, one rider’s message failed to spread while the other’s message diffused rapidly. Kilduff and Tsai (2003) point out the moral to this tale: the network of relationships within which we are embedded may have important consequences for the success and failure of our projects. On a personal level evidence suggests that the types of networks we form around ourselves can affect us in many ways, from our health to the success of our careers (Kilduff & Tsai, 2003).

The consequences of our social networks have the ability to reach beyond our immediate view and affect us in ways we may not always be aware of. Goyal (2009) looked at the effects social networks have on coordination and cooperation. He explained that a person’s social

network influenced their willingness to adopt new information technologies (empirical work suggests that there are powerful interaction effects in the adoption of information technologies) (Goyal, 2009 p. 64; Economides & Himmelberg 1995), a person's choice of what second language to learn based on the choices of other's whom they interact with (empirical work suggests that changes in the patterns of interactions among individuals have played an important role in the extinction of several languages and the dominance of a few languages) (Watkins 1991), to individuals choosing whether they should be punctual or be casual about appointment times. All of these examples illustrate the effects that our social relationships can have on not only our lives but the larger networks in which we are embedded.

Within organizations, Kilduff and Tsai (2003) point out that maintaining network ties to different groups of people in organizations has been associated with higher performance (Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 2001) and faster promotions (Burt, 1992). Having the right connections can help you get a job (Granovetter M. , 1974) and can help you negotiate a higher salary (Seidel et al., 2000)” (Kilduff & Tsai, 2003, p. 2). In the context of organization literature McEvily, Soda, and Tortoriello (2014) refer to this informal network as the informal organization, or the company behind the chart, and are not necessarily relationships that will be found on the formal organizational chart. The formal organizational chart outlines the formal organization and includes its fixed set of rules, procedures, and structures for coordinating and controlling activities (McEvily, Soda, & Tortoriello, 2014). Informal networks, on the other hand, are made up of the emergent patterns of individual behavior and interactions among individuals, as well as the norms, values, and beliefs that underlie those behaviors and interactions (McEvily, Soda, & Tortoriello, 2014). These social ties make up our informal networks and are embedded within the informal social structure of everyday life in which real influence and informal roles reside.

## **2.7 Uncovering the Informal Social Structure: The Social Network Perspective**

Cross, Borgatti, & Parker (2002) explain that over the past decade many organizations have undergone significant restructuring minimizing hierarchical levels and increasing permeable internal and external boundaries, “a byproduct of these restructuring efforts is that coordination and work increasingly occur through informal networks of relationships than through the channels tightly prescribed by formal reporting structures or detailed work processes....unfortunately, critical informal networks often compete with and are fragmented by such aspects of organizations as formal structure, work processes, geographic dispersion, human resource practices, leadership style, and culture” (p. 25). Research throughout the social science literature has shown that relationships are critical for obtaining information, learning how to do your work, and collectively solving cognitively complex tasks, simply moving boxes on an organizational chart is not enough to ensure effective collaboration (Cross, Borgatti, & Parker, Making invisible work visible: Using social network analysis to support strategic collaboration, 2002). Cross et. al. (2002) explain that the informal relationships among employees are a better reflection of the way work happens in an organization. Relationships established by position within the formal structure coupled with a type of social network analysis can be an invaluable tool for systematically assessing and then intervening at critical points within an informal network. The fundamental concept to social network analysis is that SNA offers a way of visually assessing the pattern of relationships that hold a certain group together that in turn can reveal a number of interesting and actionable points (Cross, Borgatti, & Parker, Making invisible work visible: Using social network analysis to support strategic collaboration, 2002).

Social Network Analysis (SNA) is the fundamental methodology used to analyze, visualize, and to manage hidden, sometimes called “invisible” informal networks (de Toni &



Nonino, 2010). The significance of SNA was expressed by Granovetter (1990) in his keynote speech at the 1990 INSNA conference where he admitted that he "tried to escape the label of a social networker" and instead attempted to move on to what he referred to as more substantive interests in stratification, economic sociology, and sociological theory. However, he continued that, "no matter which substantive avenue he traveled, a review of the literature in that area led him to rediscover the importance of networks in understanding the social phenomena under scrutiny" (Krackhardt, 1992, pp. 237-238; Granovetter M. S., 1990). Social Network Analysis can be an effective tool in understanding the general cumulative perspective of the actors as well as the perceptions of the actors themselves. Their views on each other and themselves will assist in the coding process of informal role identification.

Wasserman and Faust (2009, pg. 4) note four important concepts underlying the social network perspective:

1. Actors and their actions are viewed as interdependent rather than independent autonomous units
2. Relational ties, also referred to as linkages, between actors are channels for transfer or "flow" of resources which can be either material or nonmaterial.
3. Network models focusing on individuals view the network structural environment as providing opportunities for or constraints on individual action.
4. Network models conceptualize structure (social, economic, political, and so forth) as lasting patterns of relations among actors.

The overall intent in SNA is that the unit of analysis in network analysis is not the individual, but an entity consisting of "a collection of individuals and the linkages among them. Network methods focus on: dyads (two actors and their ties), triads (three actors and their ties), or larger

systems (subgroups of individuals or entire networks)” (Wasserman & Faust, 2009, p. 5).

Although Wasserman and Faust stress the idea that the network analysis perspective is not about the individual it can shed much light on a particular individual and their place within a group depending on the questions you are seeking to answer.

To illustrate the importance of networks to organizations Cross and Parker (2004) explain that “getting an accurate view of a network helps with managerial decision making and informs targeted efforts to promote effective collaboration. Rather than leave the inner workings of a network to chance, executives can leverage the insight of a social network analysis to address critical disconnects or rigidities in networks and create a sense-and-respond capability deep within the organization” (Cross & Parker, 2004, p. 7). They explain that most executives acknowledge that effective collaboration is critical to their organization’s strategic success. Yet, more often than not the important networks in organizations that do not exist on the formal organizational flow chart are not on most executive’s radar. Managers often believe that they understand the networks around them, yet, “studies show that they can vary widely in the accuracy of their network perceptions” (Cross, Borgatti, & Parker, Making invisible work visible: Using social network analysis to support strategic collaboration, 2002, p. 26) being able to accurately diagram the social links of the five or six people closest to them, but having very inaccurate assumptions about employees outside their immediate circle (Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993; Cross, Borgatti, & Parker, 2002) A network analysis can help to ensure that these networks are recognized, given the needed resources they are often starved of and ensure that they are appropriately collaborating with the rest of the organization (Cross & Parker, 2004).

## 2.8 Bridging the Formal and the Informal

A central part of this study is concerned with workgroups in organizations, specifically, seeking to understand the relationship between a person's formal role within the organization and that role's connection to their informal role. Research Question 3 asks whether the influence of an actor's formal role is dependent on how an actor manages their informal role. To examine one aspect, the formal, without also examining the other, the informal, and vice versa would be incomplete. Both are essential elements in organizations. McEvily et al. (2014) explain that:

No organization exists, not even in the post-modern configuration, at either polar extreme of solely formally determined and prescribed behaviors or purely informally emergent action driven by individual agency. Instead, formal and informal elements co-exist in a variety of combinations and affect each other in important ways [...] rediscovering the inherent interplay between formal organization and informal social structure holds to potential to surface crucial questions and problems that have yet to be fully, or in some cases even partially, addressed and to advance our understanding of organizational functioning and performance in important ways. Put differently, understanding how formally designed elements (macro and micro) and emergent informal social structures are related is key to obtaining a richer and more realistic portrayal of organizations. In our view, informal social structure and formal organization have been studied, both conceptually and empirically, like “ships passing in the night” (2014, p.302).

McEvily et. al point out that the literature on the formal organization and informal social structure are “largely disconnected, independent, and rarely integrated with each other” (McEvily, Soda, & Tortoriello, 2014, p. 302). They list three main points that have been neglected in organizational scholarship:

1. An integrated theoretical understanding of organizational functioning in which the formal organization and the informal social structure are conceived of not in isolation but in combination
2. The extent that formal organization and informal social structure do jointly matter for explaining organizational behavior and performance, mainly, how formal patterns of interaction among organizational actors shape the genesis, development, and dissolution of informal social structures
3. How informal patterns of interaction among organizational actors influence the design of formal organizational elements on organizational functioning.

McEvily et.al continue by pointing out that:

Despite the importance of the interplay between formal organization and informal social structure, we are unaware of a cumulative body of knowledge devoted to advancing our understanding of the relationship between these two elemental features of organizations...we suspect that our knowledge in this area is dispersed across wide ranges of studies, situated in a number of distinct literatures, and dedicated to addressing a varied set of questions that are not clearly intended to inform our understanding of the co-existence and co-evolution of formal-informal organizational linkages (2014, p. 304).

The following chapter will discuss the methods and modes of data collection for this study.

## Chapter 3. Methods & Data Collection

### Chapter Overview

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Summary of the Process
- 3.3 Duration of Observations
- 3.4 Confidentiality
- 3.5 The Pilot: Rationale and Benefits
- 3.6 The Setting
  - 3.6.1 Part 1: The Pilot, Matlock Engineering Firm
  - 3.6.2 Part 2: The Primary Study, Freight Services International
- 3.7 The Workgroups
  - 3.7.1 Part 1: The Pilot:
    - 3.7.1.1 Project Management Group
    - 3.7.1.2 Planning Group
  - 3.7.2 Part 2: The Primary Study
    - 3.7.2.1 Transportation Group
    - 3.7.2.2 Interisland Shipping Group
- 3.8 Data Collection and Analysis
  - 3.8.1 Observation & informal interview Data Collection & Analysis: CCM
  - 3.8.2 Coding
  - 3.8.3 Memos

### 3.1 Introduction

This was an exploratory case study. The data-gathering portion of this study was done in two parts and in two different companies. Part one, the pilot, took place at Matlock Engineering & Consulting and part two, the primary study, took place at Freight Services International. Two main reasons these companies were chosen for this study was because of their use of workgroups and their accessibility. I spent one month at the pilot site, going in twice a week and observing two workgroups, and 10 months at the primary study site going in twice a week and focusing observations primarily on two workgroups as well as their relationship to one other peripheral workgroup. It should be noted that although the terminal manager and I both identified these workgroups as three separate workgroups that were highly interconnected the terminal manager

explained that in many ways they were also one group in purpose and goals and could also be treated as a management group.

The Constant Comparative Method (CCM) was used throughout the entire process. CCM is a comparative method in which observed incidents are continually compared to one another and that “as your ideas take hold [you] compare incidents to your conceptualizations of incidents coded earlier. That way you can identify properties of your emerging concept” (Charmaz, 2006, p.53). “The constant comparative method is used by the researcher to develop concepts from the data by coding and analyzing at the same time” (Kolb, 2012, p. 83; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Data for the constant comparative method can be collected through observations, conducting interviews and other research sessions (Kolb, 2012, Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). Kolb (2012) explains that during the data gathering process the researcher can employ a variety of “methods to elicit information pertaining to the study. The techniques commonly identified in the literature for collecting data [for CCM] are document collecting, participant observing and interviewing” (Kolb, 2012, p. 83; Glesne & Peshkin 1992).

With CCM there are three parts to the coding process. This is not a rigid process, instead, its fluidity allows the researcher to flow back and forth while observing and analyzing. The three parts are 1. Initial coding, 2. Focused coding, and 3. Memo writing. Data was collected through on-site observations and informal interviews. The data was first recorded into field journals with some informal interviews being audio recorded and then were later transcribed and analyzed.

### **3.2 Summary of the Process**

The following is a general overview of the process I used to identify and understand the informal roles and their workgroup implications presented in this framework:

1. Workgroup members were observed and interviewed in their work environments.
2. Data were recorded in field books and sometimes an audio recorder was used.
3. Constant Comparative Method (CCM) was the primary method of analysis.
4. During and after the collection of field notes and daily memo data, comparing and contrasting episodes was used to determine what was relevant to this study. Also, key in the analysis process was being aware of emerging themes, key statements, incidents of change or incidents that stood out, relationships, sources of influence, and actions that might help to characterize workgroup members' place in the workgroup and the informal social structure.
5. From the analysis above a taxonomy was developed. Although the categories within this taxonomy were initially approached as fluid overtime some categories began to solidify.
6. A framework emerged in which to systematically house the different categories in a way that collectively addressed the questions this study sought to address.
7. The core body of the framework that developed is made up of three parts with strategies and application instruments stemming from these three core elements. Although each part could be used independently, together these three parts address different aspects of informal and formal roles within the workgroup that culminate in a way that highlights the importance of Supportership. The three core elements are:
  1. Informal Roles Supportership Identification Spectrum (SIRIS)
  2. Informal Role Productivity Analysis (IRPA)
  3. Healthy Versus Struggling Evaluation (HVSE)
8. This framework was used to profile the different workgroup members both individually and collectively.

The following sections will include details on the pilot and primary study, the workgroups that were observed, the Constant Comparative Method, data collection and analysis methods and lastly limitations that I experienced while conducting this study.

### **3.3 Duration of Observations & Forms**

Observations at the pilot site, Matlock Engineering and Consulting, were for four weeks twice a week. Following the pilot, observations at the primary study site, Freight Services International, were for 10 months, from June to April, twice a week. Prior to beginning observations organizations were sent an Action Plan Proposal, refer to Appendix B, and once on-site before beginning observation subjects were explained their rights as participants, given a Consent to Participate in Research Project form, refer to Appendix C, and were encouraged to talk about any concerns or questions they had. Appendices include forms sent to the organizations and given to participants, the IRB approval letter, a sample excerpt from the codebook, and a sample from field notebooks.

### **3.4 Confidentiality**

In her article on protecting the confidentiality of participants while presenting rich, detailed accounts of social life in qualitative research and the challenges that come with it, Kaiser (2009) noted that, “the literature on research design, research ethics, and the American Sociological Association (ASA) Code of Ethics say little about how to handle the risk of deductive disclosure when presenting detailed qualitative data” (Kaiser, 2009, p.1632; Tolich, 2004). Regarding specific steps to take to maintain confidentiality Kaiser (2009) stated that:



“Despite emphasizing the importance of maintaining confidentiality, the literature on research design and the ethical codes of professional associations offer virtually no specific, practical guidance on disguising respondents’ identities and preventing deductive disclosure in qualitative research” (Kaiser, 2009, p. 1635; Grinyer, 2002; Giordano et al., 2007; Wiles et al., 2008).

One of the unique challenges she discusses is how changing too many details can change the integrity of the data:

However, unlike changing a specific name, changing additional details to render data unidentifiable can alter or destroy the original meaning of the data [...] Readers are typically unaware of how data has been altered and are therefore unable to consider the significance of changes for their interpretations of the data or for the validity of the data” (Kaiser, 2009, p. 1635; Wiles et al., 2008).

Yet, it is a necessary element of the research and the field if future research is to be conducted and participants protected. Despite these challenges, confidentiality remained a concern throughout this study. Names of participants, organizations, and workgroups were changed to respect the participant’s confidentiality. When not germane gender was sometimes changed. However, because of the nature of the study and sample size, focusing only on a few workgroups and a small sample of specific group members, it was difficult. Efforts were also taken to disguise personally-identifying information as much as possible without compromising the meaning and results of the collected data.

Even though Parry and Mauthner (2004) point out that due to “The reflexive nature of qualitative research, its use of unexpected ideas that arise through data collection and its focus upon respondents’ meanings and interpretations renders the commitment to informing

respondents of the exact path of the research unrealistic” prior to beginning research (Parry & Mauthner, 2004, p. 146; Kaiser 2009) the following steps were taken to help participants have a better idea of what they were getting involved in to the best of my ability. Before beginning observations with each group, I explained the nature of the study, who would most likely be reading the final study, and gave time to address any concerns. Participants were also given a consent form, as noted in section 3.2: *Duration of Observation and forms* a sample is included in Appendix B. The form included their rights as participants, along with their right to withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty to them. Also included was my advisor’s name and contact information. Participants were informed that if they did not feel comfortable telling me their concerns or that they wanted to withdraw without telling me directly, they could inform my advisor instead. Some participants asked questions about my study but most of them informed me that they were not worried about who saw what I wrote and that they had nothing to hide. Regardless of participants’ overall lack of concern for their confidentiality steps were still taken.

### **3.5 The Pilot: Rationale and Benefits**

The pilot was important for three reasons: first, to clarify the direction that I wanted to pursue for this study by going into the field and observing workgroups in their natural settings. Second, to get a feel of how to do field observations and figure out what would work and what would not work well for me and the subjects. Lastly, to begin building some of my initial broad categories to have a more discerning jumping-off point for the primary study. The pilot turned out to be very beneficial and was a significant contribution to the framework and the overall study. Many benefits resulted from the pilot, most notable are the following four:

1. The pilot helped to clarify the research questions for the primary portion of the study.

2. From the pilot, initial broad categories, rooted in observations, were identified and the framework began to emerge.
3. I was able to gain in-field experience as well as identify and address potential limitations. For instance, during the pilot, some workgroup members seemed, and later admitted, that they felt nervous and uncomfortable with my presence in their cubicle. From this, I was able to devise strategies to help subjects feel at ease and test them before starting the primary portion of the study.
4. Subjects in the primary study seemed to be put at ease with my presence when they found out that they were not the only organization I had observed.

The most noteworthy contribution of the pilot is to the second part of the four-part framework, the Informal Roles Productivity Analysis (IRPA) which will be discussed in section 4.4.1 of the Results and Discussion chapter. The seeds for IRPA were initially sown during the pilot portion of the study. Because it was developed before the main study it was possible to observe if those findings were applicable in another setting.

### **3.6 The Setting**

There are two parts to this study, the pilot and the primary and each was conducted in a different organization. The pilot portion of the study was conducted at Matlock Engineering & Consulting and the primary study was done at Freight Services International.

**3.6.1 Part 1: The Pilot, Matlock Engineering & Consulting.** Matlock Engineering & Consulting was an international engineering firm headquartered in Hawaii with some offices also located internationally. At the time of the observation, there were about 150-200 employees. Services were diverse and there was an emphasis on their use of a team-concept approach. They

explained that this approach allowed them to better handle assignments of any size and complexity. As in a traditional corporation it was headed by a board and a CEO. Under the CEO were four departments that directly served customer needs, with some of the groups broken down further into divisions. For this study two of the four groups were observed, the Project Management Group and the Planning Group. The pilot ran for four weeks, two times a week and I moved between the two groups throughout the day.

Observations were conducted at the main Hawaii office which was housed in a large converted warehouse located a little off the main thoroughfare. Its entrance was a little obscure and not very easy to find. Upon entering the building, you would first walk up a set of industrial stairs that then opened onto the reception area on the second floor. Continuing past the reception desk and a couple of offices were glass doors that enter into a huge warehouse space filled with relatively low cubicles, just about 4 feet high. The cubicles were specially designed by one of their engineers, at the request of the company's Vice President. The Vice President informed me that he had them specifically designed low to maximize collaboration. In informal interviews, some employees agreed with his decision but many also thought it was an unhelpful distraction. Each cubicle was relatively spacious and had four work stations, or desks, in each corner with some of them also having a center table for collaborative work. Although the entire office space was spacious the lack of windows might have also added to the decision to have low cubicle walls to minimize the "inside" feel.

The most striking thing about the Matlock Engineering & Consulting environment was how quiet it was. The quiet, in such a vast space, was so heavy and obvious that it felt as though it was part of the environment itself. When I brought this up to one of the administrators she said, "It's the first thing people say when they come here, I tell them, if you sneeze you going

wake them up.” Some of the women explained that they would wear one set of shoes to work, but also keep another quieter set of shoes at the office that would not make too much noise when they were walking around. My shoes made a slight sound as I walked in and heads popped up starting from the closest cubicle moving like a wave to the farthest one to investigate the sound. In a way, the quietness acted as a backdrop that set the tone and expectation for the entire organization.

As a whole, the organization made efforts to cultivate a communal environment by celebrating employee birthdays once a month and providing a treadmill hooked up to a computer and work desk in the lunchroom for workers to do their work there if they needed a change of pace. They also offered extra-curricular classes and events such as Karate after hours, office Olympics during the Olympics season, and an annual workgroup cook-off. Every morning at around 9:30 am the CEO would walk around to each employee to say good morning.

**3.6.2 Part 2: The Primary Study, Freight Services International.** The primary study was conducted at Freight Services International (FSI). Freight Services International had terminals across the country and internationally. Some of the many services they provided were ocean transport, refrigeration, inter-island services, trucking and delivery, and warehouse storage. At the time of the study Freight Services International had an estimate of 150 – 200 employees at their Honolulu terminal where the study was conducted.

FSI was located in an industrial part of Honolulu and like Matlock Engineering & Consulting FSI was also housed in a large warehouse, but unlike Matlock Engineering & Consulting, FSI appeared older and in need of attention. The warehouse was surrounded by a parking lot from front to back and was filled with shipping containers and large trucks waiting to be loaded with freight. The warehouse itself was divided into two main sections which

employees referred to as the office and the warehouse. To enter the building, you walked up a set of short stairs. At the landing, you had the option to either continue straight towards the open loading dock where containers and merchandise were being loaded on to or in too large trucks or to go through glass doors to enter into the office section of the building. On the separating wall between the loading dock and the glass office doors was a sign indicating how many days had passed since the last accident; sometimes the number wasn't changed for weeks. Passing through the glass doors you entered into a small foyer. To the left was a small office for the Safety Officer and an entry to the Dispatch Office, loading dock, warehouse, and refrigerated section. To the right were a reception desk and desks for the office employees who were organized according to their workgroups such as customer service and local trucking and delivery. Up a set of stairs was a modest conference room and other offices for Marketing, Hazardous Materials delivery, accounting, IT, and the Interisland Coordinating Group. Upstairs was also what they called the women's lunchroom. It was not only for the women in the organization but it was generally used by the women in the office and some of the men who worked in the office. At the time of the study, the number of men that worked in the office ranged from two to three. There was another lunchroom located downstairs in the warehouse for the men. The men who used that lunchroom were generally the warehouse workers and drivers. I was informed not to eat in the men's lunchroom downstairs. Some of the women told me that it was dirty and "all the guys ate down there, you don't wanna go down there." A couple of the drivers would eat upstairs, when I asked them why they didn't want to eat downstairs they said that it was dirty and that the air conditioner was dangerous. One man said that he did not want to get electrocuted and refused to eat in the men's lunchroom until it was fixed. When I mentioned that it sounded like a safety hazard and suggested that he might want to inform management he

said that it was and that he did tell them. One woman, the dispatch supervisor, took me on a tour of the warehouse section that extended into the back to include a huge almost warehouse-sized refrigerated area. As we passed by the men's lunchroom she said, "You don't wanna go in there, it's dirty and gross and because it connects to their lockers and shower you will sometimes see a naked guy...better to just stay away."

Sometimes the building's air conditioner worked but most often it did not. It either did not turn on at all or blew uncontrollably cold air out in one strong wind stream. The employees informed me that since the company was renting the building FSI did not want to put out any money to fix anything so I should just bring a jacket "you never know what it's going to be like."

### **3.7 The Workgroups**

#### **3.7.1 Part 1: The Pilot. Matlock Engineering & Consulting**

**3.7.1.1 Project Management group.** Matlock Engineering & Consulting used a multi-disciplined approach to engineering. When an account was estimated at approximately \$100,000 and up and called for the involvement of more than one service (such as structural engineering, civil engineering, traffic, or construction management), it fell under the jurisdiction of the Project Management (PM) Group. The group was headed by a Group Manager who oversaw the entire group with a Deputy Manager as second in command whose duty it was to step in when the Group Manager was unavailable. Under the Deputy Manager were the Project Managers who oversaw the specific accounts. The scope of a Project Manager's work included but was not limited to, finding clients and coordinating the entire project and making sure the needs of all the parties involved were being met. Experience and expertise were diverse among project managers at ME&C and the accounts that they oversaw often related to their area of expertise.

For instance, some Project Managers just handle the military accounts because of their experience as engineers in the Army and Navy. One Project Manager explained that he was not an engineer but came from the private sector and because of this, he tended to manage accounts that dealt with the private sector. Another Project Manager was an architect, and another had a civil engineering background.

Lastly was Project Coordinators. As one project coordinator put it, “it’s an entry-level job”. The role of the Project Coordinator varied with each workgroup. In some groups, they acted more as secretaries to the group leader and in other groups they had a more integrated role with the other group members. It depended on the needs and the dynamic of the workgroup. The Project Management group had four Project Coordinators, more than any other group, with most groups having just one. In the PM group Project Coordinators assisted the different Project Managers throughout the life of a project.

**3.7.1.2 Planning group.** Like the PM group, the Planning Group (PG) was also run by a group manager, Tracy, and Shawn the deputy manager. However, unlike the PM group the Planning group had only one Project Coordinator, who essentially functioned as the group leader, Tracy. The Planning group also had a sub-group, Traffic (TR). The TR group consisted of Dave the group leader, Jonathan an engineer, and Jason a part-time visiting intern from Hong Kong. The overall purpose of the planning group was to prepare and process environmental documentation needed in obtaining land use approvals and permits, conduct physical planning work, and qualitative and quantitative technical analysis.



### 3.7.2 Part 2. The Primary Study: Freight Services International

At Freight Services International, there were different departments including marketing and management. This study focused on three of them: the Transportation Group, Interisland Transportation, and Warehouse. Although they performed different tasks they all shared a common purpose, to get specific freight where it needed to go. They could be viewed as three separate groups but also one interconnected group. Some of the groups had their own manager with some even having supervisors, yet, despite this they all worked together towards one common daily objective: to deliver their shared clients' freight on time. They needed each other to do it because each group handled a different aspect of the delivery. A freight order would begin with the Interisland Transportation Group, move on to Warehouse, and eventually be scheduled and delivered with the Transportation Group. The general manager explained to me, "They are like different groups but they're also one group". The table below lists the more prominent subjects included in this study from the primary workgroups observed.

Table 3.1

*Primary Workgroup Members: FSI*

<b>Primary Study Groups and Members: Freight Services International</b>			
<b>#</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Formal Group Affiliation</b>	<b>Formal Title</b>
<b>1</b>	Reed	Headed all the listed groups	General Manager
<b>2</b>	Clark	Transportation Group	Manager
<b>3</b>	Leila	Transportation Group	Supervisor & Dispatch
<b>4</b>	Mia	Transportation Group	Dispatch
<b>5</b>	Mike	Interisland Transportation	Manager
<b>6</b>	Isaac	Interisland Transportation	Transportation
<b>7</b>	Troy	Warehouse (peripheral subject)	Manager

Of these groups, I mainly observed two of the groups, the Interisland Shipping group, and the Transportation group, and considered the Warehouse group and other surrounding groups as peripheral or secondary groups. Group status, primary versus peripheral, was determined based

on my access to that group's workspace and workgroup members. In the primary groups' offices, Interisland Shipping and the Transportation, sometimes referred to as the Dispatch office, I had an unofficially designated seat that I usually sat at to observe. However, due to liability concerns, I was not able to wander the warehouse unattended.

**3.7.2.1 Transportation group. Core group members:** Clark, Leila, Mia, Reed

Observations for the Transportation group mainly took place in the dispatch office, a long and relatively narrow office that sat at the edge of and faced the main loading dock in the warehouse. The unrefrigerated trucks, such as box trucks and those that carried shipping containers, reversed up to the loading dock as forklifts and workers hurried to load their deliveries. The main entrance into the dispatch office was through the warehouse and then through the dispatch office door. It resembled a portable detachable office (which it probably was) and had its own air conditioner which was also the most reliable one in the building. It was a window air conditioner that drained into a bucket under a back desk and had to be emptied every night or else it overflowed into the office. Because it was the only reliable air conditioner many of the other workers, including from the warehouse and sometimes even office employees, tried to hang out there. I think many more would have risked staying if they were not intimidated by Leila, the dispatch supervisor. She was loud and not afraid to tell people how she felt about them in often abrasive terms and she got irritable when the office got crowded.

The dispatch office was designed to face the warehouse. Two long desks spanned the entire office, with one straddling the front wall and the other the back wall leaving a narrow walkway down the middle. The two remaining side walls each had a door with the main door leading out to the loading dock and the door on the opposite wall leading to a little closet of a room where the route scheduler, Elena, worked. The long front desk was propped against the

wall, but instead of a solid wall, it was a long bank of windows. At one end of the desk sat Leila, the Dispatch Supervisor and her work station and at the opposite end sat Mia and her work station. I sat between the two of them in the center of the desk and office with a mini-refrigerator at my feet, and we all faced and watched the warehouse and loading dock. At each of their desks was a window that opened. Anyone who wanted to talk with either Leila or Mia went to their respective window. When they were ready or not on the phone they would open their window and converse thru it or hand drivers their next delivery assignment and other paperwork. Sometimes drivers or warehouse workers would come into the office but they were usually chased out by either Leila or Mia. Because of the noise on the dock and to keep the air from the air conditioner cool the windows were never just left open for no reason. Leila had a stick that she kept near her desk that she used to open and shut the window without needing to stand or reach far. She also tapped the window from her seat when she wanted to get the attention of someone on the other side. I could observe the entire office looking forward towards the dock because of the reflection from the window's glass and watch the warehouse at the same time. It was ideal for observations.

Leila and Mia were both loud and vocal. They were not afraid to yell at others, swear, call people names like "stupid \*ss", "donkey", "dummy" or "stupid head", even to people's faces, but I never caught them doing it to each other. They seemed to be very good friends. They relied on each other and appeared to share a mutual respect for one another. Some specific things that they bonded over and that seemed to strengthen their relationship were their constant smoke breaks together and their mutual dislike for the manager directly above them, Clark. At first, their loud voice volume and rough nature seemed abrasive but over time I realized that although they could be offensive many of the other warehouse workers and drivers were usually

not offended or did not openly show it. It was not unusual for Leila to march out on to the dock and start scolding a driver or warehouse worker for something. She was very animated and would sometimes throw her hands in the air or wag her finger at whoever she was reprimanding. Sometimes you could see some of the workers mimicking her movements by wagging their fingers at each other behind her back and pretending to scold each other and laughing, yet they always did as she asked and seemingly without resentment. Frank, an older man with a thick foreign accent and deep tan was in charge of the front and back parking lots, which they referred to as the yard. He was responsible for parking and managing all of the trucks in the yard. Frank referred to Leila endearingly as “Mama” even though he was clearly older than her. He would come into the dispatch office and ask me, “Have you seen Mama?” or call out to her, “Hey, mama”. She never rebuked him and she was not one to hold back when she did not like something. Although they would sometimes get irritated by her, Leila seemed to be endearing too many of them because she cared for them and could be relied on to get things done on their behalf. On many occasions, I witnessed her advocate on a worker's behalf to management and she made it a point to know the organization’s handbook. When I first started observations there she scared me but eventually, I came to miss her on the days she was not there. She was pleasant in her way. Leila, Clark, Mia, and Reed are discussed more in the Results and Discussion chapter.

### ***3.7.2.2 Interisland Shipping Group:*** Core members: Mike, Isaac, Reed

I spent most of my mornings upstairs with the Interisland Coordinating Group. The upstairs room housed three different workgroups. The radio was always on and when certain songs would come on everyone in the room would sing out loud and sometimes even sing in parts. The room had once been a storage space. It still had a storage space feel and felt a little

cramped. There were no windows but employees got up often to stretch or converse with one another. They each had their own cubicle and they all faced the door.

An excerpt from field notes:

The room is a dull avocado green with no windows and about half the size of the average classroom. The concrete walls give the feeling of being in a reinforced bunker. On a door I don't yet know where it leads too, hangs a big Christmas wreath even though it is in the middle of the year. On the other side of the room, a one and a half foot Santa stands idle next to a big boom box covered in stuffed animals and precious moments figurines while soft rock jams from the 80's and 90's playing. On one wall hangs a Hazardous material loading and segregation chart. Tight cubicles fill the room for six people with 3-foot "desk dividers. Every cubicle has family pictures and memorabilia, a very cozy room where the door remains open and people come in and out to use the copy machine at the front of the room.

They chided each other and joked around. Sometimes they had conversations with each other while sitting at their desks, just talking across the room, sometimes it was work-related but often it wasn't since many of them belonged to different workgroups. Conversations ranged from the newest eateries to teasing or razing other employees.

### **3.8 Data Collection and Analysis**

**3.8.1 Observation and informal interview data collection and analysis: CCM.** The primary modes of data collection were observations and informal interviews with some interviews being audio digitally recorded. Observations and interview data were collected and analyzed using Constant Comparative Method (CCM) by coding (incident by incident in two

parts: part 1: initial coding and part 2: focused coding) and memo writing. In a comparative study incidents are compared to each other, “then as your ideas take hold compare incidents to your conceptualizations of incidents coded earlier. That way you can identify properties of your emerging concept” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 53). Methods of constant comparison, refer to constant data monitoring, which involves comparing collected data with incoming data being coded into categories and then integrating those categories and their properties to identify patterns (Powers & Knapp, 2010).

**3.8.2 Coding.** Coding was guided by the research questions. As data was gathered incidents were noted and then coded and continually compared to previous incidents. As similar incidents were identified they were grouped by category. Coding was done in two parts, first, initial coding and second, focused coding.

Initial coding can be characterized as exploratory. Charmaz describes initial coding with words and phrases such as ‘openness’, “emerging”, “action-oriented”, “making discoveries”, and “open-ended”. This initial exploratory phase is meant to “spark your thinking and allow new ideas to emerge” while still acknowledging that “researchers hold prior ideas and skills” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 48). Charmaz indicated that at this stage coding should stick close to the data and urges that one should try to see actions in each segment of data. Reflective questions should include (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978):

- What does the data reveal?
- From whose point of view?
- What category does this specific datum indicate?

The point of this stage was to remain open and to see where the data would take me. It was important to be continually analyzing new data against previously gathered data as well as simultaneously developing categories while looking for gaps and categories to be addressed by follow-up interviews. I found it very helpful to keep a copy of my research questions in my field book with me at all times. I would review it every morning and then throughout the day when there was a lull. Although this was an exploratory study it was easy to get caught up in directions that diverged far from my initial purposes. Those divergences were important and were either recorded and analyzed within this framework or noted for possible future research, but it was helpful to always remember my initial purposes.

Focused coding is more directive, selective, and conceptual in an effort to explain larger segments of the data by focusing on the most significant and/or frequent codes identified earlier. Focused coding is a way of sifting through the data and deciding “which codes make the most analytic sense to categorize your data incisively and completely...through focused coding, you can move across interviews and observations and compare people’s experiences, actions, and interpretations [...] the codes condense data and provide a handle on them” (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 57-59). Initial coding and focused coding are not a linear process and may require that earlier data be re-examined and so forth all in the effort to develop a more focused code (Charmaz, 2006). Articles on CCM suggest that novice attempts at open coding using the CCM approach to allow categories to emerge from data resulted in confusion and an overabundance of categories but that there are ways for novice researchers to deal with large amounts of data (Fram, 2013; Kelle, 2005). My response to this is focused coding. Focused coding is a systematic opportunity to reduce and reorganize collected data in the continual process of collecting and sorting.

**3.8.3 Memos.** Glaser (1978) specifically pointed out the important rule of memo keeping when using the Constant Comparative Method:

Stop coding and record a memo on ideas. The rule is designed to tap the initial freshness of the analyst's theoretical notions and to relieve the conflict in thought. In doing so, the analyst should take as much time as necessary for reflecting and taking his thinking to its most [...] logical conclusions. (Glaser, 1978, p. 440)

Memos are to be written in conjunction with coding, more specifically with each incident as a way to better define categories and codes, detail processes gathered through observations and interviews, understanding social processes and patterns, and to record reflections.

***Memo Writing in the Field:***

For this study Memos were written in conjunction with coding. Memos were approached in three ways for this study, a morning memo, an end of the day memo, and a reflection book. **1)**

**Morning Memo:** each morning before beginning observations I would write a Morning Memo.

Topics ranged from but were not limited to reflections that I might have pondered on since the last observation, specific things to be aware of concerning roles or coding, or notes about the environment or the people. **2) End of the Day Memos:** these memos were written before

leaving the organization at the end of each day. At the end of the day, I would review all of the notes that I had jotted down during the day. End of the day memo notes included a range of information from a summary of the day to incidents to highlights that stood out that day. Also included were roads of enquiry I thought I should be aware of or pursue, reminders of what I should be aware of during the next observation day, ideas and notes that I should review at my next observation session, and reminders to follow up on that I may have written in the separate reflections book regarding certain incidents.



**3) Reflection Book:** By the end of my time at Freight Services International I had six handwritten field books and hours of audio recordings. Although I had gone through six field books I kept the same reflection journal throughout the study regardless of what field notebook I was using. The reflection journal was carried around in conjunction with the field notebook. Main ideas, reflections, thoughts and connections between incidents among other things were recorded in the reflection book. The reflection book allowed me to have one consistent resource that linked all of my other field notebooks together so that I could refer to ideas and thoughts that I had had in the previous field notebooks. It would have been too cumbersome to carry all of my field notebooks around all of the time (I tried this method with the first two field books). The reflection book was a helpful way to combine key ideas, thoughts, and reflections, make connections and comparisons and review highlighted notes from the other books while in the field without needing to have all of the notebooks on hand. It acted as a type of reference guide for all of my notes and other notebooks. It proved to be very useful during observations as well as after.

## Chapter 4. Findings and Results

### Chapter Overview:

- 4.1 Introduction and Findings Overview
  - 4.1.1 Four-part Framework Overview
  - 4.1.2 Research Questions Addressed
- 4.2 Overview of Notable Observations
- 4.3 Part 1: Identifying the Individual Informal Roles, Social Processes, & Environment within the Workgroup
  - 4.3.1 Supporter Informal Role Identification Spectrum (SIRIS)
    - 4.3.1.1 SIRIS Roles
      - Informal Leader (IL)
      - Key Advocates (KA)
      - Advocates (AD)
      - Non-Advocates (NA)
      - Followers (FR)
      - Disconnects (DC)
      - Indifferents (ID)
      - Diminished Standings (DS)
      - Shirkers (SR)
      - Impeders (IP)
    - 4.3.1.2 SIRIS Organizational Pyramid of Informal Roles and Influence
  - 4.3.2 Relational Categories
  - 4.3.3 Bonding Rituals
  - 4.3.4 The Social
  - 4.3.5 Social Currency Exchange
  - 4.3.6 Perceived Social Need
  - 4.3.7 Perceived Social Flaw
  - 4.3.8 Perceived Social Strength
- 4.4. Part 2: Gauging an Individual's Informal Role's Productivity in their Formal Role's Workgroup Context
  - 4.4.1 Informal Role Productivity Analysis (IRPA)
    - 4.4.1.1 IRPA Roles
      - On-Task oriented roles (A)
      - Relationship building and maintenance roles (B)
      - Self-serving Oriented Role (C)
      - Obstructing Oriented roles (D)
      - On-Task Oriented/ Self-Serving oriented roles in action (AC)
      - On-task Oriented /relationship building & maintenance roles (AB)
      - On-Task Oriented/relationship building & maintenance/self-serving roles (ABC)
  - 4.4.2 IRPA Roles Overview
  - 4.4.3 Informal Roles Productivity Analysis Score
    - 4.4.3.1 Two IRPA scores: Individual and Workgroup
- 4.5 Part 3: Examining the Workgroup as a Whole
  - 4.5.1 Healthy Versus Struggling Evaluation (HVSE)

- 4.6 Part 4: Bringing It All Together in a Practical Application
  - 4.6.1 Individual Subject Profiles
  - 4.6.2 Healthy VS Struggling Workgroup Assessment Profile Worksheet
  - 4.6.3 Generalized Organizational Hierarch Pyramids Worksheet Applied
- 4.7 Visual conceptualization of the combination of the SIRIS and IRPA roles
- 4.8 Chapter Summary

#### **4.1 Introduction and Findings Overview**

Findings include a four-part analysis. Each part's contribution adds to the overall analysis ultimately culminating into the Supportership Informal Role Profile (SIRP). The framework's four parts are: Part 1: Supportership Informal Role Identification Spectrum (SIRIS) and focuses on identifying the individual informal roles, social processes, and understanding the environment of the workgroup. Part 2: Informal Role Productivity Analysis (IRPA), is used to gauge an individual group member's informal role productivity in their formal role's workgroup context. Part 3: Healthy Versus Struggling Evaluation (HVSE), examines the workgroup as a whole and determines the health of the workgroup. Part 4: Application of the findings, is an example of how the findings can be applied in a real-world setting by applying instruments that were developed from the observations and findings of this dissertation. The findings of this study, including observations, notes, and analysis, were organized into this framework. The remainder of this introduction gives a brief overview of this four-part framework, a review of the Research Questions, and lastly includes an overview of the notable observations of this study. The following table, Table 4.1 Supportership Informal Roles Profile Framework Overview, is a general simplified overview of the process.

Table 4.1

*Supportership Informal Roles Profile Framework Overview*

<b>Part 1</b>	<b>Identifying the Individual Informal Roles, Social Processes, &amp; Environment within the Workgroup</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportership Informal Roles Identification Spectrum (SIRIS)</li> <li>• Contextual Relational Categories &amp; Descriptions</li> <li>• Bonding Rituals</li> <li>• The Social</li> <li>• Social Currency Exchange</li> <li>• Perceived Social Needs</li> <li>• Social Flaws, and Social Strengths</li> </ul>	
<b>Part 2</b>	<b>Gauging an Individual's Informal Role's Productivity in their Formal Role's Workgroup Context</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal Roles Productivity Analysis (IRPA)</li> </ul>	
<b>Part 3</b>	<b>Examining the Workgroup as a Whole</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Healthy Versus Struggling Evaluation (HVSE)</li> </ul>	
<b>Part 4</b>	<b>The Application</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group Member Profiles</li> <li>• Supportership Informal Roles Group Assessment</li> <li>• The Generalized Organizational Hierarchy Pyramid</li> </ul>	

**4.1.1 Four-part Framework Overview**

Part 1 aims at identifying the individual informal roles within the workgroup, social processes taking place, and understanding the environment of the workgroup. Part one introduces the Supportership Informal Roles Identification Spectrum (SIRIS) which identifies eight types of informal roles that were observed during the study. These roles have the ability to either stand on their own as informal roles or act as an overarching category to encompass other more trait-based informal roles found in the literature. Part 1 will also address the social aspect of informal roles for instance, how workgroup members are connected as well as who may be considered more influential and why.

In addition to the informal SIRIS roles identified, six strategies that were derived through observations throughout this study are also included in this section:

1. Contextual Relational Categories & Descriptions
2. Bonding Rituals
3. The Social
4. Social Currency Exchange
5. Perceived Social Needs
6. Social Flaws, and Social Strengths

These strategies are the outcome of observed patterns and proved helpful in identifying subjects' informal roles, determining workgroup members' SIRIS placements within the social structure and contributed to a better understanding of the relational nature of the workgroup and its members.

Part 2 looks at gauging an individual group member's informal role productivity in their formal role's workgroup context using the Informal Role Productivity Analysis (IRPA). Within the context of their SIRIS roles, IRPA roles seek to understand how productive group members are at staying on task and contributing to their formal responsibilities. IRPA roles work in conjunction with SIRIS roles and examine how productive an individual is within their informal role at accomplishing formal organizational and workgroup objectives. This is a significant distinction, by only focusing on the informal structure of a group and not examining how those informal aspects manifest in the formal environment of their workgroup would be leaving out helpful and revealing information as to why a group may be functioning in the way that it is. For instance, an individual identified by his SIRIS or informal role, as having a Diminished Standing in the eyes of his peers does not necessarily mean that he is not productive or not good at

accomplishing his formal duties. It may be that his group members dislike his attitude and cocky demeanor despite being a productive worker. Likewise, an individual who may be identified as an informal leader because of her ability to connect well with others does not necessarily imply that she generally has a habit of staying on task, but instead has influential connections and is known to help others out when they need an extra hand. A person's informal role and level of influence and connections are not always linked to their actual work contribution.

Together SIRIS and IRPA roles work towards a more complete picture of workgroup members. SIRIS identifies group member's informal roles and the informal social structure while IRPA looks at how those informal roles might impact the formal structure and outcomes. Part 1 and part 2 of the framework profiles each group member individually. Part 3 of the framework begins to look at the workgroup and its members as a whole.

Part 3 introduces the Healthy Versus Struggling Evaluation Scale (HVSES) in which the IRPA scores of all the group members are brought together to determine the health of the workgroup. The HVSE does this by examining each group members' IRPA roles in conjunction with the other workgroup members' roles and from that data determines the overall health of the group. This section also helps to prepare the data for the *Healthy Struggling Workgroup Assessment Profile Worksheet* and the *Generalized Organizational Hierarchy Pyramids Worksheet* in section four, practical application.

Part 4, the application, introduces three instruments that can be used to organize and assess the collected data: 1) *Individual Subject Profile* worksheet 2) *Healthy VS Struggling Workgroup Assessment Profile* worksheet and 3) *Generalized Organizational Hierarchy Pyramid* worksheet.

The remainder of this chapter will detail the four-part framework which includes findings and their analysis and conclude with the Healthy Struggling Workgroup Assessment Profile Worksheet and the Generalized Organizational Hierarchy Pyramid Worksheet.

## **4.2 Part 1: Identifying the Individual Informal Roles, Social Processes, & Environment**

### **Within the Workgroup**

**4.2.1 Supportership Informal Role Identification Spectrum (SIRIS).** The Supportership Informal Roles Identification Spectrum (SIRIS) is the first section of the four-part framework. The purpose of SIRIS is to identify and understand the informal social structure of the workgroup. This is done by identifying the informal roles that group members hold, keying into the overall sociality of the group, identifying group member dynamics or how they interact and analyzing the informal relationships between group members. SIRIS can be useful in identifying alternative flows of information, the workgroup's hierarchy of influence, and information bottlenecks. It was observed that formal leadership was a key factor in shaping the informal roles that were taken on by workgroup members. The formal leaders of workgroups had the distinct ability to set the tone of the informal structure of the group which in turn had a hand in influencing what informal roles group members took on. This paper recognizes that formal leaders are not the sole shaper of the culture or context of the workgroup environment, let alone the ultimate, but they were important in determining what informal roles many workgroup members felt they needed to fill. Whether a formal leader's actions are intentional or unintentional the consequences of those actions set the tone for the group. Possible outcomes include affecting workgroup dynamics, morale, information flow and sometimes even workgroup productivity.

The Supportership Informal Role Identification Spectrum (SIRIS) is comprised of nine informal roles. These roles were determined after analyzing significant patterns during observations. They are:

- Informal Leader (IL)
- Key Advocates (KA)
- Advocates (AD)
- Non-Advocates (NA)
- Followers (FR)
- Disconnects (DC)
- Indifferents (ID)
- Diminished Standings (DS)
- Shirkers (SR)
- Impeders (IP)

Their context is within the workgroup and in their relation to other members of the workgroup. It is referred to as a “Spectrum” for two reasons first because they range a spectrum of varying levels of perceived influence within the group and secondly because each role can function either as the informal role itself or as an overarching category for more specific trait-roles identified in this study or the literature.

As explained, each SIRIS role can stand as an informal role on its own or also include what this study refers to as a Trait-role. Although not always necessary, Trait-roles can be helpful. For example, using SIRIS, a subject might be identified as a Key Advocate (KA), the subject’s behavior could also be narrowed down to a Trait-role by then adding to the label terms such as, “problem solver”, “boundary spanner”, or “motivator”. The subject’s informal role



could then be recognized as Key Advocate: Problem Solver or Key Advocate: Boundary Spanner. Trait-roles can be useful in labeling an observed behavior or pattern of a subject that helps to explain the reason behind their position. However, focusing solely on Trait-roles can be limiting as the subject's Trait-roles and behaviors may change or evolve even when their SIRIS role or influence may remain the same.

The SIRIS model can be helpful during observations because its structure allows for observers to immediately place actors into a context-based on SIRIS roles. Although SIRIS roles are not static observers can get an initial sense of the actor's place within the workgroup as well as the group's dynamics. Later during observations or while reviewing gathered data and identifying patterns if applicable or needed a Trait-role may be applied to reinforce the actor's SIRIS role. Because Trait-roles tend to be focused on what a subject does it can be more limiting than a SIRIS role which focuses on how what a subject does affects others and their position in the workgroup's informal social structure. Regardless, Trait-roles can be very important and helpful. As useful as Trait-roles can be focusing on Trait Roles are beyond the scope of this paper and will only be referred to minimally.

The following section will explain and expand upon the informal roles that culminate together to create the Supporter'ship Informal Roles Identification Spectrum (SIRIS). There are ten identified SIRIS roles namely: Informal Leader (IL), Key Advocates (KA), Advocates (AD), Non-Advocate (NA), Followers (FR), Disconnects (DC), Indifferents (ID), Diminished Standing (DS), Shirkers (SR), and Impeders (IP). A brief overview of each role is explained in Table 4.2: Supporter'ship Informal Roles Identification Spectrum Abbreviated Description. Following table 4.2 will be an in-depth description of each of these roles as observed in the field as well as an observed example of that role and SIRIS Organizational Hierarchy and Informal Influence

Pyramid. The SIRIS Organizational Hierarchy and Informal Influence Pyramid is an opportunity to plot the SIRIS roles observed onto an organizational hierarchy pyramid as well as the organization's formal official reporting relationships and compare them.

Table 4.2

*Supportership Informal Roles Identification Spectrum Abbreviated Description*

#	Informal Role	Role ABB	Description
1	Informal Leader	IL	Informal leaders were observed to have the ability to key into what group members perceive as lacking and somehow provide that need. Like most leaders, they can be motivational for the group, fill in where formal leadership falls short and can be the driving force to move the group towards productive goals and outcomes
2	Key Advocates	KA	Potential informal leaders, individuals that have resources such as knowledge, specific or specialized skills, connections, or experience --this list is not exhaustive-- that result in them having a degree of influence in their own right. They have the capacity to contribute to the group in very significant ways and because of this they are recognized by others as key, or important in some way, they have the ability to legitimize the standing of an Informal Leader with their support.
3	Advocates	AD	Advocates for the formal or informal leader actively showing their support for someone. They feel that who is leading them and their workgroup makes a difference and matters. They differ from Key Advocates in that they do not have the same degree of influence
4	Non-Advocates	NA	Non-Advocates are open about their disfavor for either a formal leader or an informal leader. This does not mean that they are hostile or unproductive like Impeders (IP), but they are not shy about voicing their concerns with the current leadership that may be contrary to the current situation.
5	Followers	FR	Tend to go along with the majority of the group. They are not really invested in who is leading as long as the job is getting done and things are working out. This is not a negative category. Followers are not necessarily bad workers and they can contribute much too getting things accomplished it just doesn't matter to them who is managing the workgroup as long as the work is getting accomplished. They may have their own opinions concerning how things are being managed but are not willing to speak out about it unless it goes along with the majority.
6	Disconnects	DC	Disconnects tended to come across to others as aloof and very work-oriented, even driven to accomplish their work tasks. They failed to adequately connect interpersonally with others, yet were highly productive, placing a higher value on work tasks than those around them.
7	Indifferents	ID	Indifferents do not care about the group, and are maybe even disenchanted with the group in some way but can't afford to get kicked out or fired or do not want to leave the group because their leaving may result in pay cut, loss of seniority, affect a potential future promotion or for a personal reason. They have lost the fire of the vision, never had it, or no longer relates to it. They are there for the paycheck only and have no desire to better the group. Just wants to get their job done and will usually go along with whatever direction the rest of the group members want to pursue. They have no real opinion about who the leader is or how they are doing. Indifferents are not necessarily harmful to a workgroup's productivity as long as they understand what their formal role's responsibilities are and are productive, however,

			too many Indifferents in a workgroup group member dynamics may want to be evaluated.
8	Diminished Standings	DS	When an individual is treated less than their formal title would suggest they be treated by their workgroup or those who report to him or her and show them less respect despite their formal title.
9	Shirkers	SR	Shirking, social loafing, and free riding are essentially withholding effort, or the propensity to withhold effort due to motivation and or circumstance which can be equated with unproductive behavior (Kidwell & Bennett, 1993).
10	Impeders	IP	Negative roles that disrupt productivity or the tone of the group in impeding or bad ways and can be characterized as hostile and disruptive, and use deliberate forms of intimidation. Ultimately, they are roles that are negative and impede the group effort.

#### 4.2.1.1 SIRIS Roles

##### Informal Leaders (IL)

##### Informal Leadership Observation: Identifying Informal Leaders

It was observed that informal leaders were people who were able to fulfill the needs of their workgroup and workgroup members where the formal leader had fallen short. These individuals could emerge as an informal leader despite their group already having a formal leader. The traits of these informal leaders were not unlike traditional leaders in many ways. It was observed that these individuals seemed to have the ability, or were perceived by others as having the ability, to move the group towards perceived productive results and goals or fill gaps left open by the formal roles and leadership already in place. I observed that relationship building traits were also an important informal leader attribute. At the core of it, even though different groups had different values and needs informal leaders seemed to emerge when they were able to key into gaps and address the needs of their group members in meaningful ways. Unlike formal leaders, informal leaders have no formal authority, instead, their authenticity as a leader has been granted to them by their peers for their ability to accomplish what would otherwise not be done or not be done to their group's expectations.

### ***Field Observation: Informal Leaders***

At 1:05 pm Reed (General Manager) was called into the dispatch office by Leila (Dispatch Supervisor) because there was a problem with a customer who was unhappy about how she was being treated. Erin (Customer Service) who managed the account worked in the office under Maria (Office Manager). The customer for this particular account transports Hazmat material, explosives that she needed by Saturday. The Thursday before, for some reason, most likely a scheduling problem, Erin was informed by their in house scheduling that the delivery was not going to be delivered on its due date. Erin informed the customer. Friday, the next day, Clark, the Transportation Manager who was also Leila's reporting superior, looked at the job and then at the last minute said that he could deliver the package. Erin called the customer to inform her that they could now deliver the package.

The customer was angry with the situation because she had had to hire another trucking company to deliver it when Freight Services International told her that they could not. Erin had the upset customer speak with her manager, Maria. However, according to Leila, the customer was still very upset because the customer just wanted an apology, but all Maria did was give the customer excuses. The customer's call had then been handed over to Clark the Transportation Manager. For some reason, the customer did not appreciate how Clark was treating her either. Finally, the customer was transferred to Leila in the dispatch office. The customer expressed to Leila that she did not appreciate how she was being treated. Leila apologized to her and said that she would talk to the General Manager and informed the customer to not talk to Clark anymore. Leila informed Reed that the woman did not want to deal with Clark or Maria; that the customer had been with them for three years and did not want to leave but at the same time did not appreciate how she was being treated.

### *Disregard for Formal Roles*

Wanting to keep their customer, together in the dispatch office, Reed, Leila, and Mia came up with a way for the customer to bypass Clark, Erin, and Maria completely in the future. It was very interesting to hear them brainstorm together as they worked to come to a suitable solution. Although Clark and Maria were the managers and Leila and Mia were below them on the organizational hierarchy Reed addressed the two women as if their roles and organizational authority outranked their managers. I was able to observe how much Reed respected Leila and Mia's opinions. Together, Leila and Mia helped Reed problem solve the situation by explaining to him that before Erin had the account, Roger had been handling it and that it would probably be best to ask him to take it over again. After consulting with Leila and Mia Reed agreed. Before leaving Reed asked Leila:

REED (to Leila): So, should I call her? (The customer) I would just apologize.

LEILA: Yeah, she'd like that, that's all she wanted, someone to apologize.

In this example, Reed, the General Manager, trusted Leila's assessment of the situation and problem solved it with her. From a formal hierarchy perspective, this would have been something he would have problem-solved with his managers but they proved to be out of touch with what needed to be done and had worsened the situation. On the other hand, Leila consistently showed her ability to pick up where formal authority fell short and move towards productive outcomes. It also illustrated Reed's lack of confidence in those above her. I would later observe that this type of interaction between Leila and Reed was a reoccurring pattern. It was not unusual for Reed to break the formal chain of command by bypassing his managers including keeping managers away from "special" and "sensitive" accounts and work directly with Leila and Mia. Leila, in particular, was someone that he relied on a lot when his formal

leaders, AKA managers, fell short in their expected duties. Leila seemed to be able to key into what was not being accomplished by her managers and fill that need. Although those around her, in and out of her group, did not know specifically how she helped Reed they seemed to recognize her informal importance and I think that for many it blurred the line between formal and informal authority. Many came to her for help with their formal concerns before approaching their managers. In addition to that, because Reed was the terminal's General Manager, as one woman put it, "he's my boss's boss's, boss" his formal authority added to Leila's influence.

### **Key Advocates (KA).**

#### **Key Advocates observation 1: Key Advocates can look very similar to Informal Leader.**

It was observed that a glance Key Advocates can look very similar to Informal Leaders and if the environment of their workgroup were structured differently they might have been the Informal Leader.

#### **Key Advocates observation 2: Identifying a Key Advocate**

Key Advocates were observed to be individuals that had resources such as knowledge, specific or specialized skills, connections, or experience --this list is not exhaustive-- that result in them having a degree of influence in their own right. It was also observed that Key Advocates have the capacity to contribute to the group in very significant ways and because of this, they are recognized by others as key, or important in some way. Key Advocates were seen to lend legitimacy to an informal leader through their support. While observing some Key Advocates I recognized that they shared similar traits to those described in the literature as opinion leaders, spark plugs, boundary spanners, and central connectors. Opinion leaders are considered

individuals that have “a strong ability to interact with others. These charismatic people can influence the attitude of other workers towards organizational changes” (de Toni, A.F and Nonino, F., 2010, p. 88; Krackhardt, 1992). Spark Plugs were described in athletics as, “an athlete who ignites, inspires, or animates a group towards a common goal. May be referred to as a task booster” (Cope, Eys, Beauchamp, Schinke, & Bosselut, 2011, p. 24). Boundary spanners are individuals who connect one informal network to other groups of people. Central connectors have been identified as people who have the ability to connect many people within an informal network (de Toni, A.F and Nonino, F., 2010; Cross & Prusak 2002). Although these traits could also be used to describe informal leaders, Key Advocates seem to differ from informal leaders in that they do not seem to consistently want the responsibility that comes with the spotlight and accountability to others associated with being the “leader”. For the Key Advocates observed in this study, this role allowed them to be involved in the center of things, give needed advice and help but then pull away when they wanted too without any pressure or negative repercussions. Informal leaders and formal leaders can benefit greatly as well as have their influence bolstered when they have the support of Key Advocates.

If formal leadership is lacking and/or there is no informal leadership, Key Advocates seem like the most likely individuals to move into an informal leadership position. In one incident it was observed that in a time of uncertainty workgroup members as well as outsiders would start looking to them for direction. However, it is their choice if they want to encourage that or not by actually taking on the different responsibilities, shying away, or showing their support for another individual, in turn boosting that individual’s likelihood of becoming the Informal Leader. This would allow the Key advocate to stay under the radar. It was observed that just because Key Advocates may not be considered the informal leader that does not mean

that they do not have the leadership skills necessary to assume the position or the influence. Leadership skills are a trait, the leader is a role. On the flip side, it should also be considered that maybe not all Key Advocates have the needed leadership skills to actually lead, motivate, or move the group effectively towards productive workgroup outcomes. Nevertheless, it has been observed that Key Advocates' opinions can carry substantial weight in the eyes of their peers.

Identifying leadership skills in an individual does not automatically imply that the individual is the informal leader of a group. It was observed within the workgroup context that individuals can have leadership traits such as using influence to shape task strategies, coordinate group efforts, and have influence beyond their formal role and still not be the informal leader. This model recognizes that individuals can be multifaceted. Not all individuals who have the skill, ability, knowledge, or potential also have the desire or the motivation to lead a group. There are many individuals who are content supporting others and have no desire themselves to be in the limelight or burdened with extra responsibilities. Yet, their support for their chosen group leader, formal or informal, can become an invaluable resource.

***Field Observation: Key Advocates.***

Mia was a social butterfly. She was very knowledgeable about the company and its workings, mainly because she had worked in every department at some point. She shared that sometimes when a department is having a problem she is sent to work in that department to see what's going on and to try to fix it. She knew many of the employees in both the warehouse and the offices. She had a very friendly and easy-going demeanor but was not afraid to speak her mind when crossed. During the day different employees would stop by her window to chat, catch up, and plan outings and bar-b-ques with her. It was not unusual for them to also come to her with their problems. When they came to her with computer program problems she would



troubleshoot it with them and she knew who to call in the main office on the mainland to get things fixed, even though their site had an IT person, Dianne. When people did not understand their forms they came to her and she cleared the confusion by explaining what forms they needed or how to correctly fill them out, most of those who came to her were not from her department. When people did not get along with others in their department and they had already spoken to their manager with no result she would comfort them and figure out solutions with them. Leila was observed to be an informal leader and shared her office space with Mia. Although it did not appear that many of them knew Leila in the same way, Mia's support and friendship with her implied something to those who trusted Mia namely that Leila could also be trusted. In that way, Mia's support helped to legitimize Leila to a degree with those who were not personally acquainted with her.

In the dispatch group at Freight Services International, I had initially thought that Mia was the Informal Leader of the group. As mentioned earlier, she had worked in almost every department in the organization, employees were constantly coming to her for help, support, suggestions, and advice, and she had the ear and regard of Reed the General Manager who was in charge of the entire Pacific region. In one episode Reed, the General Manager, approached Mia and Leila to take care of a certain "special" potential client that he was wooing. Together the three of them decided Clark, the Transportation Manager above Mia and Leila, did not need to know about it yet. Reed asked for Mia and Leila's business cards to give to the potential clients despite that not being part of their formal job description. By keeping Clark, the manager, out of the loop, this move on Reed's part was a departure from the formal chain of command and formal duties.

As time went on I realized that although Mia held a lot of influence she had no desire to “be in charge”. She enjoyed talking, gossiping, and spending time with the other employees. She seemed to relish being in the know and having her opinion have weight. She did not seem interested in holding any extra responsibility that would give added stress and take up more of her time.

### **Advocates (AD).**

#### **Advocates observations 1: Identifying an Advocate**

Advocates support either the formal or informal leader, depending on who they believe is adequately fulfilling the leader position and their needs. Advocates have actively and openly thrown in their lot and support for someone and it is clear to those around him or her who they support. Although they may not be considered by others as “influential” in any obvious way, their open support creates a supportive environment for the informal leader. If there are enough advocates within a workgroup those who may not support an informal leader may be reluctant to openly state it or go against their decisions.

Overall, advocates feel that whoever is leading them and their workgroup makes a difference or they have a degree of loyalty towards the person they support. In the latter case, their loyalty may stem from the informal dynamics of their relationship. Relationship dynamics are expanded upon in the Relational Category portion of this chapter and offer added insight into possible social and relational motivations behind informal roles.

#### **Advocates observation 2: Importance of Advocates & Distinction from Key Advocates**

Advocates differ from Key Advocates in their reach of influence but are no less significant as a workgroup member. Knowing someone is an advocate can be very helpful in

creating a supportive environment for informal leaders. If there are enough advocates informal leaders may be able to take risks or make decisions they might not have been able to do had their environment been less supportive.

***Field Observation: Advocates.***

In the following excerpt taken directly from field notes Camille, who is an Operations Assistant, speaks highly of Reed the General Manager.

“I’m part-time. Reed is a great guy for a general manager he makes you feel special. I used to work under him but he’s hardly here. I came here to work for two days, I’ve been here for 10 years. I’m 74 but they let me keep working here. I used to work for the bank. I came here for a temporary 2-day job. The boss [Reed] asked me, ‘what you doing next week?’ I said ‘noth’n’, he said, ‘you like work?’ I’ve been here 10 years.” She lightly laughs as she shrugs her shoulders. “I keep asking Reed when you going leave?” (The implication is that she believes that he lets her work here out of kindness and that it’s because of him that she is able to keep her job).

Researcher Note: Camille feels like she’s too old to be working here at Freight Services International and she feels very grateful for her job. She also feels that the only reason why she’s still here is that Reed is nice and makes work for her.

Although Camille is timid and tends to keep to herself she is an open and avid Advocate for Reed. She has no obvious degree of influence with her fellow employees but her support for Reed helps to contribute to an overall supportive environment towards him.

## **Non-Advocates (NA).**

### **Non-Advocates observation: Identifying a Non-Advocate**

Non-Advocates are open about their disfavor for either a formal leader or an informal leader. This does not mean that they are hostile or unproductive to the degree of Impeders (IP), but they are not shy about voicing their concerns with the current leadership even if their concerns are contrary to the current norm.

#### ***Field Observation: Non-Advocates.***

Jonathan did not seem very happy working in the warehouse and could often be found in the dispatch office or upstairs office. In one exchange between him and Mike, Jonathan expressed his frustration with the double standard of his supervisors who had a habit of taking off from work without going through the proper channels and getting away with it:

MIKE: (to JONATHAN) So your boss going be off...Samuel said he not going be here tomorrow.

JONATHAN: Yeah, I know...how's that, you just get to tell your group you not going be here at the end of the week, no need put in for your vacation or anything.

In one conversation that I had with Jonathan, I asked him how he enjoyed working in the warehouse. He said that he did not enjoy it very much and was not planning on working there long. When I asked if he was planning on leaving the company he said, "Between you and me I'm going to move into the office, it's already pretty sure." I wished him luck on that. During my last week of observations at Freight Services International Mike left the company two years shy of his retirement age and Jonathan was seated at his desk.

## **Followers (FR).**

### **Followers observation: Identifying Followers**

It was observed that followers tended to go along with the majority of the group. They were not noticeably or overtly invested in who was leading as long as the job was getting done and things were working out. They were not specifically loyal to a specific formal or informal leader. This did not come across as a counter-productive category because their loyalty did not affect their work contribution. It would seem that work effort would most likely remain stable despite the formal or informal leader and in general, they contributed much too getting things accomplished if they were already prone to do so. Socially, followers seemed to feel most secure when they have another person to take the lead. They did not necessarily want to be in the spotlight or singled out. Although they did not always freely voice their opinions they did have them but are often reluctant to voice their opinions unless there was another person who they viewed as having influence who shared their same opinions or if they sensed that the majority felt the same way that they did. In general, followers seemed to come across as people who were perceived to be content to just go along with whatever was happening around them as long as it did not cause too much disruption to their duties.

### ***Field Observation: Followers.***

There were many who seemed content to just go along with whatever was happening around them. However, just because followers do not always voice their opinions does not mean that they agree with or are happy with a situation.

Theodore drove the box trucks at Freight Services International. He was a mild manner, older gentleman, who seemed to keep to himself. Every day he would come to Mia's dispatch window and tap on the door and then wait for Mia to give him his route of deliveries for the day.

The women in the dispatch office could be loud, aggressive, bossy, sometimes changing orders last minute or cutting people off in the middle of their conversations if it irritated them. They were also prone to frequent smoke breaks and seemed to get away with a lot more than the other employees. Theodore never reviled back or complained when they were rude to him. He was always well mannered, treated them with respect regardless of how they treated him and he never voiced his opinions. From all outward indications, he seemed “fine” with everything at work.

One morning I came into the breakroom earlier than usual, around 5:30 am, and no one from the office had come in yet. Theodore was sitting at one of the chairs when I had entered and sat down at the breakroom table. After some time passed he asked me why I was observing them. We started talking. We talked for a while about the company in general, his apartment building where he had just moved, and little about his family. Towards the conclusion of our conversation, we returned to the topic of work. Before leaving he said, “The dispatch office gets away with a lot, Leila and Mia are always taking smoke breaks and stuff, it shouldn’t be like that. It’s just not right.”

At around 11 am I left the upstairs office and went downstairs to the dispatch office where I usually finished my day. At his second run Theodore tapped on Mia’s window, Mia and Leila were caught up in their conversation, looked at him and then looked away. Mia opened the window and then shut it again on Theodore’s face, then she opened it again and gave him his delivery orders, they smiled at each other and he nodded as he left.

## **Disconnects (DC).**

### **Disconnect observation: Identifying Disconnects**

The Disconnects observed in this study tended to come off as aloof from the others. They were very work-oriented but failed to adequately connect with others or feel the need to socially connect with others in their workgroup. They tended to be very productive and well established in their field. The ones observed in this study were very educated, holding higher formal degrees than those around them such as Ph.D. and Masters Degrees were accomplished and seemed driven to accomplish their tasks at hand. The overall feeling that they gave off was that they had so much to do they did not have time to talk and that what they were doing was of great importance to all. They liked knowing what their responsibilities were in order to effectively accomplish them. Those observed did not seem as interested in the workgroup dynamics as much as they cared about getting work done and being productive.

### ***Field Observation: Disconnects***

Tracy was the formal group leader for the Planning Group at Matlock Engineering and Consulting. Those around her described her as smart, accomplished, and a great public speaker. However, she gave off the distinct feeling that she did not want to be bothered. She was continually bustling from one end of the office to the other. Once when I tried to speak to her while she was at her desk she abruptly stated, “No, I’m too busy” and promptly focused back on her work. I later found out that that behavior was not unusual. On the positive side, she seemed very driven and focused on accomplishing her work tasks. On the downside, she did not seem to value the interpersonal relationships within her group. Because of this and paired with her sometimes abrasive nature her workgroup members created a nonverbal system to warn each

other when she was near. One group member explained that they don't see her much unless she has something to say about their reports, then she will email them.

### **Indifferents (ID).**

#### **Indifferents observation 1: Identifying Indifferents**

Indifferents do not really care about the direction or leadership of the group. They may even be disenchanted with the group, organization or leadership in some way but cannot afford to either get kicked out, fired or do not want to leave the group for various reasons. For instance, leaving may result in a pay cut, loss of seniority, affect a potential future promotion, or they simply may have nowhere else to go. Indifferents may have lost the fire of the vision or no longer relate to it or their workgroup members. They are basically there for the paycheck and to get the job done and have no desire to invest in ways to better the group. Indifferents mainly want to get their job done and will usually go along with whatever direction the rest of the group members want to pursue. In addition, Indifferents may be disgruntled about how they are being treated and may not feel that what they say will make a difference. In return, they may express their feelings in ways that come across as not caring. Indifferent roles may not be very harmful to a workgroup as long as they understand what their formal role's responsibilities are and accomplish them.

#### **Indifferents observation 2: How Indifferents differ from Followers**

Indifferents differ from Followers in that they do not want to be there or in that group and carry a sense of discontent, whereas, followers have no problem with their group, group members, or leadership and are content to just go along with everyone else.

#### ***Field Observation: Indifferents***



The following is a conversation that illustrates Mike's growing disenchantment with his job and organization. The following excerpt is taken from field notes:

The office received a memo that said: "Jim Visiting". Jim was the president of the company.

RESEARCHER (to Mike): "Who's Jim?"

MIKE: The president

RESEARCHER: Oh, I thought he was the VP (vice president)

MIKE: No, he's the president like Allison (in marketing)

RESEARCHER: Oh, I thought that Allison was only the VP of marketing here, not of everything. So she's the VP of marketing for the whole company?

MIKE: I don't really know, I don't really care about all that stuff, all I know is that in the five years I work here I never get one raise.

RESEARCHER: Oh, how often do they give raises?

MIKE: I don't know but everyone got one across the board except for me, I never get.

RESEARCHER: Oh. Maybe there was a mistake in the paperwork?

MIKE: Huh?

RESEARCHER: Maybe there was a mistake in the paperwork.

MIKE: No, my pay stub still says the same amount.

I decided not to push it but I thought that it was interesting that a raise would be given across the board to everyone except for him. Mike then made a joke about it, something about going to the store but telling the clerk he couldn't purchase the items because he "never get the raise".

When I first began my observations at FSI Mike seemed very supportive of the organization and was quick to point out how successful Freight Services International was in their field. As time passed he began making little jokes and expressed nonverbal cues that hinted at his discontent such as rolling his eyes when certain managers' names were mentioned or sharing some less than legal practices some of the managers practiced to get shipments through. He was never outright hostile towards anyone in particular but he did not hide his growing discontent by sleeping at his desk during work hours and visiting gambling sites while on the clock.

### **Diminished Standings (DS).**

#### **Diminished Standing observation: Identifying Diminished Standing**

Diminished Standing is when an individual is treated less than their formal title would suggest they be treated and those who report to him or her show them less respect despite their formal title. These individuals might be bypassed in some way either in responsibility or in the information flow. This disregard might even extend to those in Diminished Standing not being consulted or informed on matters that directly fall under their formal jurisdiction.

#### ***Field Observation: Diminished Standings***

The following examples are just a few of many involving Leila and Mia, dispatch office workers at FSI, and their manager Clark, who they appear to have no respect for.

#### ***Example 1:***

Leila worked a very early shift and went home at 7:30 am. Clark filled in for her but kept making mistakes such as giving drivers the wrong orders and each time he did that he would have to run outside to catch the driver before he left and make the correction. Each time he did Mia would say in a demeaning tone, "He's such a dingleberry."

MIA: He drives me crazy when we're alone, it's just me and him. I tell him. I know he irritates Leila, she'll yell at him. He's lucky I've got more patience than Leila but he cannot handle his job without stressing

*Example 2:*

Clark came into the dispatch office while both Mia and Leila were working and said that he wanted to talk to them. Neither acknowledged him. He continued by explaining that he had gotten an email from a customer explaining that two of their stores wanted to go from daytime delivery to nighttime delivery. Clark wanted to know what they should do and he wanted to run possible driving routes and drivers by Leila and Mia. After he explained all of this neither Leila nor Mia turned around to acknowledge him, they both just continued to work as if Clark was not even there.

CLARK: (frustrated) Well?!

LEILA: (Not looking up from her work) Well what?

CLARK: What do you think?

LEILA: I don't know, if you like...

MIA: (Not looking up from her work) Well I guess that route is okay if it's theirs and there's no traffic.

*Clark leaves the office irritated.*

LEILA (to Mia): I don't know why Clark came to us. If it don't work I don't want to get blamed if it doesn't work.

MIA: Yeah.

LEILA: If you ask me he shouldn't even ask us, he shouldn't even schedule it. Harry (Routing scheduler) should do it because if it doesn't work out...

*Example 3:*

RESEARCHER: (to Leila and Mia) Do you guys report to Maria (the office manager)?

LEILA: No, we report to bonehead.

MIA: Clark

LEILA and MIA both laugh

LEILA: Clark is our boss and Reed is our (General Manager)

CLARK: (enters the dispatch office) Did Troy (Warehouse manager) come back? (he leaves the dispatch office).

LEILA: It's like they jealous of each other, if one eating lunch (with Reed the General Manager), they fuss, why I not invited to eat lunch?

MIA: Guys are worst than girls

LEILA: They gossip, backstab, talk stink

MIA: And when you call them on it they say, "I never said that".

Although Clark formally outranks them in the formal sense they exhibit little respect for him.

They are not secretive about it and I have often observed them yelling at him or "cutting him

down". If Clark asks them to do something within the scope of their job they will complete it but

they are not slow to undermine his authority. Earlier in the section labeled "Field observation:

Key Advocates," an incident is discussed in which Reed the General Manager bypasses Clark,

the manager of the Transportation workgroup. Instead, Reed approaches Mia and Leila to take

care of a special potential client that he is wooing. Along with the General Manager, Leila and

Mia decide to leave Clark out of the loop until everything is settled. Reed asks Leila and Mia for

their business cards so that the clients can contact them directly and not have to go through the

company system. In this example, even the General Manager is exhibiting diminished respect for Clark's formal position.

### **Shirkers (SR).**

#### **Shirking observation: Identifying Shirkers**

The concept of shirking is not a unique one and during this study, subjects were often observed to be shirking to some degree. In conjunction with my observations, the jumping-off point for developing the definition of shirking for this paper was adopted from Kidwell and Bennett (1993) in which they brought together three fields of research to examine the common phenomena of what they referred to as an employee's propensity to withhold effort. They explain, "Three concepts have been used to frame the study of withholding effort: shirking, social loafing, and free-riding [...] we suggest it would benefit organizational researchers to study the basic behavior common to all of the previous terms, that is, withholding effort [...] the likelihood that an individual will give less than full effort on a job-related task" (Kidwell & Bennett, 1993, pp. 429-430). Within the scope of this study, subjects were not labeled shirkers if they were perceived as giving less than their full effort. Performing the same tasks every day in windowless rooms in which the temperamental air conditioner was unpredictably very cold or not working at all among other factors sometimes made it difficult for employees to give their full effort all of the time. Also, during this study, it was difficult to accurately determine what each individual's full effort looked like however, most completed their tasks. This was evident in them making their delivery deadlines on time. Within the scope of this paper, shirking was identified as an employee's propensity to withhold effort and habitually perform below organizational and social expectations.

***Field Observation: Shirkers***

I observed that it was possible for an individual to fulfill more than one role within the same workgroup and sometimes at the same time. For instance, Mike, who was cited in the Indifferents section of this chapter was also a chronic shirker. He was not ashamed of sleeping at his desk while everyone else worked, running personal errands such as going to the bank or visiting gambling sites on the company computer, all during work hours. When I mentioned that they had started running checks on employee computers to see what sites employees had been visiting on company time he started bringing in his own personal electronic tablet. The following excerpts are from my field notes regarding Mike:

Right before coming downstairs to dispatch Mike asked me, “You never get tired?” I said, “Sometimes, depends on what I eat.” He said, “Sometimes I get so tired around 2-3 pm I fall asleep.” He points to the others in the office and says, “Sometimes they throw paper clips and pens at me and say ‘wake up!’ He laughs good-naturedly and adds, “So funny.”

In another incident:

The upstairs office is discussing the “no eating at your desk” policy. Maria the office manager doesn’t allow the employees under her to eat at their desks but they do anyways unless they get caught.

MIKE: Yeah, I always eat lunch at my desk because there’s so much work to do.

LEONA: Me too (she turns to me) but we don’t have the same boss (she and Mike report to different people), that’s why he sleeps and stuff...

MIKE: Yeah except when Jack’s here

RESEARCHER: Jack Waters? The Vice President?

MIKE: Yeah.

RESEARCHER: Wasn't he just here a couple of weeks ago?

MIKE: Yeah (his face in a not very excited expression). I couldn't sleep when he was here.

LEONA: Yeah, he (Jack) kept waking him (Mike) up (she pretends that Cynthia is Mike and is patting her on her back and rubbing her back saying) "Hi Mike, how you doing?" (Exaggerating her movements as if trying to slyly wake him up).

Isaac's department, Local Hauling, was later merged with Mike's Interisland Transportation department. One day Mike asked Isaac to run an errand in the warehouse for him, as Isaac was leaving I said, "That's really nice of you to do it", he responded, "I have to, he's my boss." Although Mike's formal title placed him higher on the organizational hierarchy than Isaac, Isaac was a dedicated worker. His dedication did not go unnoticed and as time passed I would hear Mike make comments to Isaac such as, "Why didn't Reed send me that email too?" In one incident I came to work and Mike seemed agitated. When I asked him where Isaac was he said that Isaac had been asked to attend a meeting with Reed, the General Manager, but that he had not been asked to attend.

### **Impeders (IP).**

#### **Impeding observation: Identifying Impeders**

Impeding roles tend to be very negative roles and disrupt productivity or the tone of the group in impeding or bad ways. Impeding roles could be characterized as hostile and disruptive, and use deliberate forms of intimidation. In their behavior towards others, Impeders may come across as tanks and snipers. Impeders have no regard for the group or its members and can sometimes have a strong personal agenda. Some of these impeding communicative patterns are

fueled with the intent of showcasing themselves over the needs of the group and at the expense of productivity. Ultimately, they are roles that are negative and impede the group effort.

***Field Observation: Impeders.***

Impeders were not observed during observations of this study but were included as part of the progression in the strata.

***4.2.1.2 Sociograms and the SIRIS Organizational Pyramid of Informal Roles and Influence.*** There are many ways to visualize the data gathered. Throughout the data gathering process, I would sometimes sketch a rough sociogram to better understand the relationships that I was observing. Figure 4.1 represents the formal structure of the workgroup or organization's reporting hierarchy based on their formal roles. The direction of the arrows indicate the formal flow of who is expected to report to whom. The size of the node represents the actor's formal decision-making power within that hierarchy. Figure 4.2 is a more accurate representation of how they communicated daily, with the arrows representing how they communicated and who was relied upon to make decisions. Figure 4.2 illustrates that they did not always follow the formal lines as indicated in figure 4.1.

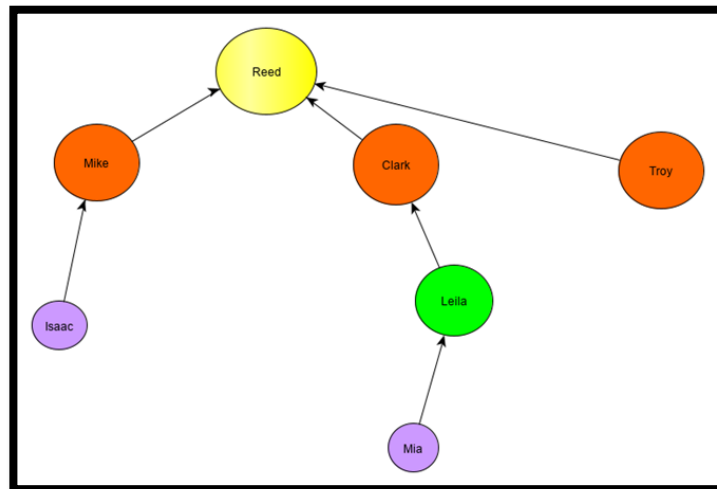
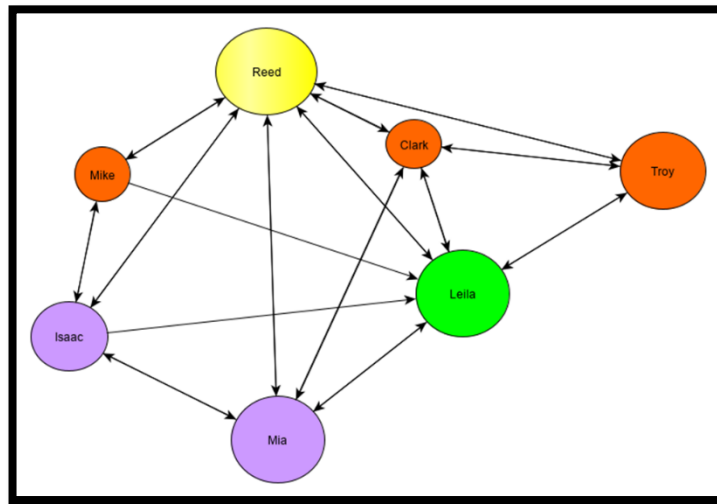


Figure 4.1: *Sociogram FSI Formal Roles Structure*



Sociograms are very useful tools and they helped layout a visual foundation for my observations. Those visuals eventually led to the SIRIS Organizational Pyramid of Informal Roles and Influence. I created the SIRIS Organizational Pyramid of Informal Roles and Influence to be



*Figure 4.2 Sociogram FSI Informal Roles Structure*

able to layout the social hierarchy within the informal social structure in a way that would allow me to compare the formal and informal structure hierarchically. I used two pyramids: the Formal Roles pyramid and the SIRIS Roles pyramid.

The Formal Roles pyramid gives a quick overview of the organization's formal official reporting relationships within workgroups without having to specifically list or know their formal titles. This generalized model gives an overview of who reports to whom within the workgroup or organization. Although it is ideal to have an official Organizational Reporting Chart not all organizations have an organizational chart or a current one available. Neither Freight Services International nor Matlock Engineering & Consulting had one available.

The SIRIS Roles pyramid lists the hierarchy within the informal social structure based on their SIRIS roles. Placing them side by side allows for direct comparison. The SIRIS

Organizational Pyramid of Informal Roles and Influence can be helpful in getting a quick overview of the informal social structure, in identifying which formal organizational roles might need to be addressed and where influence or alternative flows of information may lie.

For the Formal Roles Pyramid, I filled in the names of group members according to who reports to whom in the formal workgroup or organization structure based on their formal roles and titles with the pinnacle of the pyramid indicating the highest role in the organization or workgroup hierarchy. Next to each name, in parenthesis, I included their abbreviated SIRIS role. To fill in the SIRIS Roles Pyramid I filled in the names of group members according to the SIRIS roles indicated on each level of the pyramid. Each level of the SIRIS Roles pyramid indicates a specific SIRIS role. Fill in the names of group members according to their SIRIS roles. *Figure 4.3: SIRIS Organizational Pyramid of Informal Roles and Influence Instrument is an example.*

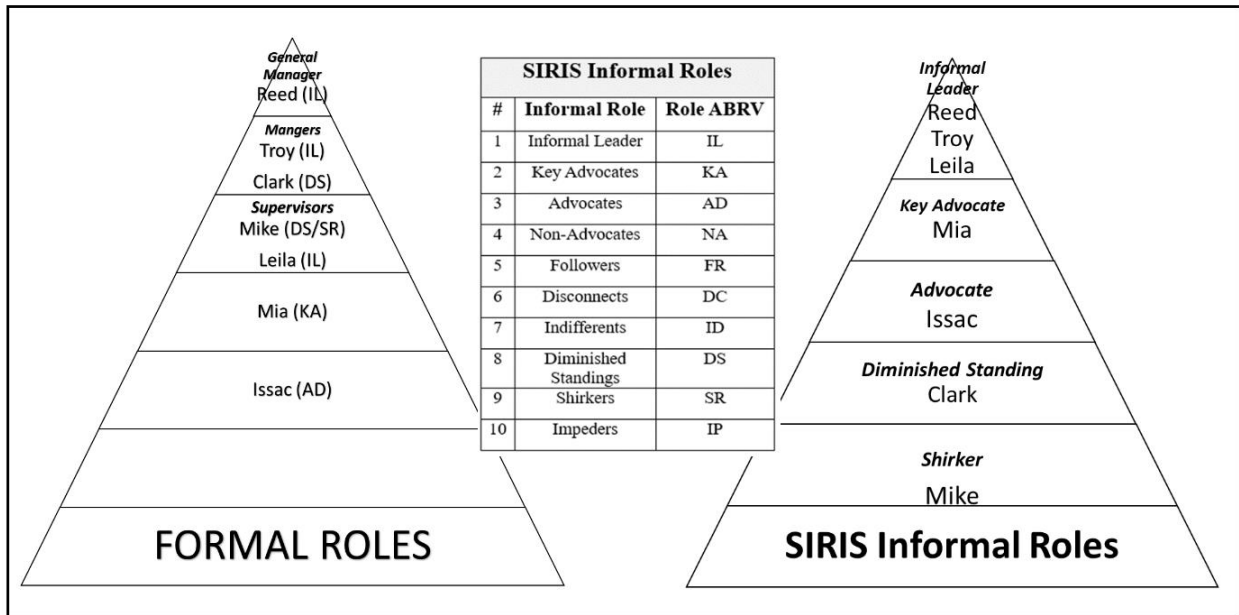


Figure 4.3. SIRIS Organizational Pyramid of Informal Roles and Influence Instrument

## **Relational Categories, Bonding Rituals, Perceived Social States, Social Currency Exchange**

This section suggests different devices that helped identify SIRIS roles and in understanding the dynamics and nature of group members' relationships. They were derived from patterns that were observed throughout the study. There are four main devices: 1. Relational Categories, 2. Bonding Rituals, 3. Perceived Social States, and 4. Social Currency Exchange.

### **4.2.2 Relational Categories**

Fourteen relational categories were identified; however, this study does not claim to encompass all existing types of relationships within workgroups. Instead, the categories listed here are sufficient for this study. The context of these relational categories is the workgroup and its purpose was to identify and characterize the relationships between individuals and analyze what the nature of that relationships might imply for the workgroup dynamic. Identifying the nature of relationships within the workgroup helped to better uncover the informal social structure of the group. It was an added benefit to the study to identify how group members were connected and the nature of their relationships. The findings of this study suggest that it is possible that the nature of the relationship itself can sometimes add or diminish the strength of an individual's influence. For example, friendships that existed before a professional relationship within a workgroup could indicate a stronger bond and even an alternative flow of information, influence or resources.

Relational categories can help identify the type of relationship group members has with each other as well as the significance of those relationships. Relationships that extend beyond the workplace have the potential for more development and therefore potentially stronger ties especially if the time spent together outside of the work context is of a more personal or familial

nature. This is because the relational dialogue and experience between the individuals continue beyond the workplace.

Understanding Relational Categories can give added perspective and insight as to why individuals may encompass a particular informal role and why the workgroup may function in the way that it does. In one observed episode, a major storm was approaching and everyone was worried about their personal water and food supplies. Leona was able to order cases of water through one of her client contacts but she was only able to secure a certain number of them. Because of this, she established a two case maximum for each person. She decided that she would only allow the office staff to buy from her but also included Mia and Leila from the Transportation and Dispatch group. People were clamoring for her water, especially since they were not able to leave work to purchase it on their own and in many places water cases were selling out. Warehouse employees and drivers heard about her water and asked Leona if they could purchase cases of water. She informed them that she was only selling to the office workers but that if there were any leftover she would let them know. Leona was not very pleasant in her demeanor towards the warehouse employees and drivers who had approached her to purchase water and many looked disgruntled about it. I got the sense that many of them thought that this was unfair favoritism. At one point, one of the drivers approached Mia's dispatch window and told her that he and some of the other drivers were not able to purchase water from Leona. Mia said, "Don't worry babe, I got 'um." He left satisfied. She turned to me and informed me, "That's my son and his friends." Those drivers, Mia's son and his friends, were able to quietly bypass Leona's self-established rule by circumventing her through Mia. Leona did not put a water purchasing limit on Mia. Months after the incident I found out that Mia and Leona had once worked in the same department and Mia had been very helpful to Leona which is probably

one explanation for her special treatment of Mia. This was one of many examples in which understanding the nature of employees' relationships was beneficial in understanding the organizational flow and the workgroup beyond formally appointed roles.

The relational categories listed here does not imply that the specific nature of each relationship is a simple and predictable "cookie-cutter" replica of these categories. Instead, it is a tool to aid in understanding how group members are connected and what the implications of their relationship might suggest. Examining the nature of subjects' relationships with each other may shed some light, background, and understanding of some relationships that may not have been obvious at first. The following are the Relational Categories and descriptions as well as a brief example taken from observations and informal interviews. Table 4.3: Relational Categories and Descriptions, also outlines the Relational Categories.

1. Individual A does not know that individual B exists and individual B does not know that individual A exists.

Example: Owen was a new employee and part of a prison work-release program. He worked exclusively on the dock in the warehouse. Chelsea was an operations assistant who worked in the offices and rarely if ever went into the warehouse. Owen and Chelsea did not know each other.

2. Individual A knows of individual B, but individual B is unaware of individual A or vice versa.

Example: Owen a new employee and part of a prison work-release program who worked exclusively on the dock in the warehouse knew of and recognized Jack Waters, Vice President of the company who would visit periodically. However, Jack Waters did not know of Owen.

3. Both individual A and individual B know of each other in some context but have never met or interacted.

Example: Emma was the new receptionist. When Leila who worked in dispatch heard there was a new receptionist she said, “Yeah, I heard about her, she’s Samuel’s girlfriend yeah?” One day while Leila was out sick Emma came into the dispatch office to talk to Mia. Emma had not met Leila yet but had heard about her. When Emma asked when Leila was going to return she looked a little apprehensive. Mia reassured her by saying, “Don’t worry, Leila is really nice once you get to know her, her bark is louder than her bite.” Both Emma and Leila had heard about and knew of each other but they had not met yet.

4. Individuals A and B associate on a casual basis within the work environment e.g.: say hello in passing.

5. Individuals A and B are associated with each other and work together on a professional level and in a generally positive manner. Their context is work-related but is interjected with casual interactions such as occasional joking, gossiping, or brief discussions on superficial topics.

Example: Mike and Norah were cubical neighbors they got along well. Their conversations were not strictly work-related. They often gossiped, exchanged jokes, and talk about their personal lives with each other.

6. Individuals A and B are associated with each other and work together on a professional level and in a generally negative manner. Their context is work-related but may be interjected with

casual interactions that are disagreeable, such as not agreeing on issues or how things should be run and are not always successful in reconciling their differences.

Example: Mike and Leila had a hostile relationship. Mike would try not to show his frustration with her but Leila was not subtle about her dislike for him. When he made mistakes she was quick to point them out and often in a cutting tone. When she would see him approaching her desk she would say things like, “Here comes dummy”.

7. Individuals A and B share a professional relationship but have also developed a personal relationship, however, their associations do not extend beyond work. They may participate in bonding rituals on a regular basis that strengthens their personal connection such as:

- Taking smoke breaks together
- Eating lunch together
- Coffee breaks together
- Habitual gossiping
- Carpooling

Example: Leona and Cynthia were cubicle neighbors. When Cynthia had questions or concerns about her work she often went to Leona before seeking anyone else’s advice. They regularly waited for each other so that they could walk to the snack wagon together and took coffee and lunch breaks together, but they did not spend time together after work hours.

8. Individuals A and B started with and have a professional relationship within the context of work but then extended their personal relationship beyond the workplace in a positive manner. For instance, taking vacations together, having BBQs together, drinking together after work.

These relationships may be categorized as developing or maintaining friendships or love interests.

Example: Mia and Leila are officemates, the dispatch office is their domain and they are very protective of it. When you first meet them it seems like they have been friends forever. They finish each other's sentences, cover for each other, travel to Vegas together, have bar-b-ques, drink together, and constantly take smoke breaks together. One driver came up to the window I was seated at while they were out smoking and asked, "where's Twiddle Dee and Twiddle Dum?" But as Leila explains, they were not always friends and only got to know each other on a company trip where they bonded.

9. Individuals A and B started with and have a professional relationship within the context of work but then extended their personal relationship beyond the workplace in a positive manner that later soured into a negative relationship. For instance, dating that ended badly.

Example: Leila and Myles met at work, never married and are no longer together, but have a child together. Myles does not seem to be very active in their child's life. At work, they are very professional and seem to tolerate each other.

10. Individuals A and B developed a positive working relationship while both working in another organization before both working together in the current organization.

Example: Before working at Freight Services International Reed worked for their competitor. According to Mike, when Reed came over from his previous employer to Freight Services International he brought with him many employees and clients. That may explain why some of his employees are very loyal to him.



11. Individuals A and B developed a negative working relationship while both working in another organization before both working together in the current organization. It should be noted that in organizations where the skill sets are very specific to a small community this is more likely to occur. For instance, in Hawaii, there are not a lot of organizations that employ Big Rig delivery truck drivers because of the tests they need to take to qualify for the license so there is a greater chance that employees would have worked with each other at some point in their careers in other organizations.

Example: For a brief time Rose came to work as a driver for Freight Services International. Leila in the dispatch office was frustrated with her because she felt that Rose was “spoiled” and felt that she expected to be treated differently from the male drivers. Leila explained that she had heard from the other drivers who had worked with the Rose in another company that she had “kinda been babied” because she was a woman.

12. Individuals A and B first had a positive personal relationship outside the context of the organization before working together and forming a professional relationship.

Example: Reed, the General Manager, and Mia, a dispatch operator, got along very well. It was not unusual for Reed to come into the dispatch office and ask for her advice and thoughts on clients and situations even if it was not in her job description or would have formally been handled by a manager. Mia also seemed very familiar with his family. They had been very good friends in high school. The trust that they built in their previous relationship had carried on into their professional relationship and superseded the formal titles that they carried.

13. Individuals A and B first had a negative personal relationship outside the context of the organization before working together and forming a professional relationship.

14. In general, if individuals A and B have personal relationships outside of the workplace that involve family, significant others, common close associations, or individuals A and B are related to each other than personal bonds are more likely to be stronger if those bonds are strong.

Example: Sometimes Mia's son, who worked as a driver under her, would ask to leave early. She was usually very obliging, more so than when others asked the same things of her.

Table 4.3 outlines each relational category.

Table 4.3

*Relational Categories and Descriptions*

<b>Relational Category</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>1</b>	Individual A does not know that individual B exists and individual B does not know that individual A exists.
<b>2</b>	Individual A knows of individual B, but individual B is unaware of individual A or vice versa.
<b>3</b>	Both individual A and individual B know of each other in some context but have never met or interacted.
<b>4</b>	Individuals A and B associate on a casual basis within the work environment e.g.: say hello in passing.
<b>5</b>	Individuals A and B are associated with each other and work together on a professional level and in a generally positive manner. Their context is work-related but is interjected with casual interactions such as occasional joking, gossiping, or brief discussions on superficial topics.
<b>6</b>	Individuals A and B are associated with each other and work together on a professional level and in a generally negative manner. Their context is work-related but may be interjected with casual interactions that are disagreeable, such as not agreeing on issues or how things should be run and are not always successful in reconciling their differences.
<b>7</b>	Individuals A and B share a professional relationship but have also developed a personal relationship, however, their associations do not extend beyond work. They may participate in bonding rituals on a regular basis that strengthens their personal connection such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Taking smoke breaks together</li> <li>- Eating lunch together</li> <li>- Coffee breaks together</li> <li>- Habitual gossiping</li> <li>- Carpooling</li> </ul>
<b>8</b>	Individuals A and B started with and have a professional relationship within the context of work but then extended their personal relationship beyond the workplace in a positive manner. For instance, taking vacations together, having BBQs together, drinking together after work. These relationships may be categorized as developing or maintaining friendships or love interests.
<b>9</b>	Individuals A and B started with and have a professional relationship within the context of work but then extended their personal relationship beyond the workplace in a positive manner that later soured into a negative relationship. For instance, dating that ended badly
<b>10</b>	Individuals A and B developed a positive working relationship while both working in another organization before both working together in the current organization.
<b>11</b>	Individuals A and B developed a negative working relationship while both working in another organization before both working together in the current organization. It should be noted that in organizations where the skill sets are very specific to a small community this is more likely to occur. For instance, in Hawaii, there are not a lot of organizations that employ Big Rig delivery truck drivers because of the tests they need to take to qualify for the license so there is a greater chance that employees would have worked with each other at some point in their careers in other organizations.
<b>12</b>	Individuals A and B first had a positive personal relationship outside the context of the organization before working together and forming a professional relationship.
<b>13</b>	Individuals A and B first had a negative personal relationship outside the context of the organization before working together and forming a professional relationship.
<b>14</b>	In general, if individuals A and B have personal relationships outside of the workplace that involve family, significant others, common close associations, or individuals A and B are related to each other than personal bonds are more likely to be stronger if those bonds are strong.

### **4.2.3 Bonding Rituals**

Based on the observations this paper defines bonding rituals as a reoccurring pattern signified by the participation of two or more individuals involved in the same shared experience.

***Bonding Rituals observation 1:*** Bonding rituals promoted camaraderie, a certain level of community, a sense of fitting in, and a shared experience.

***Bonding Rituals observation 2:*** Bonding rituals could indicate a shift in the norm or general social of the workgroup. Bonding Rituals can indicate a certain degree of history for the individuals involved. Continual participation in the bonding ritual could also potentially lead to opening channels of communication not previously accessible to certain individuals.

***Bonding Rituals observation 3:*** Two types of Bonding Rituals were identified: Spontaneous Bonding Rituals and Organizationally Organized Bonding Rituals.

Spontaneous Bonding Rituals were bonding rituals that emerged on their own due to circumstance or convenience.

***Observed Example of Spontaneous Bonding Rituals:*** Examples: taking smoke breaks together, taking coffee breaks together, habitual gossiping sessions in the breakroom, consistently having drinks together at a local bar during non-work hours, and singing together as radio songs play in the office.

Organizationally Organized Bonding Rituals were bonding rituals organized by the organization.

***Observed Examples of Organizationally Organized Bonding Rituals:*** Cubical Christmas Decorating and Desktop Christmas Tree decorating contests that occurred every year. Some other bonding rituals were Lunch on Management day, a day when the company provided lunch

for all of the employees or had management cook a Bar-B-Que in the parking lot, Office Olympics, and Office Boot Camp (one company opened a room to have workout boot camp before work and encouraged employees to set weight loss goals with a prize for the biggest loser).

Whether spontaneous or planned by the organization, bonding rituals were observed to be significant interactions that could occur either on a daily, monthly, or yearly basis. Whatever the case they served to strengthen the relational bonds between individuals and/or groups.

Identifying Bonding Rituals proved to be helpful in the following ways:

- Recognizing potential patterns
- Recognizing the significance of some relationships between individuals and groups.
- A better understanding of how the informal roles were being created, played out and resourced.
- Added understanding of how influence in groups and between individuals was sometimes exchanged, including alternative and informal routes of information flow.
- Recognizing when relationships escalate or diminish.

In some instances, big events can have the effect of bringing people together and strengthening their relationships, such as making a stressful deadline together or traveling together on a business trip. For instance, Leila admitted that she did not really know Mia and Reed until they took a business trip together. Yet, oftentimes it is the little consistent, routine, and even seemingly mundane communicative patterns that can have the effect of slowly binding group members to each other.

## **Field Observation Example: Bonding Rituals**

### ***Smoke breaks:***

#### ***Example 1:***

Earlier in the day there had been a manager's meeting. Troy, the warehouse manager had attended. When it was done he came into the dispatch office. As soon as he entered Leila said to him "Come with me, I need a cigarette break." Troy had picked up the receiver of the phone and was about to make a call but instead said, "OK, this can wait."

LEILA: Then you can tell me what went on in your meeting

TROY: Who you, Nostradamus?

They went out to discuss the meeting.

#### ***Example 2:***

LEILA (to Mia): Troy wen come say, "let's go smoke" but then I stay thinking I told Mia  
I going smoke with her.

MIA: That's okay, maybe he need for vent.

LEILA: Look he stay waiting over there but I need for vent too (to Mia).

#### ***Example 3:***

Leila finally gets up from her desk.

LEILA: I need to smoke!

RESEARCHER: You do that!

LEILA: I will! I need to! (to Mia) I was waiting for you but you taking too long!

MIA: I told you go with Troy in case he gotta talk and vent.

LEILA: (Almost yelling) But I wanted to go with you! (She stomps out of the office and slams the door.

At Freight Services International smoke breaks allowed for alternative flows of information because people of different departments and different organizational ranks would smoke together and exchange information. In the examples above Troy often waited to and wanted to smoke with Leila. He used her as his soundboard throughout the day. Troy was the warehouse manager and worked directly with the general manager and Leila was a supervisor that worked in the transportation and dispatch department. Leila did not get along well with her reporting manager and would often find out what was discussed in meetings as well as privileged information from Troy. Mia did not always join them for their smoke breaks but would encourage Leila to take her smoke breaks with Troy and later Leila would inform her what they talked about during their smoke breaks together. It was not unusual for her to say, “go smoke with Troy and then tell me what happened.” The people who smoke also seemed to have an “in” with each other than those who did not smoke did not. I think that it was more than just the act of smoking but also the sharing of cigarettes, lighters, and company time. One day Mia confided that she had tried to stop smoking but that it was just “too hard” and that her husband did not know that she had started up again. I suspect that feeling socially “on the outs” by sitting out smoke breaks contributed to her starting up again.

***Witnessing when there is a shift in a relationship.***

Cynthia and Leona shared a small bonding ritual, they always took a coffee/ snack break together. When the snack truck would come they would wait for each other to finish what the other was doing and then walk down to the parking lot together, purchase a snack, and then sit in the lunchroom together to eat and chat. Midway through observations, it was noticeable that Cynthia was going to the snack truck and eating alone and Leona would take her break a little later after Cynthia was done. It was then observed that Leona was telling Cynthia to go on

without her even when Cynthia would say that she would wait for her. Although it may have seemed unimportant, this break in their snack ritual could indicate a shift, even a small one, in their relationship. This was confirmed when one day Cynthia was upset about a mess up on the paperwork. She went to Leona and shared her frustration and complaint with her and then asked for her advice. After Leona took the time to explain all of Cynthia's options and what she should do according to the protocol Cynthia said, "Nah, I'm gonna check with Maria" and then walk off. Leona turned to me, "she always wastes my time like that, why ask me then?!" They were seen less and less together and eventually did not take lunch together anymore.

#### **4.2.4 The Social**

An essential part of this paper was about going beyond the formal makeup of the workgroup and trying to uncover the informal social structure in which influence and informal roles reside. To uncover the informal social structure, I began by observing the general sociality of all that I could take in within the environment. Within the scope of this study, it was helpful to define The Social as all things occupying or within that particular space and time including animate and inanimate objects and all interactions with them. A drawback is that it may seem overly broad and too encompassing. However, the benefit is that by identifying a general sense of everything as a part of the social it creates a baseline of normality for the workgroup and its members. It was also helpful in identifying when there was a shift in "the norm" as well as who or what may have caused it and the effects it had. At one point I observed how seating arrangement affected interactions and attitudes as well as room temperature; such as how the lack of cool air from a faulty air conditioner in a room with no windows contributed to people's attitudes and temperament towards each other. The daily routine of group members and



peripheral employees contributed to the social as well as how the music being played from a radio contributed to making things “social” as they all sang certain songs together. Artifacts like the copy machine took on its own life and contribution as people would gather in line to use it making the person seated right next to the copy machine either the most popular or the most distracted employee. All of these elements within the environment contributed to the type of sociality being built and set a cadence for the rhythm of their interactions.

Latour (2005) has a similar notion of the social, as something that moves beyond just the ties between people. He explains it using the metaphor of items in a supermarket:

I have argued that most often in social sciences, ‘social’ designates a type of link: it’s taken as the name of a specific domain, a sort of material like straw, mud, string, wood, or steel. In principle, you could walk into some imaginary supermarket and point at a shelf full of ‘social ties’, whereas other aisles would be stocked with ‘material’, ‘biological’, ‘psychological’, and ‘economical’ connections. For ANT we now understand, the definition of the term is different, it doesn’t designate a domain of reality or some particular item, rather is a name of a movement, a displacement, a transformation, a translation, an enrollment. It is an association between entities which are in no way recognizable as being social in the ordinary manner, except during a brief moment when they are reshuffled together. To pursue the metaphor of the supermarket, we would call ‘social’ not any specific shelf or aisle, but the multitude modifications made throughout the whole place in the organization of all the goods—their packaging, their pricing, their labeling—because those minute shifts reveal to the observer which new combinations are explored and which paths will be taken [...] Thus, social,[...] is the

name of a type of momentary association which is characterized by the way it gathers together into new shapes” (Latour, 2005, p. 65).

It was not uncommon for subjects to carry the residue of experiences that they were involved in one environment and take it with them into other social environments, whether they realized it or not. In this vein we begin to create our own personalized social, certain elements of each episode that we are involved in moving with us into another or other environments and progressively being strung together, in turn, shaping our perceptions and our own brand of social as we see it. Within the scope of this paper, the social is not identified as positive or negative, but instead, just activity and everything that it encompasses. Perceptions of positive and negative are analyzed during the social process portion of analysis as all of these elements are put into context and patterns identified.

In analyzing The Social of an environment even seemingly insignificant events contributed to the rhythm of the episode and a baseline for other episodes. It also served as an indicator for when the rhythm would shift, for example, the following excerpt was taken from field notes:

***Field notes Example:***

Lots of conversations going on the air conditioner is super loud and strong today but only in a certain area of the room. People coming in and out to use the copy machine located at the front of the room.

Conversations are being discussed as they sit in their cubicles and over the music of the radio:

2:15 p.m.: Maile and Norah are talking about the death penalty

2: 20 p.m.: Norah leaves her cubicle and comes up to Mike's desk to tell him about a \$7 deep dish pizza special at Little Caesars and then goes back to her discussion with Maile and whoever else wants to chime in their 2 cents about it, "Prisoner's they got it so easy, do we pay for their life of luxury? They only watch T.V. and go to the yard to play..."

2:40 p.m.: They start reading different menus from different restaurants and looking up their locations on the internet.

Cynthia is looking up pupu platters from Zap's Restaurant from Yelp and reading it out loud. They start discussing how Zaps's doesn't sell hotdogs. I mention that there is a hotdog chili plate and Cynthia says, "yeah, but not hot dog on a bun". Now they are looking up and talking about Tammy's Seafood and Catering. They love their food here. Last week alone in one day I was offered glazed donuts twice at different times of the day from two different bakeries, a coco puff from Linda's bakery, vinegar chips, pumpkin seeds, and Chinese Tea cookies. Today I was already offered apple slices, Spinach Spanish Filipino bread from Allen Pasta and I was just offered sushi and I can smell donuts down the hall.

This is all taking place during work hours. Everyone in the room is contributing to the conversation and it helps to keep their minds off the heat of the room. The little conversations that they share help in building a little camaraderie between those sharing the cramped office space. They joke a little more together in general and it keeps the bunker-like room from becoming too depressing. Later that year Maile left the company to go to nursing school to pursue her dream of becoming a nurse. A few months later Isaac from another department joined Mike's Department in Interisland Transportation. As Isaac was setting up his cubicle he turned on his own radio despite the room's communal radio. His music was contemporary hip-

hop and he has no reservations about lashing out at people he did not agree with. The jovial chatter that was once a common occurrence was a little less and the spontaneous group singing to the radio that used to happen regularly was not observed again.

#### **4.2.5 Social Currency Exchange**

This study observed Social Currency Exchange to be what is being exchanged in everyday interactions that either boost, maintains, or degrades relationships and influence. Social currency is not a set item or value but differs for each person, context, and relationship based on the Perceived Social Needs of the individuals involved. It was observed that when individuals were able to accurately discern and understand another individual's needs, wants, or motivations and then addressed those needs in a sufficient way their credibility or perceived influence was boosted with the individual that they responded to. Accurately understanding a person's needs, wants, and motivations are key in understanding what the currency for a particular individual is.

These exchanges can be viewed as a type of economy of influence and relationship management. Possible currencies observed included but were not limited to companionship, status, validation, reliability, knowledge, security, comfort, and stability. Based on the social currency exchanged the nature of the relationship could also be categorized in terms such as alliances, friendships, supporter, and associate. Individuals that are perceived by others as already having a degree of influence may have a stronger Social Currency Exchange than those who do not. In an exchange withholding, social currency may also be a path to influence. During the observation and analysis stage of this study, in seeking to understand the relationship between group members, questions that were often considered were:

1. What is the social currency being exchanged?
2. How is each individual in the relationship benefitted or slighted?

***Example from the Field:***

Mike headed the Interisland Transportation group. He was described by most as lazy or a bad example and many of his colleagues did not give him the respect that he believed he deserved including Reed, the General Manager, who Mike reported too. Reed began bypassing Mike by leaving him out of emails and meetings and instead including another employee in Mike's department who was his junior. However, there was one woman, Chelsea, who came in three times a week and always spoke very highly of Mike. In all of my interviews, she was the only one who had something positive to say about Mike and she was always very enthusiastic about how great he was. She said: "I always come to Mike for help, he's the only one who helps me", she smiles.

One way to explain why, despite the negativity laced in all of his other work relationships, Mike and Chelsea got along so well can be explained through a Social Currency Exchange lens. Each had a Perceived Social Need. Mike's Perceived Social Need was the desire to feel respected and recognized as a valuable and knowledgeable worker. He eventually left the organization because he was frustrated and felt that he was not being valued. He confided in me that he had told Reed, the General Manager that he was old and wanted to retire. He had said it in jest and with the hope that Reed would try to stop him. Instead, Reed responded, "Just let me know when." This really bothered Mike.

Chelsea was an older woman who felt a little out of her element and said that before she took this job she had been out of work for a while. One of Chelsea's Perceived Social Needs was to have a friend and understand the best way to do her job. Because she shared an office

with Brian the Safety Officer she rarely had interactions with the other office workers. The nature of her position specifically had her interacting with Mike. He showed her how to use Excel more efficiently and helped her fulfill her duties with helpful explanations. In return, she valued his suggestions, took them seriously and explained to me how beneficial they were. Each had a Perceived Social Need that was able to be filled by the other. Mike's currency was that he provided Chelsea with the friendship and work support that she wanted and Chelsea's currency was that she provided Mike with the respect that he felt he deserved and did not receive from his other co-workers.

#### **4.2.6 Perceived Social Need**

Perceived Social Needs are a way of identifying an individual's social values, or what they perceive as socially important. These needs are specific to each person and can move beyond demographics or the physical exchanges of material goods. At its core, I observed that Perceived Social Needs are about understanding what it is an individual desires socially or perceives as important such as feeling a sense of belonging, the need to connect with others, intellectual stimulation, or to feel appreciated.

The concept of need states, in general, is not a new phenomenon. Baumeister, Hawkins, and Cromwell (1964) discuss need states in terms of activity level including need states for food, water, or sex. They define needs states as "any condition or deficit or excess which causes the organism to depart from the dynamic equilibrium known as homeostasis" (Baumeister, Hawkins, & Cromwell, 1964, p. 438). In marketing "researchers define need states as the inner and outer influences (or triggers) impacting on an individual that result in a purchase or usage decision" (Vue, Degeneffe, and Reicks, 2008) and are studied in order to better understand and refine their marketing strategies to consumers (Leith & Riley, 1998). Within the scope of this paper, I

observed that Perceived Social Needs function under the premise that each person has a preconceived notion of their level of social comfort or homeostasis in each situation that they desire to reach or be at socially. This homeostasis is not static and may differ in different situations. An individual can reach homeostasis, a state of general comfort when they perceive that their social needs are satisfied or are being met in some way. This perceived social need can sometimes be fulfilled by another individual or individuals or themselves as they perceive it. Ties can be strengthened and sometimes even influence gained when an individual either fulfills the needs of another, reinforces it, or withholds it from another. This paper refers to that exchange, or more specifically what is exchanged as a Social Currency Exchange and was discussed in the previous section.

In one example of Perceived Social Need, a young woman named Kate who was in her early 20's and worked in the office in customer service had the Perceived Social Need to be perceived as "in" with the management group, namely Reed, Clark, Troy, Leila, and Mia. Around them, she seemed quiet, awkward, and a little out of place with their loud boisterous interactions and familiarity with each other. She was eager to please them and would try to hang around in the dispatch office even though she was not always overtly welcome and was often ignored. One day while I was eating in the office lunchroom a place Reed, Clark, Troy, Leila, and Mia never went, I listened as Kate confidently spoke about them with another employee in a very knowing tone, with the implication that she was close and chummy with them:

KATE: Troy (Warehouse Manager) can't pass his CRI test. He's tried three times....he tries to act like a jack a\*\*, but he's buying his elderly dad a house....

In another example of Perceived Social Need Leila, who often came across as a tough, not caring what other people thought, and always having a smart and sassy comment to throw back at

someone type of person, was always seeking validation from her office mate and smoking buddy Mia. The following three examples are to give a contextual characterization of Leila and to illustrate her usual nature in which she was not abashed to tell the other workers off:

***Example 1 of Leila***

LEILA: I wen call Dan for tell him for go lunch. I said, “Dan”, and he said, “yes sweetheart”...I said, “no call me sweetheart, I not your sweetheart—I sweetheart you!”

***Example 2 of Leila***

DREW (To LEILA): Eh, sistah

LEILA: (in an irritated tone) We both white but I not your sistah, and what’s up with your friend John. He has no sense of humor, he weird, he’s so f\*\*king weird.

Leila did not seem to care about what many people thought of her and she was not afraid to “tell them off”. In one exchange on the phone with a client, the representative for a big distributor, Leila was irritated and made no attempt to hide her irritation in her voice and comments.

***Example 3 of Leila:***

Field Notes: LEILA is talking to a client, the representative of a major food distributor on the island. She is explaining to them why their shipment is not ready and that it is beyond Freight Services International’s control. She explains that the client’s shipment has not even been unloaded from the ship yet and that there is a process beyond what she can do. Leila continues to explain that as long as the shipping company that brought in their cargo keeps to the schedule then their shipment will be delivered on the day that it is scheduled to arrive. The representative that she is on the phone with is still persistent so LEILA asks them to send her an email. At first, she is relatively pleasant but over time she begins to get more irritated and it shows in her demeanor and her voice intonation.



LEILA: Send us an email

PERSON ON PHONE TALKS

LEILA: Just send us an email in case I'm not always here

PERSON ON PHONE TALKS

LEILA: Just send us an email (irritation growing in her voice and demeanor)

PERSON ON PHONE TALKS

LEILA: Just send us an email (irritation is heightened)

PERSON ON PHONE TALKS

LEILA: Just send us an email in case I drop dead right after I hang up this phone! (She hangs up and says to herself) So irritating!

Not many people had the sufficient Social Currency to satisfy Leila's Perceived Social Needs. However, there was Mia. On the formal organizational chart, Mia placed right under Leila, but Leila treated Mia like an equal and was always seeking her approval with statements like, "what you think?" "Oh yeah, you think so?" and "for real?" She regarded Mia's advice and opinion highly and never spoke ill of her even though she regularly did so about everyone else, including Reed who she seemed to at least like. Leila's need for validation could have theoretically been fulfilled by most people. There was no doubt that she as a hard worker and dedicated to helping others despite her rough exterior but she did not seem to regard other's praise of herself very highly. Instead, she sought validation and acceptance almost solely from Mia. Not everyone can fulfill another's Perceived Social Need.

#### **4.2.7 Perceived Social Flaw**

Perceived Social Flaws were observed to be negative behavioral patterns that individuals repeated until others began to associate that behavior with that individual's character. These patterns of perceived weakness were observed to detract from an individual's influence and may have resulted in a diminishing of their Social Currency Exchange with their co-workers.

##### ***Perceived Social Flaw Example:***

Mike came across as a nice guy with a pleasant and easygoing manner. He appeared capable in his job and knowledgeable of the ins and outs of the company. He also seemed to make his deadlines and his phone chats with clients were friendly with personal touches that suggested familiarity. Years earlier when Reed, the General Manager, left his previous employment to head the Pacific region of Freight Services International (FSI), its competitor, Mike and some other employees followed Reed to FSI. Mike was put in charge of the Interisland Transportation group. However, when people heard that I was shadowing him their comments were usually accompanied with eye rolls and "uh oh" intonations. Leona, one of his office mates shared, "you know that he just sleeps whenever he wants, he doesn't even care." I asked her what she meant by that. She said, "He just goes to sleep right there at his desk, head back, mouth open. One time the big boss was here but he still did it." She shook her head disapprovingly. She was not the only one to point this out. Mike's sleeping was usually one of the first things anyone shared when they found out that I was shadowing him. Mike was strongly associated in others' minds as the guy who literally sleeps on the job. In another incident, I was in the dispatch office with Leila and Mia. From afar off, they could see Mike heading their way. When Leila saw him approaching her window she said out loud, "Here comes dummy", Mia her office mate laughed. Although Mike seemed too able to get his work accomplished others

perceived him as lazy and unreliable. Whether this assumption was accurate or not this Perceived Social Weakness affected how others treated him and diminished his social standing.

#### **4.2.8 Perceived Social Strength**

Perceived Social Strengths were observed to be positive behavioral patterns that individuals repeated until others began to associate that type of behavior with that individual's character. These patterns of perceived positive behavior were observed to enhance an individual's influence and may have resulted in a boosting of that individual's Social Currency Exchange with their co-workers.

##### ***Perceived Social Strength Example***

It was not unusual to enter the dispatch office and find Leila reading the company handbook. When I asked her why she was doing it she said that it was to protect her drivers and those under her. She explained that many of them did not take the time to read the handbook and she did not want them to be taken advantage of. In one incident Clark, the Transportation manager, wanted to penalize one of the drivers for clocking in late to work by a couple of minutes. Clark argued that according to his phone's time the driver was late. Leila, who reported to Clark, kept insisting that the clock's time on the dock was different from his phone. When that did not sway him, she cited the employee handbook and pointed out that according to the handbook the driver had a grace period. Clark had no choice but to relent. Leila's knowledge helped the driver avoid the penalty. Drivers and warehouse workers often came to talk with her before approaching Clark about their potential vacation days, to consult with her on the company's sick day policies, and other issues concerning their employee rights. Those employees would then talk to Clark confident with the knowledge that Leila had provided for

them. Her Perceived Social Strength of organization and procedural knowledge paired with her caring desire to help her co-workers lifted her in the eyes of those around her. She often came across as brash, loud, and harsh, quick to yell at people who irritated her and not afraid yell at those who annoyed her but many took her behavior with a grain of understanding that she generally meant well and did care about them. They sometimes called her “mama” and when she would go onto the dock to chastise a dock worker they would mimic her behind her back, one hand on their waist wagging their finger up and down in friendly jest as if scolding each other.

### **4.3 Part 2: Gauging an Individual’s Informal Role’s Productivity in Their Formal Role’s Workgroup Context**

#### **4.3.1 Informal Role Productivity Analysis (IRPA)**

The Informal Role Productivity Analysis (IRPA) is the second part of the Framework. At the hub of IRPA are three central informal role categories from which five other informal role categories emerge. Although both SIRIS and IRPA focus on informal roles, they differ in that SIRIS aims at understanding an individual’s informal hierarchical standing within the group’s social structure and IRPA aims at understanding how productive that individual’s informal role is in accomplishing organization and workgroup objectives. Yet, they complement each other by bringing together formal and informal roles and the formal and informal social structure by examining how effective informal roles are within the formal structure and is a process in which to analyze the formal productivity of the informal social structure. Later in the Healthy versus Struggling section of this framework, each person’s SIRIS and IRPA roles will be examined together and then in conjunction with the others in their workgroup to try and understand how workgroup members’ informal roles are affecting the productivity and overall health of the workgroup.

The three central IRPA are (A) On-Task oriented roles, (B) Relationship building and maintenance roles, and (C) Self-centered roles. These were initially based on the work of Benne and Sheats (1978). Although similar in many ways to the central three of Benne and Sheats' categories these were slightly altered for this study. The three original categories proposed by Benne and Sheats' (1978) were found to be too static for this study's new context and limited informal role agency. This study made alterations to the meaning as well as the nature of the categories and allowed roles categories to overlap within an episode. These alterations accommodated for when group members' communicative patterns sometimes encompassed more than one role category. From this perspective, four other role categories emerged. (AB) On-Task oriented /Relationship building and maintenance roles; (AC) Task-oriented/ Self-Centered role; (BC) Relationship building and maintenance roles/ Self-Centered roles; and (ABC) On-Task oriented/ Relationship building and maintenance/ Self-Serving roles and lastly (D) Obstructing Oriented roles. The following is an explanation of the roots of IRPA and an overview of the IRPA roles.

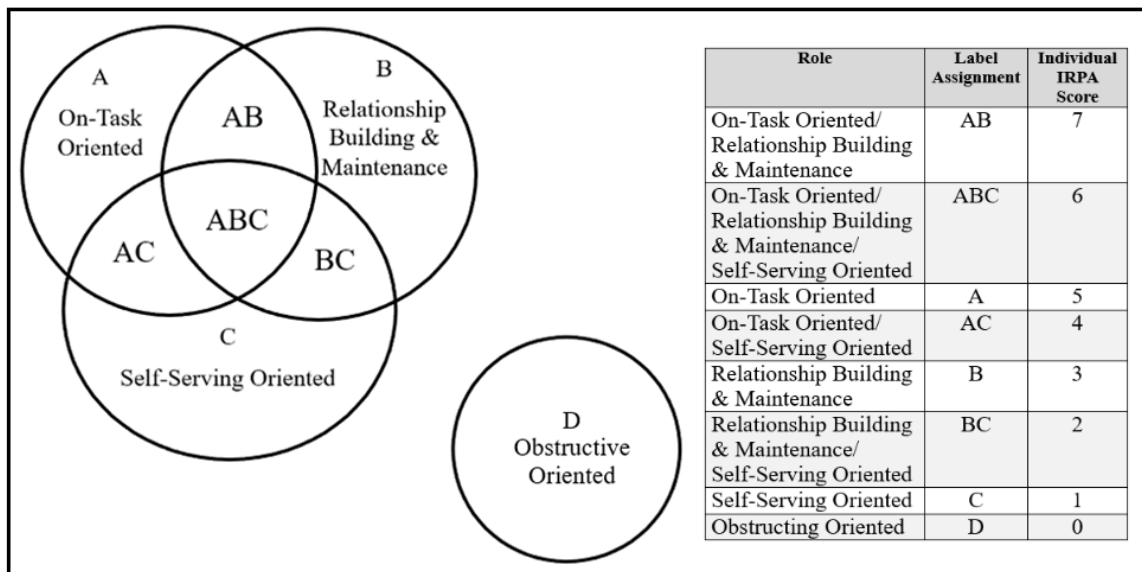


Figure 4.4. Informal Roles Productivity Analysis Venn Diagram and Chart

### **4.3.2 IRPA Roles Overview**

#### **On-Task oriented roles (A)**

Task-oriented communicative patterns assist in focusing group as well as interpersonal efforts in goal achievement and productivity. Task-oriented roles are productive in the sense that these roles are task-focused and the work will most likely get accomplished. Yet alone, On-task oriented roles lack the relationship-building aspect that can potentially add to the effective longevity of the group.

#### ***On-Task oriented role in action***

One group member described her formal workgroup leader's communicative style by stating, "We don't really see her, if there are comments on a report then she'll come and tell us." This particular group leader was very adept at her task-oriented role, but by focusing solely on the task she missed opportunities to build meaningful and resourceful relationships with her group members and in essence trust because they did not really know her.

#### **Relationship building and maintenance roles (B)**

Relationship building and maintenance roles are oriented towards the functioning and strengthening of the group as a group and can occur at either the group or interpersonal level. Individuals engaging in positive relationship building and maintenance communicative patterns on a regular basis can cultivate a "safe" environment and context in which contribution and risk-taking are accepted and encouraged. Those in this role tend to be friendly with others, sometimes talk about things non-work related, and engage in positive rapport. This is not to say that individuals in these roles are all outgoing and overtly socially engaging and savvy. On the contrary, at the core, it was about people being genuine, patient with each other, and

understanding that coworkers were not simply cogs in a machine. Task-oriented activities were usually obvious to identify but relationship building and maintenance communicative patterns were often subtler and not always a big production. It was observed that relationship building and maintenance patterns were a culmination of a lot of little things such as nodding agreeably, saying thank you, and acknowledging the time another group member spent out of their own time to help. Other examples included group members chatting in the breakroom, joking together, grabbing coffee for a cubical mate or asking how projects were coming along. Every day seemingly trivial “small talk” was a significant aspect in the maintenance of relationships to the point that the lack of small talk between group members would serve as a red flag and a possible shift in the general social temperature of the workgroup. The building and maintenance of relationships were observed to be woven into the fabric of the sociality of the group. Members engaged in building that sociality with each other every day and was bundled up with their past interactions and the anticipation of future ones. This category plays an important role in developing trust within the group and between group members. Rath and Conchie (2008) explain why trust is such an important value:

“Trust also increases speed and efficiency in the workplace. When two people working on a project do not know each other well, it takes a considerable amount of time for them to be able to collaborate productively [...] once a basic level of trust is established between two people, they can make things happen in a fraction of the time that it takes other colleagues who don’t have that bond. Trust allows people to skip most of the formality and immediately get to what is important. As Kofi Annan explained, ‘If you don’t have relationship, you start from zero each time’ [...] Respect, integrity, and

honesty are outcomes of strong relationships built on trust [...] Relationship flat-out trumps competence in building trust” (p.83-84).

Although values like relationship building, relationship maintenance, liking, trust, patience, and simply “getting along” are often viewed as soft or as lesser in importance, they are not. It could be argued that when individuals are viewed as valuable their quality of work may also benefit. In one interview that will be revisited later in this chapter, John was sharing his views on his formal leader’s leadership style. He thought that she was caring and nurturing and took the time to “feel out” how group members were feeling. When he was asked if he thought that that type of leadership really mattered he said, “I think for everyone it makes you work harder, because you don’t want to let them [group leader] down. There is more pressure to perform when your leader takes an interest in you. I think it makes our group more collaborative.”

***Relationship Building and Maintenance role in action.***

When Vikki, a formal workgroup leader, was not at her desk or in a meeting she could be found visiting the cubicles of her group members asking how their projects were going and if they needed anything. It was obvious that she had built a personal relationship with group members and they felt comfortable joking with her, talking about their weekend, as well as discussing their work. This was notable in an organization that seemed to rely heavily on Instant Messaging (IM) as a form of communication. Several group members, as well as other employees, explained that they probably IM more than talk face to face, even with people whom they share their cubicle with. Julie from the Project Management Group explained that since it was so quiet and many people listened to their earphones while working “it was just better.” Despite this, Vikki’s group members still found ways to build and maintain relationships such as baking cupcakes for the group or bringing sushi from the lunchroom to share with others at their



work stations. On the downside, it should be noted that as important as this category is, an excess of relationship building and maintenance roles without a healthy balance of task-oriented roles can push these patterns into the obstructing oriented roles category.

### **Self-serving Oriented Role (C)**

Self-serving oriented role patterns are mainly directed towards the goal of satisfying the needs of an individual above the betterment of the group. When taken to the extreme these patterns can be counter-productive and a detriment to the group. Unlike Benne and Sheats who did not classify this role as a member role because they did not believe that it benefitted the group in any way, I observed that self-serving oriented group members could still be productive if the individual stayed on task. If the self-serving focused group member was driven and work-oriented much could be accomplished. However, in some instances, it was observed that individuals perceived by others as having a noticeable degree of self-servingness could not always be relied on to put in the “extra mile” for the sake of the group or did not hold back in promoting their personal interests and accomplishments over the group. Self-serving behavior can be perceived by other group members as distrustful and distasteful and can be an obstacle on the road towards productive collaboration.

#### ***Self-serving Oriented Roles in action.***

During a lunch break at Freight Services International, Kate, a customer service representative was discussing the different attributes of the management team with one of her friends. When she came to Clark, the Transportation Manager, she said in a matter of fact tone, “Clark, he only apologizes to certain people (the implication being that if he thought you were important enough he made the effort), other people he doesn’t care about.” Other employees also

felt that he just wanted to look good in front of upper management, were suspicious of his motives, and felt that he did not genuinely care for those that he worked with. These perceptions of him contributed to the rift that existed between him and his workgroup members.

### **Obstructing roles (D)**

Obstructing roles are behavioral patterns that result in blocking productivity and other positive roles, sometimes even in malicious ways that can be overly aggressive or passive-aggressive. Some of these impeding communicative patterns are fueled with the intent of showcasing themselves over the needs of the group and at the expense of productivity. Benne and Sheats (1978) point out that “a high incidence of ‘individual-centered’ as opposed to ‘group centered’ participation in a group always calls for self-diagnosis of that group” (Benne & Sheats, 1978, p. 159). Not all obstructing roles are self-centered. For instance, sometimes even too much relational building and maintenance behavioral patterns can become a hindrance, such as excessive socializing.

Some communicative patterns in this category can be characterized as being extremely aggressive, one who seeks to deflate the status of others, treating the feelings of others in inappropriate or disrespectful ways, verbally or physically attacking the group, joking aggressively, showing envy towards another’s contribution by trying to take credit for it, negative and resistant, disagreeing and opposing without or beyond reason. These roles also include communicative patterns that call attention to the individual employing inappropriate boasting, acting in unusual ways that hinder productivity, struggling to prevent oneself as being perceived in an “inferior” by inappropriately asserting authority or superiority, manipulating the group or certain members of the group. There are also many forms of domination and some

include forms of flattery, asserting a superior status or right to attention, giving directions authoritatively, and interrupting the contributions of others. This is not a definitive list, but it should give a general sense. Benne and Sheats (1978) also insightfully noted that the outright suppression of individual roles, which this paper refers to as obstructing oriented roles, will deprive the group of much-needed data to sufficiently self-diagnose its situation. Obstructing oriented roles are counter-productive and promote struggling and unhealthy environments. When these roles emerge, they should be addressed immediately and in a constructive manner. Not all negative and obstructing roles are intentional, mean, or vindictive but they can still result in impeding productivity or a healthy workgroup environment. Some individuals may not realize that their behavior is offensive or intimidating to others and sometimes the best and sincere intentions can hinder a group, for instance overdoing any of the three core IRPA categories (task-oriented roles, relationship building and maintenance roles, or self-centered roles). The key is to achieve a balance, optimally this is the role of the workgroup leader.

***Obstructing Oriented Role in action.***

Tracy was not a bad leader but often seemed oblivious as to how her communicative patterns affected other group members. On the upside she was very task-oriented; unfortunately, she appeared to cultivate very little, if any, relationship-building and maintenance roles with her workgroup members. At times her focus on getting the task accomplished seemed to verge on becoming an obstructing oriented role. As a consequence, group members seemed to react to her by taking on communicative patterns that were more defensive, impeding, and individual-centered, particularly when she would undermine them in front of others. In one telling incident Dave, one of her group members, received a call from a client in which the client wanted verification on a piece of information. Dave said he would check and call back. To ensure that

his information was correct he went across the office to another cubicle to discuss it with an engineer. Because the cubicle partitions were low it was possible to watch the entire episode. From across the warehouse Tracy, his manager appeared. She proceeded to correct and talk to Dave from across the entire office in an authoritative and harsh manner in front of the entire office of at least 50 people. Throughout their interaction, the office remained silent as everyone watched the exchange. She then walked up to Dave, sharply took something from his hand and in an irritated voice loudly said, "I'll do it myself" and walked off. Dave was clearly embarrassed but held his composure as he walked towards his desk. Stephanie noted, "Dave hates when Tracy does that." The possibility of public embarrassment as a response when communicating with anyone, let alone an authority figure can be disconcerting and affect the context and tone of the group, in turn influencing the informal roles group members to take on to "keep face".

The remainder of the roles in the Informal Roles Productivity Analysis focuses on how the three main roles discussed above, A, B, and C, overlap in group and interpersonal settings. The following are some examples of the roles (AC) Task-oriented and Self-Centered oriented, (BC) Relationship building and Self-Centered oriented, (AB) Task-oriented /relationship building and maintenance, and (ABC) Task-oriented/Relationship building and maintenance/Self-Centered oriented roles in action.

### ***On-Task Oriented/ Self-Serving oriented roles in action (AC)***

At Matlock Engineering & Consulting Jerry, who had designed the current cubicles had been asked by the CEO to "update" them with a redesign. Jerry could often be found working intently on his computer and hurrying back and forth across the office to finish this request.

When others noted aspects of the design that could help them in their work he was quick to snap at them and was often harsh in his response. He later explained to me that the CEO had asked him to redesign the cubicles because he had a degree in architecture. Jerry said that he considered his architecture degree a real working degree, not like other degrees (those of his fellow employees) that, in his opinion, did not contribute much. By disregarding his coworkers and solely focusing on his own task and desire to please the CEO he lost out on the opportunity to find out from group members' experiences how he could help them in their daily work life. Instead, he chose to focus solely on the mechanics of his task and his desire to impress the CEO who did not work in a cubicle but had a spacious office to himself. If Jerry had taken the focus off himself and had listened to his fellow employees he would have learned that despite the CEO's belief that the current cubical walls needed to be lowered (which had already been lowered in the previous cubicle renovation) in order to encourage engineers to be social and collaborative, the engineers believed that their already shorter than average walls created unwelcomed distractions from their work.

***Relationship building & maintenance/ Self-Serving oriented roles (BC) in action:***

Leila shares her feelings on Reed the Terminal General Manager.

LEILA: Reed is totally on Hawaiian time [always late]. That's why Troy waiting, I told him with Reed take his time and add two hours. (Leila pauses and then adds) Reed is the moving specialist, he's either moving the president or the president of Johnson Inc.'s (a prominent and influential shipping company) friend's stuff. We do a lot of stuff for them and they do a lot of stuff for us (the implication is that some of that "stuff" is off the record), we get a lot of business from them."

Jobs at Johnson Inc. were very difficult to get and even the entry-level positions were highly sought after. It was generally known that to just get an interview you needed to know someone in the company. Even after being hired new hires were hired as part-timers with no benefits and an unpredictable schedule with most new part-time hires waiting years to be offered a fulltime position. Although Reed was the Terminal General Manager for the entire Pacific Region for FSI, a job he had invested a lot of time in and had been willing to move his family for in order to train for, in a conversation that I had with the warehouse manager one day, Troy shared that Reed had mentioned that he was trying to get into USA Freight International. At the time of this writing, Reed is no longer working for FSI and has since started working for USA Freight International in a fulltime position.

***On-task Oriented /relationship building & maintenance roles (AB) in action***

For the interpersonal and workgroup setting Task-oriented/ relationship building and maintenance roles (AB) is optimal because it integrates both the relational element and the ability to accomplish the task contributing to workgroup productivity.

In one example Angie called a client for needed information for her project. Her phone conversation was as follows:

Angie: Hi Ryan, this is Angie.

Ryan: Response on the other end

Angie: How is your family doing?

Ryan responds and Angie laughs in a friendly manner and they talk for a little.

Angie: That's good...I'm calling because we had a concern about.... (She goes on too explain)

***On-Task Oriented/relationship building & maintenance/self-serving roles (ABC) in action***

On-Task Oriented/relationship building & maintenance/self-serving roles can be productive but only to a degree. Relationship-wise an individual can seem friendly and helpful, but if other group members feel that it is disingenuous the trust between group members may waiver; particularly if the goodwill of the group member in question is not consistent.

At Freight Services International Clark, who was Manager of the Transportation Group, was not an unproductive employee. He could often be found helping the dispatch office when they were shorthanded and it was not uncommon for him to enter their office and announce, “What do you guys need me to do, what do you need help with.” Some afternoons he would buy the dispatch employees’ lunch like pizza or desserts like donuts and Spanish bread. Yet, despite these efforts, there were more than a few employees that expressed their dislike for him. Leila relayed the story of the mini-refrigerators in which Clark, in an effort to “look good”, gave away something that was not his. Leila explained:

LEILA: I was the first one. There is a mini-fridge in the dispatch office. I brought a taller white one from home from my room because I didn’t want it in my room no more. I brought it here and when I came back to work the next day Elena guys went have um over there (she points to the next dispatch office over). I told Elena, ‘Who told you, you could have my refrigerator?’ She said Clark told her she could have it. So I told her, ‘okay you keep it in there but if mine full I can put my stuff inside.’

RESEARCHER: Clark just gave your fridge away? But he knew it wasn’t his right?

LEILA: That’s how he is (she says in an irritated voice).

In another exchange between two employees talking in the lunchroom one of the women said to the other, “Clark, he only apologizes to certain people, other people he doesn’t care about” implying that if Clark did not think that you were important or of consequence he did not care about your feelings. Clark was a contributing member of the group, sometimes being in the office very early and being one of the last in his group to leave. He was pleasant enough, and sometimes seemed very generous; however, other employees sometimes sensed a personal motive that they were not comfortable with and his actions were sometimes thoughtless of others and seemed motivated for his benefit.

### **4.3.3 Informal Roles Productivity Analysis Score**

Each IRPA role has an assigned IRPA score. The score acts as a gauge or range with the highest number, 7, representing the most productive and group health-promoting roles and the lowest score, 0, representing the least productive and least group health-promoting roles. IRPA scores are not the ultimate indicator of productivity but they offer a lens in which to approach productivity and health of the relationships between workgroup members within the workgroup. Having an IRPA score to gauge from gives a researcher a measurable context and helpful starting point from which to make evaluations and beginning into understanding the group.

**4.3.3.1 Two IRPA scores: Individual and Workgroup.** There are two types of IRPA scores: individual IRPA scores and workgroup IRPA scores. Individual IRPA scores are based on the IRPA role assigned to each individual, see Table 4.4. The IRPA workgroup score determines the average score for the group. That score can then be plotted along the Healthy VS Struggling measurement chart to determine the overall health of the workgroup. The Healthy VS Struggling measurement chart can be found on the Healthy Struggling Workgroup Assessment



Profile worksheet at the end of this chapter. To determine the IRPA workgroup score to be applied to the Healthy VS Struggling chart:

1. Determine the workgroup’s OPTIMAL IRPA SCORE by multiplying the number of group members by 7 (7 being the highest individual IRPA score possible).
2. Determine the workgroup’s ACTUAL IRPA SCORE by adding group members’ individual IRPA scores to determine the total.
3. Divide the workgroup’s ACTUAL IRPA SCORE by the number of workgroup members to determine the Healthy VS Struggling group assessment score.

Table 4.4.

*Informal Roles Productivity Analysis Labels & Scores*

<b>Role</b>	<b>Label Assignment</b>	<b>Individual IRPA Score</b>
<b>On-Task Oriented/ Relationship Building &amp; Maintenance</b>	AB	7
<b>On-Task Oriented/ Relationship Building &amp; Maintenance/ Self-Serving Oriented</b>	ABC	6
<b>On-Task Oriented</b>	A	5
<b>On-Task Oriented/ Self-Serving Oriented</b>	AC	4
<b>Relationship Building &amp; Maintenance</b>	B	3
<b>Relationship Building &amp; Maintenance/ Self-Serving Oriented</b>	BC	2
<b>Self-Serving Oriented</b>	C	1
<b>Obstructing Oriented</b>	D	0

Table 4.4 Informal Roles Productivity Analysis Labels & Scores, lists each IPRA role and its corresponding abbreviated label and Individual IRPA Score.

Part 3, brings together the results of the SIRIS and IRPA roles by introducing the Healthy Versus Struggling Evaluation (HVSE) in which both are incorporated.

### **4.4 Part 3: Examining the Workgroup as a Whole**

#### **4.4.1 Healthy Versus Struggling Evaluation (HVSE)**

In parts one and two of the framework, the focus is on understanding the individual in relation to the other members of the workgroup both in a formal and informal context. Part 3: Healthy Versus Struggling Evaluations (HVSE), begins to look at the workgroup as one functioning system, each group member a part of the whole. This is done by plotting the workgroup IRPA score onto the Healthy Versus Struggling Assessment (HVSA) scale. See Figure 4.3: Healthy Versus Struggling Assessment Scale. The Healthy Versus Struggling Assessment scale plots the workgroup's IRPA score to determine the health of the workgroup. The HVSA spectrum ranges from a healthy workgroup environment on one end to a struggling workgroup environment on the other. Workgroups are deemed to be healthy versus effective or productive because the "health" of the group points to the overall sense of perceived well-being of group members and their relationships with each other. This does not necessarily mean that a struggling group will not produce results. On the contrary, it was observed that some groups will function regardless of health status out of sheer necessity. At that point, the question becomes, to what degree and how much of the group's potential is being actualized? There is a difference between missed opportunities, lackluster proficiency, and merely surviving versus actually thriving.

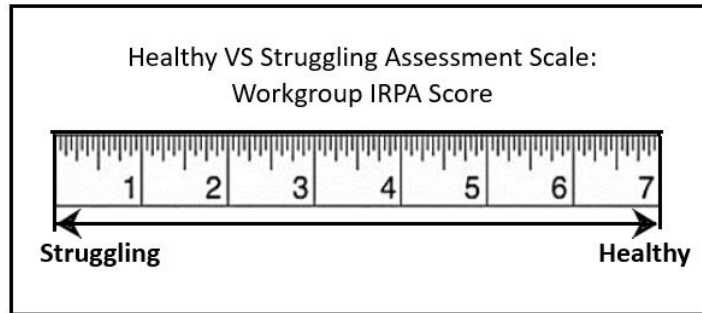


Figure 4.5. Healthy Versus Struggling Assessment Scale

When healthy workgroup indicators were observed it fostered a collaborative and productive environment in which group members were generally satisfied, exhibited a sense of belonging, and felt safe taking risks or making “unpopular” suggestions. In struggling environments, it was observed that collaboration seemed strained and productivity was based on just “getting the job done”. Group members were continually tense about other group members (with no proper way of addressing it), individuals did not appear to feel as if they fit in and seemed nervous around other group members, and there were fear and apprehension about taking risks or making unpopular suggestions. Based on observations it is suggested that struggling groups could also be characterized as too much socializing and not enough task accomplishing interactions. As noted earlier, this scale is not an either/or. Instead, it is a spectrum anchored by healthy on one end and struggling on the other, with workgroups falling between or on one of the two anchors.

It was also observed that the tone of the workgroup environment, healthy or struggling, could be greatly attributed to the formal leader of the workgroup. Although both formal and informal leaders can affect the tone and feel of the group, as influential as some informal leaders can be, formal leaders have a very distinct effect on the workgroup. It was observed that how formal workgroup leaders managed their informal roles had a strong relationship with the type of informal roles workgroup members took on, as discussed in chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion section 5.2. How leaders managed their informal roles had a way of promoting

either healthy and productive workgroup environments or struggling and strained workgroup environments in which collaboration and productivity were tense.

### **Examples from the field:**

#### ***Example 1: The Project Management group***

At Matlock Engineering & Consulting I observed two groups, the Project Management (PM) group and the Planning group. From the very beginning, things were distinctly different, starting with how my introductions went with each group. On my first day with the Project Management group, Vikki the formal group leader gathered her entire group together in an informal meeting. At this meeting, I gave a summary about what I was doing, I gave them the opportunity to air out any concerns, ask questions, and then everyone was issued a consent form that outlined their rights as subjects in the study and the option for them not to be included in the study if they chose not to participate. The meeting concluded with Vikki stating, "I think that this is a great opportunity and we can all learn and benefit from it." The meeting had an easy-going tone to it and group members seemed at ease with each other and joked together in a friendly manner. This was observed to be the general tone of the group throughout observations.

It was obvious that Vikki was a busy person. She was always in meetings that took her away from the group, but her concern for group members on a personal level was obvious. It was not unusual to see her stop at the different cubicles of group members and ask how things were going or if they needed help with anything. Her conversations and interactions with group members were generally casual and were not always purely task-related but were interspersed with relationship building communicative patterns such as joking or asking how things went with a group member's weekend. This seemed to set the tone for the rest of her group who sometimes followed her lead.

In an informal interview, Vikki noted that she had not been to college, which, according to an engineer in another group, was not the norm in the organization. One group member said that Vikki had started in the front office at an entry-level position and worked her way up “through the ranks”. Vikki seemed very interested in keeping abreast of the latest organizational trends by reading various organization-focused books. She thought it was important to “keep up”. She noted that she once thought a book was so good that she ordered one for each of her group members. Upon sharing that, Libby who shared her cubicle began talking about the latest book she was reading and they discussed what was helpful. Vikki stated, “When I find a good book I try and bring it to work so everyone can have the chance to read it.” In the center of her cubicle, which she shared with three others, was a 3x4 table (a table which seemed to be a standard issue for all cubicles) covered with their group’s latest puzzle and a lot of snacks, which was available to anybody needing a snack fix or mid-day energy boost. Most of the cubicles had their stash of snacks but Vikki noted that having the best snacks brings people around. When I asked her the purpose of the puzzle she recounted that one of her readings had been about the success of the Google Company. Google allotted work time for their employees to do non-work related things to let them think and or develop their creativity and to give them a “mind break”. She thought that she would give it a try by bringing in a puzzle for her group members with the idea that sometimes when you are doing something non-work related and non-stressful ideas will come to you, “like getting that good idea in the shower”. The puzzle offered a little office-fun since they could “not get too crazy at work”, especially given the very quiet environment in which they worked. Whether the puzzles were effective or not is beside the point. Vikki seemed to be willing to take risks that could sometimes be seen as unconventional and even outwardly

unproductive if she thought it would help her group members. In one-on-one conversations with project management group members they described her as nurturing, easy to talk to, and caring.

On the whole, when interviewed, Project Management group members used words like family, friends, mentors and approachable to describe their fellow group members. When asked if their group ever did things outside of work, group members answered, “yes, sometimes we get together to eat or go golfing, stuff like that...” Jennifer, a Project Management group member, commented in an informal interview that generally everybody got along and that it was nice, “I’ve worked in places where people literally wanted to kill each other; this is pretty nice, and everyone pretty much gets along.” One group member commented that even though some of the group members were very experienced “way up there” and even ran their own successful firms at one point in their careers they “checked their egos at the door” and treated everyone as equals. This atmosphere seemed to encourage all to take on leadership-promoting type roles. The communal warehouse office was generally very quiet but it was not unusual to hear snippets of the PM group’s conversations or laughter. As John, a project manager in the PM group stated with a smile, “We’re like the cool group.” The figure below gives a general overall sense of the informal roles that Vikki took on in terms of IRPA.

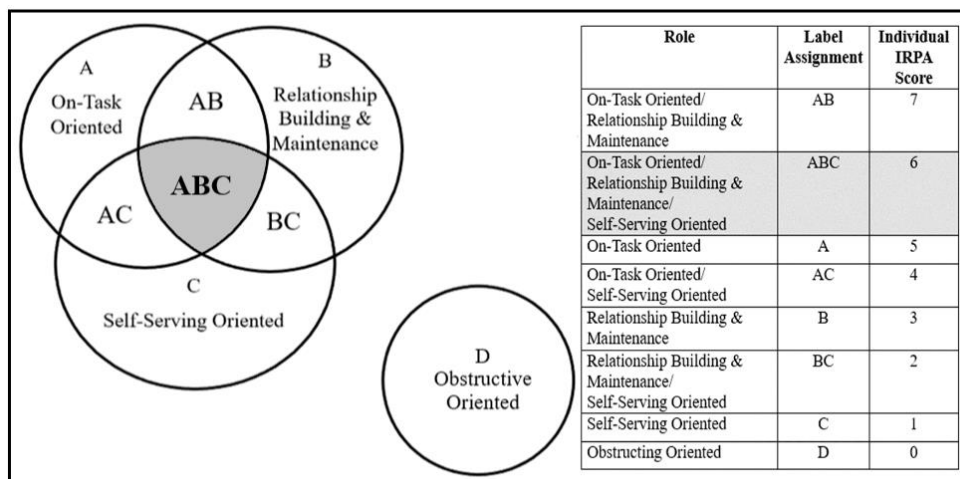


Figure 4.6. IRPA Diagram: Vikki

### ***Example 2: The Planning Group***

My initial impression of Tracy, the formal leader for the Planning Group (PG), was very formal and slightly intimidating. Stephanie, my initial contact with the organization, was a group member in the planning group and had wondered why I was not put into her group. She confided, “Tracy doesn’t always check her emails and it takes a while for her to get back to you, she’s really busy, that’s probably why...” I watched from afar as Stephanie approached Tracy at her desk. Stephanie’s face was mixed with apprehension, noticeable discomfort and nervousness. She cautiously spoke to Tracy and then glanced my way and waved me over where I quickly explained what I was doing. Tracy said that it was okay to observe her group and that I should just arrange everything with Jaime her project coordinator (PC). It was obvious that Tracy was all business, very focused on her work, and seemingly consumed by whatever she was working on, but she was nice. Later that day I stopped by her desk to drop off consent forms explaining subjects’ rights in the study, I tapped her on the shoulder and asked her if she would have a free second later, she abruptly and loudly stated, “no, I’m too busy” and turned back to her work. Later Stephanie came up to me and said, “Sorry about that, I should have warned you that she is kind of like that. Maybe it’s because she’s from the East Coast or something and that’s the style. We just let it go [...], Dave is from around there and he knows how to talk with her. We don’t really see her; if there are comments on a report then she’ll come and tell us.”

I was not able to talk with Tracy one on one but co-workers were happy to share what they knew. John from another group explained that Tracy had earned her Ph.D. in her field; he guessed that it was probably in planning and noted that she was a great public speaker:

JOHN: Because she is in planning she gets up in front of a lot of people with different

Backgrounds- all different levels. She is very good at choosing the words appropriate to her audience... which is very critical when you are doing outreaches. You have a broad spectrum...she knows how to find that even ground.

RESEARCHER: Do you think she's approachable? (John hesitates and looks at the audio recorder)

JOHN: I think she is...

RESEARCHER: Not in her role as a public speaker but within the organization as a person to just go up to.

JOHN: Well...I think...our culture is very passive...

RESEARCHER: The culture of your organization?

JOHN: No, the culture of who we are, maybe because it's Asian influence, Pacific Island influence, and because of her position in the company and her intellectual...it's very intimidating...she's very business-oriented. Maybe that is why she is so successful, she's the type [that] when I come to work, work is all I see.

He included that she was very outspoken in their organization but that she had a lot of experience and had come from another well-established firm prior to Matlock Engineering & Consulting. Overall, words that were used by interviewees to describe Tracy were: outspoken, intellectual, experienced, successful and intimidating.

The Planning group's workspace was divided among three cubicles separating Tracy the group leader, Tim the deputy manager, and Dave the TR group leader by a partition with two or three other group members divided between Tim and Dave's Cubicle. Tracy shared her cubicle with her personal assistant. Although separated by the partition their workspaces faced each



other at a center point that made the cubicles resemble a three-pointed star so that although separated by a low wall with some effort they could all see each other. In one incident Tracy stood up in her cubicle and started speaking to Dave who was seated in his cubicle. She didn't wait to get his attention or notice if he was aware of her. As mentioned earlier many of the employees wore earbuds throughout the day, a practice not discouraged. Tim the deputy manager shot Dave a look over the partition to tell him that Tracy, in their neighboring cubicle was speaking to him. When he still didn't notice, Stephanie who shared his cubicle discretely alerted him. Following that incident, I asked if it was always like that, sending each other silent and discrete alerts. Dave said that because the computer monitors were too high he could not see or hear when Tracy was addressing him so the other group members alert him with their eyes. When I asked why he didn't just tell Tracy that he could not always hear her, he said "Nah" and brushed it off.

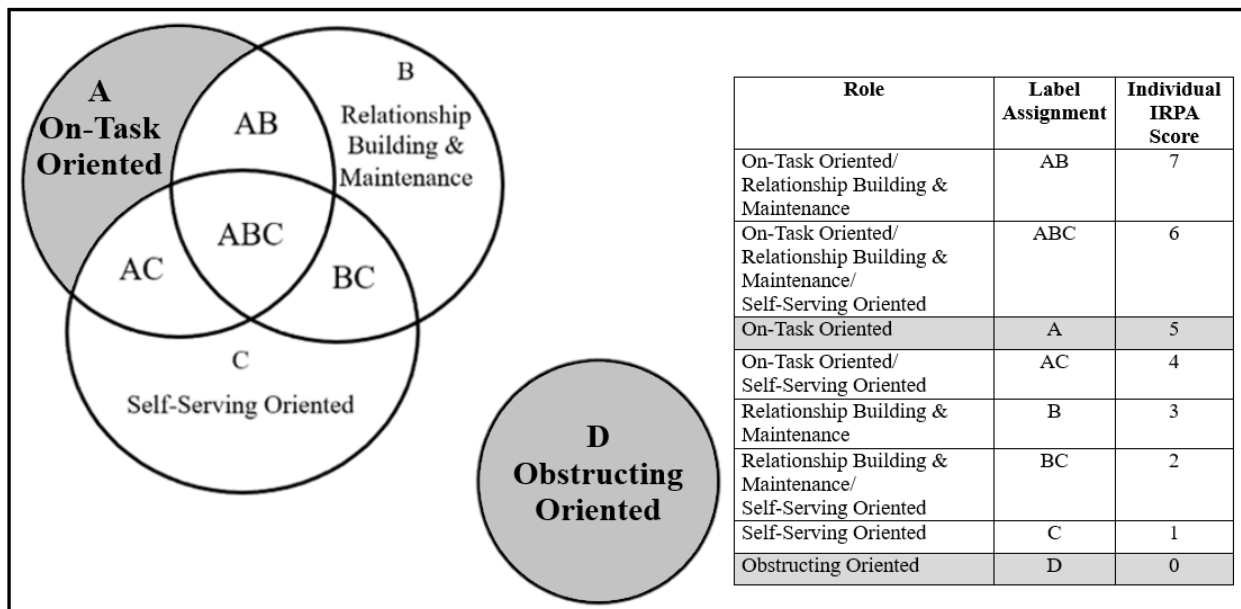


Figure 4.7 IRPA Diagram: Tracy

## *Vikki & Tracy*

There was no question that both group leaders were accomplished formal leaders, and both appear to be very proficient in managing group task projects. However, how each decided to express their formal roles when engaging with group members affected the informal roles group members took, the context in which they built their relationships with each other, as well as their day to day interactions. The idea of feelings, especially in the workplace can sometimes seem “fluffy” and unsubstantial, yet it has been found that employee job performance correlates with how they feel towards those they work with. In today’s competitive world just “getting the job done” or simply “clocking in” may not always be enough (Ramlall, 2008). Casciaro and Lobo (2005) posed the following question and answer: “when looking for help with a task at work people turn to those best able to do the job, right? Wrong”. They found that work partners tended to be chosen not for their ability and competence, but instead for their likability. When given a choice to work with the competent jerk who knows a lot but is unpleasant or the lovable fool, who doesn’t know much but is a delight to work with, more people chose the lovable fool (Casciaro & Lobo, 2005). Casciaro and Lobo add that “that has big implications for every organization, as both these types often represent missed opportunities[...]for the competent jerk, too often their expertise goes untapped by people who just can’t put up with them” (Casciaro & Lobo, 2005). This is not to say that Tracy is a “jerk” or that leaders who are not connecting with their group members are jerks and unbearable. Instead, this speaks to the fact that how we “feel” towards those we work with matters and can have effects on productivity. It was observed that key relationship building and maintenance themes that emerged were the importance of approachability, trust promoting roles, and respect enhancing roles. These may seem obvious to some, but apparently, not enough. John from Vikki’s group contributed the following:

JOHN: Vikki is a lot more nurturing, more ears to the ground, in tuned, grounded, ‘asks how you doing’ she is more intuitive and asks, ‘you don’t look okay, is something wrong’ she takes the time to feel us out (group members).

RESEARCHER: Do you think that matters though?

JOHN: I think it does, it creates a nurturing environment that they care.

RESEARCHER: do you think it makes your work seem more valid because of it?

JOHN: I think for everyone it makes you work harder because you don’t want to let them [group leader] down. There is more pressure to perform when your leader takes an interest in you. I think it makes our group more collaborative.

In speaking with the vice president of Matlock Engineering & Consulting he shared that they had found that their engineers were very good at what they did, but that did not always include being able to speak well with clients. In response to this, they opened a Toast master’s chapter giving their employees a venue in which to develop public speaking skills. In one weekly Toast master’s meeting held during lunch in the conference room, the speakers chosen to speak that day had been allowed to choose their topic. Jack, an employee from one of the engineering divisions chose to speak on what type of boss he would be one day and used his current workgroup leader as a foil. After listing some of the problems that he was dealing with in his work situation and his apparent frustration with his group leader he noted, “I wish I could leave it (the problem list) somewhere where she would see it, such as slipping it under the stall when she is using the bathroom or ‘accidentally’ leaving it out on her desk.” He made these remarks in jest but it was obvious there was a degree of sincerity. At the core of his talk was the need to be heard and taken seriously by his group leader.

It was observed that by only assessing the overall productivity of a group overlooked other factors that contributed to the wellbeing of the group as a whole. Simply being productive, in the sense that the group met organizational objectives did not necessarily mean that the group and its group members were doing well. Although it is helpful to the productivity of a workgroup to identify struggling group members it was observed that unhealthy groups are still able to meet deadlines and expectations, but at what costs? Examining the health of a group can be a more encompassing indicator of what is really going on in a workgroup, what human resources are being utilized, undermined or withheld. Both the Project Management group and the Planning group were considered productive, but the Project Management group with their approachable leader seemed energetic with creativity, had a comfortable sociability, and workgroup members were often observed bouncing ideas off each other in an open manner. The Planning group on the other hand, although collaborative, seemed most comfortable when their formal leader was not at her desk or absent altogether. When she was around they shot apprehensive side glances her way and seemed tentative about sharing things with her unless they really needed to. Tracy, the Planning group leader missed out on opportunities to see how her workgroup members could be a valuable resource to their group and the group missed out on being mentored by such a well-esteemed person in her field, and potentially helpful networking opportunities. Although not completely struggling Tracy's group could conservatively be rated past the middle line and on to the struggling side of the spectrum. The following section will introduce three worksheets to aid in bringing all of the gathered data together to be examined in a comprehensive context.

## **4.5 Part 4: Bringing It All Together in a Practical Application**

The following section is an example of how the framework can be applied to a group-- using Freight Services International's management group as an example. Included are three sample worksheets

1. Sample Worksheet 1: Individual Subject Profile
2. Sample Worksheet 2: Healthy VS Struggling Workgroup Assessment Profile Worksheet
3. Sample Worksheet 3: Generalized Organizational Hierarch Pyramids Worksheet

### **4.5.1 Individual Subject Profiles**

The Sample Worksheet 1: Individual Subject Profile, consolidates some of the main observations and is an overall summary of a specific group member condensed into one worksheet. Some main indicators listed are the person's formal role, SIRIS role, IPRA role and score, and a brief IRPA explanation and some observation highlights. The observation highlights are not all of the field notes but some to give a gist of why they may hold the roles that they do. Ideally, an Individual Subject Profile would be compiled for each group member. The Individual Subject Profile worksheet offers a general portrait of that group member and makes it easier to fill in worksheets 2 and 3 which focuses more on the workgroup as a whole.

### **4.5.2 Healthy VS Struggling Workgroup Assessment Profile Worksheet**

The Sample Worksheet 2: Healthy VS Struggling Workgroup Assessment Profile Worksheet includes all of the workgroup members' SIRIS and IRPA roles and scores and tallies those scores to determine the workgroup's overall Healthy VS Struggling Score to then be plotted on the assessment chart and gauge the general health of the workgroup.

### **4.5.3 Generalized Organizational Hierarch Pyramids Worksheet Applied**

The Sample Worksheet 3: Generalized Organizational Hierarchy Pyramids Worksheet, is comprised of two pyramids, the Formal Roles pyramid and the SIRIS Roles pyramid. The Formal Roles pyramid is a quick visual of the organization or workgroup's hierarchy, or who reports to whom. The SIRIS Roles pyramid outlines workgroup members according to their informal roles and gives an overview of the informal social structure and the informal hierarchy of the workgroup.

**Sample Worksheet 1: Individual Subject Profiles**

<b>Individual Subject Profiles</b>	
<b>Name</b>	Reed
<b>Workgroup</b>	Transportation/ Interisland Transportation/ Warehouse
<b>Formal Title</b>	Terminal General Manager
<b>SIRIS Informal Role(s)</b>	Informal Leader
<b>IRPA Role</b>	(ABC)
<b>IRPA Score</b>	5
<p><b>SIRIS ROLE: Informal Leader</b>            Although Reed was their formal leader, there was no question that he was also their informal leader. He had the ability to calm them when things were not going well and seemed to have a clear vision as to where their group needed to head towards. His other group members also did not hesitate to see him when things went wrong or when they had a new idea to share.</p> <p><b>IRPA Score: ABC</b></p> <p><b>IRPA A:</b>            Reed could be very task-oriented with a great work ethic. As their formal leader, when he was at work those around him exhibited confidence in his judgment and ability to accomplish tasks.</p> <p><b>IRPA B:</b>            He appeared to be a people person who was open to suggestions and it was not unusual to find him with the dispatch group brainstorming ways to approach a difficult situation, get feedback from them, or ask for suggestions. In this way, he gave his group members a sense of personal value and belonging. When there were problems in customer service he had a way of smoothing out the situation. Reed would often check on his group members to see how they were doing and if he could help in any way. When they were shorthanded they didn't hesitate to tell him and he didn't hesitate to step in, even driving to make deliveries to make deadlines.</p> <p><b>IRPA C:</b>            Employees implied that he was not above doing personal favors for the heads of other companies using employee time, equipment, or workers. It was also not unusual for him to come in late or disappear when helping with deliveries. He even garnered a nickname that implied that he could not always be counted on to stay the entire time. Although he was part of management and probably had errands to accomplish that his other group members may not have been privy to, he was so task-oriented that there wasn't the sense that he was slacking off somewhere, but instead, many held the belief that he was running personal errands for other ventures or family. However, he seemed to be so likable that they did not seem to mind.</p>	
<b>Perceived Social Need(s)</b>	
<b>Perceived Social Strength(s)</b>	Hard worker and very likable.
<b>Perceived Social Flaw(s)</b>	Not unusual for him to disappear and be hard to get a hold of
<b>Perceived Social Flaw Consequence</b>	Employees were sometimes frustrated trying to get a hold of him.
<b>Relational Categories with other Workgroup Members</b>	Mike: 10 Isaac: 5 Clark: 7 Leila: 5 Mia: 12
<b>Notable Field Observations and Notes</b>	
LEILA shares her experience with REED on a work trip to Boston:	

But one night, Angela, this nice nice Mexican lady, she works in our Boston terminal, she wanted to take us eat Mexican food so bad, so her and her husband, me, and REED believe it or not was available, came with us, so we're over there somewhere in Boston I don't know where, it's like a little hole in the wall Mexican joint, like we get hole in the wall Hawaiian joint, and when we leave we was outside taking pictures and REED he was like "take one of me! Take one of me!" [she's laughing] and he's like jumping up in the air "make sure you got one of me with my feet off the ground [we're both laughing]. I'm laughing with MIA, this guy is crazy or what! I tell you, even on our way over on the plane, he's like, "you guys cannot sleep, I got my deck cards, we playing cards" [we laugh] I looking at him like...I told MIA, "you sitting next to him 'cause he's so funny. So what happened was MARIA wen book her flight different from us and REED wen go book mine him and MIA we was on the same plane. I can't remember but I think MARIA was like on one different plane, and we got, us three got there at the same time, and she never get there till after, like we went and got the rental car and then we had to go back and get her, like she was all mad at REED.

RESEARCHER: how come she didn't just book it at the same time?

LEILA: That's what I told REED, I don't know....

RESEARCHER: Yeah, he's [REED] fun-loving

LEILA: He's crazy! He's a scatterbrain, like...he's different, she laughs

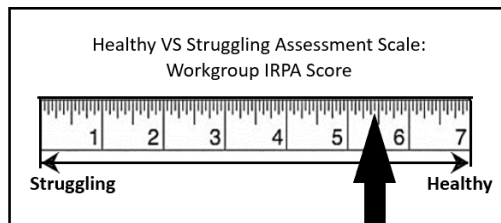
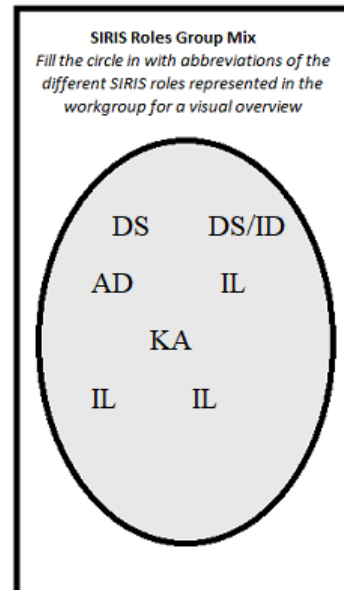


**Sample Worksheet 2: Healthy VS Struggling Workgroup Assessment Profile Worksheet**

Healthy VS Struggling Workgroup Assessment Profile Worksheet					
1	<b>Organization:</b> <i>Freight Services International</i>				
2	<b>Workgroup: Name/ Department/ Division:</b> <i>Overall Transportation</i>				
3	<b>Formal Group Leader:</b> <i>Reed</i>				
4	<b>Main Purpose for the group:</b> <i>Delivery, transportation, temporary holding</i>				
5	<b>Key supplementary purposes:</b> <i>Customer Service</i>				
6	<b>Core Group Members</b>				
7	<b>Name</b>	<b>Formal Title</b>	<b>SIRIS Role abbr below</b>	<b>IRPA Role</b>	<b>IRTCA # Score</b>
8	<i>Reed</i>	<i>General Manager</i>	<i>IL</i>	<i>ABC</i>	<i>6</i>
9	<i>Troy</i>	<i>Warehouse Manager</i>	<i>IL</i>	<i>AB</i>	<i>7</i>
10	<i>Clark</i>	<i>Transportation Manager</i>	<i>DS</i>	<i>AC</i>	<i>4</i>
11	<i>Mike</i>	<i>Interisland Transportation Supervisor</i>	<i>DS/ID</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>1</i>
12	<i>Leila</i>	<i>Dispatch Supervisor</i>	<i>IL</i>	<i>AB</i>	<i>7</i>
13	<i>Mia</i>	<i>Dispatch</i>	<i>KA</i>	<i>AB</i>	<i>7</i>
14	<i>Isaac</i>	<i>Interisland Transportation</i>	<i>AD</i>	<i>AB</i>	<i>7</i>
15					
16					
17	Total Number of workgroup members	Only include workgroup members included in this assessment who have been assigned a SIRSI & IRPA role			7
18	Optimal IRPA Workgroup Score	Total Number of group members included in the assessment multiplied by 6 (Line 17 divided by )			49
19	Cumulative IRPA Workgroup Score	Sum of all group members' IRPA # Score			39
20	Healthy VS Struggling Assessment Score	Cumulative IRPA Workgroup Score (line 19) divided by the total number of workgroup members (line 17)			5.4

SIRIS Informal Roles		
#	Informal Role	Role ABRV
1	Informal Leader	IL
2	Key Advocates	KA
3	Advocates	AD
4	Non-Advocates	NA
5	Followers	FR
6	Disconnects	DC
7	Indifferents	ID
8	Diminished Standings	DS
9	Shirkers	SR
10	Impeders	IP

IRPA Role	Label Assignment	Individual IRPA Score
On-Task Oriented/ Relationship Building & Maintenance	AB	7
On-Task Oriented/ Relationship Building & Maintenance/ Self-Serving Oriented	ABC	6
On-Task Oriented	A	5
On-Task Oriented/ Self-Serving Oriented	AC	4
Relationship Building & Maintenance	B	3
Relationship Building & Maintenance/ Self-Serving Oriented	BC	2
Self-Serving Oriented	C	1
Obstructing Oriented	D	0



Health of FSI workgroup

*Sample Worksheet 3: Generalized Organizational Hierarch Pyramids Worksheet*

**Generalized Organizational Hierarchy Pyramids Worksheet**

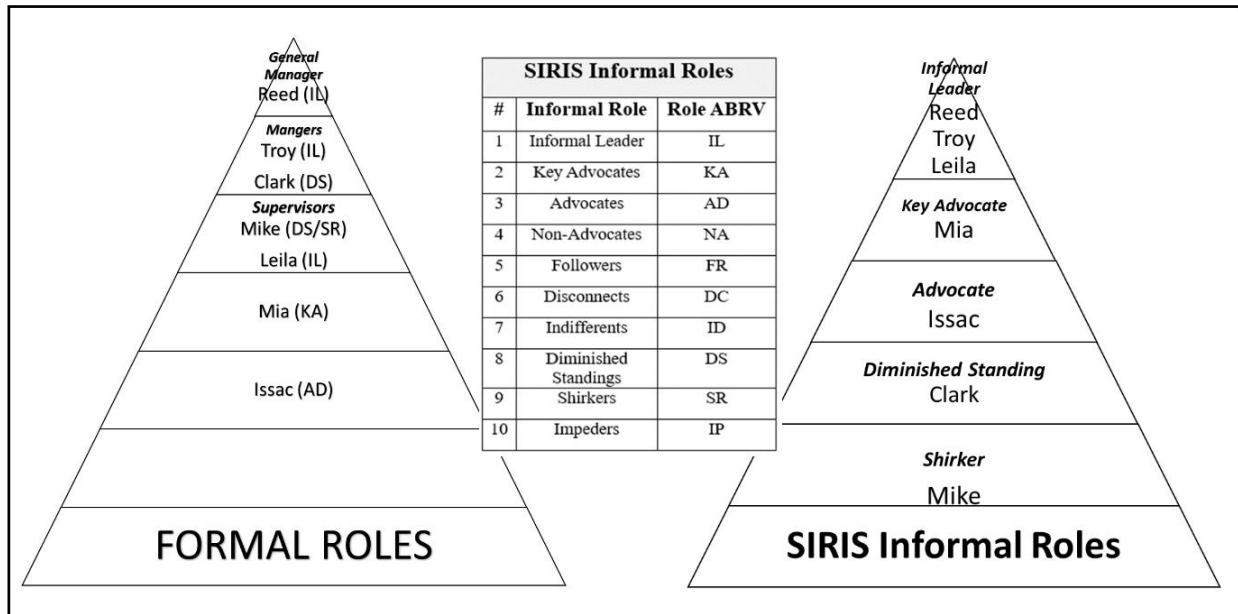
Not all organizations have an organizational chart or a current one available. The Generalized Organizational Hierarchy Pyramids are made up of two pyramids: the Formal Roles pyramid and the SIRIS Roles pyramid. The Formal Roles pyramid gives a quick overview of the organization's formal official reporting relationships within workgroups without having to specifically list or know their formal titles. This generalized model gives an overview of who reports to whom within the workgroup or organization. The SIRIS Roles pyramid lists the hierarchy within the informal social structure. Placing them side by side allows for direct comparison. The Generalized Organizational Hierarch Pyramids can help identify which formal organizational roles might need to be addressed and where influence or alternative information flows may lie.

**Directions for Formal Roles Placement Pyramid:**

Fill in the names of group members according to who reports to whom in the formal workgroup or organization structure based on their formal roles and titles with the pinnacle of the pyramid indicating the highest role in the organization or workgroup hierarchy. Next to each name, in parenthesis, include their abbreviated SIRIS role.

**Directions for SIRIS Roles Pyramid:**

Each level of the SIRIS Roles pyramid indicates a specific SIRIS role. Fill in the names of group members according to their SIRIS roles.



#### 4.6 Visual Conceptualization of SIRIS and IRPA Roles

Figure 4.8 is a visual conceptualization of the combination of the SIRIS and IRPA roles. The figure is divided into four sections, however, this does not mean that any of the QUADS represent the perfect combination of informal roles. Although some quads represent a combination of roles that are optimal for a workgroup they still have their drawbacks. Yet, this figure can be helpful in seeing the workgroup as a whole and immediately spotting individuals that might need more attention than others.

		7 AB ON TASK RELATION	6 ABC ON TASK RELATION SELF SRVNG	5 A ON TASK	4 AC ON TASK SELF SRVNG	3 B RELATION	2 BC RELATION SELF SRVNG	1 C SELF SRVNG	0 D PRODUCTI VELY IMPEDING	SIRIS TOTAL		
<b>Quad 1</b>	IL Informal Leader	<b>TROY LEILA</b>	<b>REED</b>							3	<b>Quad 3</b>	
	KA Key Advocate	<b>MIA</b>								1		
	AD Advocate	<b>Isaac</b>								1		
	NA Non- Advocate											
	FR Follower											
<b>Quad 2</b>	DC Disconnect										<b>Quad 4</b>	
	ID Indifferent											
	DS Diminished Standing				<b>CLARK</b>			<b>Mike</b>		2		
	SR Shirkers											
	IP Social Impeders											
<b>IRPA TOTAL</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>			<b>1</b>				

Figure 4.8 Visual Conceptualization of SIRIS and IRPA Roles

Quad 1 and 2 are a combination of the most task-oriented roles. Quad 3 and 4 are roles that do not place a high priority in accomplishing workgroup objectives.

Quad 1 are a combination of roles that are task-oriented and socially involved with the workgroup. Optimal SIRIS and IRPA combinations found in this quad are KA/AB, AD/AB, FR/AB, KA/ABC, AD/ABC, and FR/ABC. However, it is important to consider that not all of these roles are “healthy”. For instance, if the informal leader’s formal role is not the formal leader of the group it could be an indication that group dynamics need to be evaluated.

Quad 2 are a combination of roles that are work-oriented but also disconnected from the workgroup socially in some way.

Quad 3 represent a combination of roles that are involved with the workgroup socially (SIRIS), they care about their group and what’s going on with their group members. However, these roles are not task-oriented (IRPA) and in some circumstances could also be considered unhealthy for the workgroup.

Quad 4 are a combination of roles that are socially disconnected from the workgroup and its members in some way and do not consider accomplishing their work tasks a priority. Individuals falling in this quad should be evaluated. The roles in this quad are not productive or beneficial to the group and should be addressed before the health of the group is put at risk.

#### **4.7 Chapter Summary**

The following section is a summary overview of the Framework presented in chapter 4. Each section in chapter four examined a part of the framework separately, this chapter summary will give a general overview of the framework as a whole system of integrating parts. As explained in their respective sections, each part contributes to the whole of the framework.

*Table 4.5: Framework Overview Revisited*, below outlines the entire framework in four parts and is followed by a summary of each section and some of its parts. Although not completely

comprehensive by any means Table 4.5 is a condensed representation of many of the key elements from each of the sections within the framework and can be a helpful reference guide.

Table 4.5

*Framework Overview Revisited*

<b>Part 1</b>	<b>Identifying the Individual Informal Roles, Social Processes, &amp; Environment with in the Workgroup</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportership Informal Roles Identification Spectrum (SIRIS)</li> <li>• Contextual Relational Categories &amp; Descriptions</li> <li>• Bonding Rituals</li> <li>• The Social</li> <li>• Social Currency Exchange</li> <li>• Perceived Social Needs</li> <li>• Social Flaws, and Social Strengths</li> </ul>	
<b>Part 2</b>	<b>Gauging an Individual's Informal Role's Productivity in their Formal Role's Workgroup Context</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal Roles Productivity Analysis (IRPA)</li> </ul>	
<b>Part 3</b>	<b>Examining the Workgroup as a Whole</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Healthy Versus Struggling Evaluation (HVSE)</li> </ul>	
<b>Part 4</b>	<b>The Application</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group Member Profiles</li> <li>• Supportership Informal Roles Group Assessment</li> <li>• The Generalized Organizational Hierarchy Pyramid</li> </ul>	

**Part 1: Identifying the Individual Informal Roles, Social Processes, & Environment within the Workgroup**

Part 1 begins with:

1. **SIRIS Roles** (see Table 4.2): Seeks to understand each workgroup member’s possible informal role at a given time.

2. **Relational Categories** (see Table 4.3): The context of each individual's relationship to the others within their workgroup.

SIRIS Roles and Relational Categories allow us to gain a little insight into how each group member may be positioned within their workgroup and why, identify key individuals with a notable degree of influence not recognized on the organizational formal roles hierarchy chart, and put each identified group member's informal role into a context in relation to the others. In this way, we begin with the individual and expand out to explore their interconnectedness or lack of connection to their workgroup. Continuing on and also included in Part 1:

3. **Bonding Rituals**: outward expressions of how group members socially connect within their environment in formal and informal ways. Shifts in bonding rituals can also indicate shifts in the general sociality of and between the workgroup and its members.
4. **The Social**: this encompasses the general environment in which the workgroup functions and includes animate as well as inanimate objects. The social also extends to how the environment itself can affect the social exchanges of group members.
5. **Social Currency Exchange**: a lens in which to explain and understand how group members' daily interactions affect their status one on one with group members; as well as the group as a whole; and frames how an individual maintains, boosts or diminishes their influence within the group. Perceived social needs, Social flaws, and Social strengthens are strongly associated with this construct.
6. **Perceived Social Needs**: each group member holds a preconceived notion of their level of social comfort or homeostasis that they desire to be at for each social situation. An individual can reach homeostasis, or state of general comfort when they perceive that their needs are being satisfied or met in some way either by themselves or by another

person. Ties can be strengthened or even influence gained when another individual either fulfills, reinforces, or even withholds the needs of another. Social needs are strongly associated with social currency.

7. **Social Flaws, and Social Strengths:** either positive or negative behavioral patterns that individuals repeat to the point that others begin to associate that behavior with that individual's character. Perceived weaknesses were observed to detract from an individual's influence and standing within their group whereas positive behavioral patterns were observed to enhance an individual's standing and influence within their group. Social flaws and strengthens weakened or strengthened an individual's social currency exchange with their group members.

Part 1 of this framework is very social in nature. Essentially, it is about understanding the social aspect and structure of the workgroup and workgroup members' placement within their socially bounded structure: how they socially connect and communicate within that environment, what their connections might mean, and identify implications that might not be visible on the formal organizational hierarchy chart. Part 1 also sets the context of the workgroup to be examined in parts 2, 3, and 4.

## **Part 2: Gauging an Individual's Informal Role's Productivity in their Formal Role's**

### **Workgroup Context**

While Part 1 focuses on understanding the social structure and context of the workgroup, its members and the social processes that bring that about part 2 shifts its focus on how those informal roles may affect their formal duties. For instance, do the informal roles that individuals have taken on benefit the workgroup when it comes down to the primary purpose of the workgroup: to work and accomplish organizational objectives. For instance, group members

may socially get along very well and have an informal leader that they all willingly look to, but that does not necessarily mean that that workgroup is accomplishing all of their organizational objects and being productive in their roles to the level required of them. Part 2 introduces the Informal Role Productivity Analysis (IRPA). Whereas SIRIS roles focus on the social make-up of the group IRPA roles strive to understand how productive an individual's informal role is in staying on task and assisting others in staying on task. Table 4.4 gives a brief description of each possible IRPA role. The core IRPA roles are On-Task Oriented, Relationship Building and Maintenance Oriented, Self-Serving Oriented, and Obstructing Oriented, with the remainder of the roles being a combination of the core roles. An IRPA score is assigned to each role in order to tally all workgroup members' scores to gauge the health of the group in part 3.

### **Part 3: Examining the Workgroup as a Whole**

Part 3, Healthy Versus Struggling Evaluation (HVSE) brings together parts 1 and 2 by examining the group members as a functioning whole. In parts 1 and 2 each group member is analyzed within the context of the workgroup, part 3 combines their scores to give a context in which to examine how each group member's role contributes to the whole of the group. This is done by plotting the combined average of workgroup members' IRPA scores on the Healthy Versus Struggling Assessment chart. It was observed that even struggling groups have the ability to meet organizational objectives even within toxic work environments.

### **Part 4: Bringing It All Together in a Practical Application**

Part 4 brings together the results of each part of the framework to be analyzed as a comprehensive whole. The observations and findings from each part of the framework are compiled within three Application Worksheets:

1. Application Worksheet 1: Individual Subject Profiles



2. Application Worksheet 2: Healthy VS Struggling Workgroup Assessment Profile  
Worksheet

3. Application Worksheet 3: Generalized Organizational Hierarch Pyramids Worksheet

Together, these three application worksheets offer a streamlined portrait of the workgroup and its members. It does not supplant field notes and the results of constant comparative observations but instead boils down the findings into a comparative measurement.

## Chapter 5. Discussion

### Chapter Overview

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Implications for Theory or General Concepts: Patterns of Informal Leadership
  - 5.2.1 Not all workgroup social structures have an informal leader.
  - 5.2.2 When a workgroup has a formal leader as well as a strong informal leader it could indicate internal problems within the workgroup.
  - 5.2.3 Informal leadership is not always explicit
  - 5.2.4 Informal Leadership in formal workgroups can be similar to informal leadership in emergent groups & identifying informal leaders.
    - 5.2.4.1 Emerging informal leaders in workgroups with existing formal leaders identified.
    - 5.2.4.2 The difference between the literature and this study.
- 5.3 Addressing the Informal Roles of Indifferents, Shirkers, & Job Satisfaction
- 5.4 Implication of Findings:
  - 5.4.1 The framework.
  - 5.4.2 Practical implications: A systematic framework.
    - 5.4.2.1 Observed example.
  - 5.4.3 Flexibility of the framework.
- 5.5 Developing the Informal Roles Productivity Analysis Model and Moving Beyond the Literature
- 5.6 Symbolic Interaction Theory
- 5.7 Moving Beyond Followership Theory towards Supportership: Another Lens

### 5.1 Introduction

This study sought to explore: 1. possible social processes that surround those individuals identified within workgroups and their organizations as informal leaders as well as other informal roles within the workgroup. 2. If there was evidence that suggested a relationship between how a subject manages their formal and informal role and his or her place within the informal social structure. 3. How the influence of a subject's formal role is dependent on the way that they manage their informal role within the informal social structure and 4. To introduce the concept of Supportership and highlight its potential importance. The major contributions of this work are presented in Chapter 4: Findings, in which the findings of this study are outlined in a framework that includes a method to identify informal roles within workgroups and assess

possible ways those informal roles are impacting the group and the formal productivity of the workgroup. The following sections in this chapter will address implications for theory and general concepts; an alternative narrative and approach to the informal roles identified in this study as Indifferents and Shirkers; address Supportership versus followership and the implications they both carry, my findings in regards to Symbolic Interaction Theory and further implications of my findings.

## **5.2 Implications for Theory or General Concepts: Patterns of Informal Leadership**

**5.2.1 Not all workgroup social structures have an informal leader.** It was observed that not all informal workgroups social structures had an informal leader. This may initially sound like an insignificant and obvious observation. However, this observation leads to the next question that is addressed in the following section, “why do some groups have informal leaders and why do some not have informal leaders, even when those groups are in the same organization?”

I observed that in cases where the formal leader of a group was more than adequately fulfilling the needs of his or her group there was no need for an alternative or informal leader to emerge. I observed two examples of this, one at Matlock Engineering & Consulting with Sarah’s group and the second example of this at Freight Services International with Troy’s group.

At Matlock Engineering & Consulting, Sarah, the Project Manager and formal group leader, made conscious efforts to talk to her group on social and professional grounds. She consistently worked to understand their needs by meeting with group members individually to try and perceive gaps that needed to be addressed in the group.

Out of the three groups observed at Freight Services International, Troy, the warehouse manager who headed the drivers and loading unit, was the only group that did not have an informal leader. He understood the culture of his workers, addressed their needs in ways they felt fixed their problems and was in constant professional and casual communication with them. Often he could be seen jumping onto a forklift or as a driver in the big trucks to move shipping containers around the yard to help his team meet their deadlines. Both groups still had their issues, they were not perfect, but they also had a formal leader who was attentive and willing to help the group move towards resolutions in ways that did not leave group members feeling isolated. An alternative informal leader was not necessary because people perceived that the role of the formal leader was being adequately fulfilled in both situations. However, this was not always the case regarding the other groups that I observed.

**5.2.2 When a workgroup has a formal leader as well as a strong informal leader it could indicate internal problems within the workgroup.** It was observed that informal leaders can emerge even in workgroups that have formal leaders in place who would normally have the advantage of formal organizational authority. In the literature (Taggar, Hackett, & Saha, 1999; Cohen, Chang, & Ledford, 1997) the idea of informal leaders tends to be studied and acknowledged in a positive light and in many settings informal leaders can be a positive thing. Informal leaders were observed to have the ability to key into what group members perceive as lacking and somehow provide that need. Like most leaders they can be motivational for the group, fill in where formal leadership falls short and can be the driving force to move the group towards productive goals and outcomes.

However, there are also negative implications of an informal leader in workgroups that can affect the group as well as the informal leader as an individual. Within the context of a workgroup that is structured to have a formal leader, if a formal leader is in place, the rise of an informal leader can be a red flag indicating that the formal social structure of the group should be re-evaluated. Leadership may want to consider evaluating how group members feel their needs are or are not being met by formal leadership or the formal structure currently in place. For instance, if a strong informal leader is recognized and group members are by-passing the formal leader than the formal structure of the group may be ineffective and employees' formal roles may need to be reviewed. What scenarios would cause an informal leader's influence to supersede that of the formal leader?

Some of the following scenarios were observed:

- Group members may feel that the informal leader is more competent, knowledgeable or experienced than the formal leader and therefore lacks confidence that the formal leader can either get things accomplished or represent them properly to the rest of the organization or clients.
- Group members may feel that the formal leader does not have the group's best interest in mind.
- The formal leader may feel undervalued and stop caring altogether because someone else is "picking up the load".
- The formal leader may be away on organizational business and meetings because of the position and has lost touch with group members.
- The formal leader does not share the same overall values of the other workgroup members.

- The formal leader believes that the title alone infers influence beyond organizational authority.

In each of these scenarios even if the workgroup was being productive formally, in the sense that they were meeting workgroup goals and objectives, at the informal level an informal leader could be an indication that the group is suffering in other ways. In one observation conscientious group members became over-burdened because formal duties were not being adequately fulfilled by those who were responsible for them and so they had to be “picked up” by other group members to keep overall group productivity from dipping. It may also indicate that a group member is ineffective in their position and could benefit from either more training or maybe better suited in another workgroup or position so that their resources can be more fully utilized.

For informal leaders benefits and pitfalls were observed. On a positive note, the social currency that they may enjoy is appreciation, confidence, security, ease of mind that things will get done, even get done “the right way”. Informal leaders may also benefit from being viewed as highly competent, especially if the formal leader is regarded by other group members as a negative or incompetent foil. Informal leaders are very helpful to have when the formal leader is somehow lacking. Informal leaders have the opportunity to show formal leadership within the organization their ability to lead, manage, and get things done well. However, the dark side to being an effective informal leader is that higher up bosses or managers in the organization who are just interested in keeping the status quo may have no interest in putting in the effort to change things. A potential pitfall is that an informal leader may miss opportunities for advancement and be overlooked for promotions because the negative repercussions of removing them from the group may not seem worth the risk to management.

**5.2.3 Informal leadership is not always explicit.** One group that I observed at Matlock Engineering & Consulting had a very strongly opinionated, knowledgeable, educated, and highly capable formal group leader named Lilly. Lilly was well recognized by the community and was often the face of the company at various events. However, her group members described her as unapproachable but would quickly add that she was good at her job. She would talk to the others in her group from over their low cubicle walls but did not seem to think that it was important to first get their attention or ensure that they were aware of her intent to speak to them. When she felt the need to speak to someone or the entire group, she would stand up at her cubical and then announce to them things that she wanted to be done or expected of them. In their hyper quiet environment, many of the employees wore earbuds or earphones and listened to their music throughout their workday. This was a practice not discouraged by the organization and a majority of the employees kept their earbuds in throughout the day and communicated through their Instant Message accounts even when they sat next to each other in the same cubicle.

Lilly would often talk to a group member, always work-related, without feeling the need for them to acknowledge her. The other group members would have to nudge each other or shoot each other looks to indicate that they were being addressed. One group member was so nervous about Lilly that he kept a reflective surface facing the entrance of the cubicle so that he would never be, as he put it, “caught off guard” by her. Lilly’s group members were relatively easy-going, liked to chat, eat lunch together, and often joked around but when Lilly was around there was a distinct feeling of uncomfortable rigidity. Although I asked group members individually about Lilly their responses were similar: she was good at her work, well educated, and very capable but “acted like that” socially because she was from the east coast and group members reasoned that “they probably did things differently there”. Group members often

sought and looked to Samuel for work and workgroup social cues. He exhibited no outward desires to “lead” the group but he had a type of grounding sense about him. When Lilly was not there he was their adjunct leader by default. He was quiet, knowledgeable, and although not overly social sometimes made jokes and was not intimidating. He seemed content doing his own work, but I noticed that others looked to him often. His informal leadership style was not deliberate but he helped navigate the group in a rhythm that they felt comfortable with and buffered the more abrasive style of their formal leader.

Although I observed informal workgroup leaders who were loud, outspoken, and obvious, Samuel showed that that was not always the case in identifying an informal leader. Some informal leaders will fill the position in less obvious ways. There were many commonalities between the workgroups that I observed, yet, personality type was not the ultimate indicator of an informal leader. Different groups had different values and informal leaders seemed to emerge when they were able to key into gaps and address the needs of their group members in meaningful ways.

**5.2.4 Informal Leadership in formal workgroups can be similar to informal leadership in emergent groups & identifying informal leaders.** In some literature, a type of informal leadership has also been referred to as leadership emergence (Taggar, Hackett, & Saha, 1999; Wolff, Pescosolido, & Druskat, 2002). Emergent groups, sometimes referred to as autonomous groups, do not have formal leadership but instead derive their roles and leadership from group member’s behaviors as group members “step up” to fulfill informal roles. Taggar, Hackett, & Saha (1999), using a sample of 480 undergraduate students at a midsized university, studied leadership emergence in autonomous work teams. The teams were autonomous in that



they were teams in which team members were not invested with any type of formal authority but were still responsible for a variety of tasks including “team maintenance functions (e.g., conflict resolution and team and individual performance feedback), work allocation, and identifying and solving ill-defined or poorly structured problems” (1999, p 901). Emerging leaders were defined as “group members who exert significant influence over other members of the group although no formal authority has been vested in them” (Taggar, Hacket, and Saha, 1999, p.901). Since no one in the teams that they studied were vested with formal authority the researchers characterized leadership behavior according to the workgroup members’ peer to peer definitions of leadership attributes that were based on the subjects’ experiences during the study. They noted that:

When a team works under a time constraint the appropriate leader role behavior would primarily attempt to organize work, work relations, and goals rather than to develop trust, respect for others, and regard for others’ feelings. Zaccaro et al. (1991) found that emergent team leaders (individuals rated highest on perceived leadership by their peers) were more adept than other team members at perceiving team requirement and selecting appropriate behavior to these demands” (Taggar, Hacket, & Saha, 1999, p. 901).

Taggar, Hacket, and Saha stated that “one anticipates that leadership emerges when a peer sends expectations for leadership behavior to a fellow team member who, if he or she is willing and capable, reinforces those expectations by exhibiting effective leadership behavior. Therefore, exchanges between team members may take structure not from formal job positions but the negotiated roles or relationships between members” (Taggar, Hacket, & Saha, 1999, p.901; Seers 1989). They point out that since team members were not given a formal position it would seem that negotiating roles would be the most likely result.

#### ***5.2.4.1 Emerging informal leaders in workgroups with existing formal leaders***

***identified.*** In this study, it was observed that the phenomenon of emerging informal leaders was not exclusive to autonomous workgroups. Formal workgroups, despite having a formal design and structure, including formally designated roles, were similar to emergent groups in many ways. When there was a need, individuals who were willing and able could emerge as the informal leader of their group even if the formal leader position was already in place and filled. The traits of these informal leaders were not unlike traditional leaders in that they seemed to have the ability, or were perceived by others as having the ability, to move the group towards perceived productive results and goals or fill gaps left open by the formal roles and leadership already in place.

***5.2.4.2 The difference between the literature and this study.*** However, unlike what Taggar, Hacket, and Saha (1999) observed concerning the decision of their emergent leaders to disregard the need to develop trust, respect for others and other's feelings within their groups as a common behavior, I observed that relationship building traits were an important attribute in the informal leaders that I identified. This difference may be due to the likelihood that unlike the workgroups observed by Taggar, Hacket, and Saha (1999), who were a convenience sample of undergrads who would disband their groups after the experiment; real-world workgroup members in organizations whose livelihood depends on their performance and relationships usually already share a history with each other and also understand on some level that their working relationships and the various consequences that come with them will continue maybe even for their entire careers.

### 5.3 Addressing the Informal Roles of Indifferents, Shirkers, & Job Satisfaction

Can understanding why a group member is indifferent or shirking their duties help in getting them back on track? Mike from the Interisland Transportation Group at Freight Service International was a good example of being both Indifferent and a Shirker. Yet, he was knowledgeable and demonstrated that when he decided to be, he could be very productive and focused. His lackluster attitude might be attributed to his feelings of being stuck in a rut, feeling underappreciated, and overlooked. The thought that all group members are only cooperative for the sole sake of the group is a utopian ideal. Fostering and recognizing the individual's need to progress and maybe even outgrow the work or workgroup is important to the overall context of the work-group. Recognizing group members' individual needs and goals, instead of suppressing it, may help to foster the sense of a higher purpose and motivation towards productivity and contribute to job satisfaction. The following is an excerpt from an informal interview conducted with Mike where he expresses his feelings of not being appreciated:

RESEARCHER: (to MIKE) How long has the air (air conditioner) been out?

MIKE: Since Friday I think, but I wasn't here on Friday and Monday.

RESEARCHER: Were you sick too?

MIKE: Sick in the head, sick of this place...

RESEARCHER: Same thing I guess. I heard that how you feel about a place that you work at can affect how you feel physically.

MIKE: Yeah, I know. I'm feeling under-appreciated. I'm tired of this place. But you know, and keep this under your hat...

RESEARCHER: What do you mean?

MIKE: This is confidential

RESEARCHER: Okay, I'll even close my research notebook.

MIKE: No, I think you should write this down for your stuff, it's important (he leans back and crosses his arms across his chest). You know, I talked to Reed yesterday. I told him that I don't feel appreciated and I keep getting passed up for raises, two years in a row! He said that he was sorry. He apologized and said that he was taking me for granted because I'm a dependable Harry. I come in every day, I work well with the customers, I get all the interisland shipments out.

RESEARCHER: Maybe if you outline with him exactly what it takes to get a raise...

MIKE: No, this company no give raises, they only freeze raises.

RESEARCHER: Maybe if you talk with the person who determines raises about your goals...

MIKE: Nah, I don't want a raise anymore.

RESEARCHER: You don't?

MIKE: Nah, I'm too old. I just want to be appreciated. I don't like my job, but I love what I do. I love working with numbers. I'm a numbers guy.

Spector (1997) expounds on the importance of job satisfaction, he explains that the consequences of an employee's level of satisfaction with their job does not begin and end with the employee but is considered a factor for business effectiveness. At IBM where they regularly administer an employee job satisfaction survey and are noted to be very concerned about the satisfaction of employees with their jobs, has been recognized as having a high level of employee job satisfaction which contributes to their low employee turnover and their outstanding company reputation (Spector, 1997). Personal enrichment opportunities can alleviate the feeling of having a "dead end" job and allow individuals to participate in healthy opportunities that encourage their

personal development and reach personal goals while also furthering workgroup and organization goals.

The Matlock Engineering & Consulting firm recognized this principle to a degree and did their best to address it. One group member from the project management group expressed how his group leader encouraged his progress and development and not just at the workgroup level. In addition, the organization openly encouraged personal and leadership development opportunities, with the understanding that by fostering better-qualified individuals it resulted in a higher quality of work and also kept jobs from becoming perceived as dead ends. Group managers were encouraged to do a yearly personal interview with group members to assess their group and assist in developing group members' individual professional development work goals. In another example the Project Management group allowed project coordinators, those who assist the project managers, to jump into projects they were not assigned to or that were headed by other project managers if it was a project the project coordinator was interested in being a part of or interested in for a future direction in their career.

At Matlock Engineering & Consulting, the project coordinator position was considered an entry-level position. In an informal interview, one project coordinator shared her personal goal to be able to work her way up in the company. She hoped that what she was doing would get her there. She explained that management met with employees to discuss employees' personal goals and how they might be able to achieve them as well as goals that help employees not to lose sight of the company's core values. Added to this was the opportunity for them to "jump" into projects that she was not assigned to if it would help her gain experience in an aspect of the field she would like to grow in, she added, "we're like a family here". In another casual interview Hector, a young project coordinator talked about how he admired his group leader who

had risen “through the ranks” despite not going to college. This was unique in their organization and he hoped to follow in her footsteps which kept him motivated and feeling that there was a place for him at the organization with opportunities to grow. These feelings were not felt by everyone in the organization but seemed to be based on how much an employee’s workgroup leader felt that these values were important. Yet, it does imply that there is a relationship between an individual’s feeling towards their job and workplace and their job performance.

Not every employee needs to be motivated by these external factors but some do. Within organizations and workgroups are various types of people and needs. The ideas presented in this section were just some ideas and tools in which to address different individuals. It may seem cumbersome to have so many different types of people and to have to address their needs but the various perspectives that they offer may be enriching and worth the effort in the long run.

## **5.4 Implication of Findings:**

**5.4.1 The framework.** The framework developed in this dissertation offers a context in which to observe and analyze formal and informal roles that have been identified in this study and from the literature in an interrelated perspective. From the informal roles identified in SIRIS to trait roles pointed out by other researchers the interconnectedness of this approach recognizes that group members’ relationships and actions on an informal level have consequential implications in a formal capacity.

Although other studies have identified helpful informal roles in various fields this study offers a structure in which all informal workgroup or team roles can be observed within a bounded interlocking relationship-oriented context. For example, within this system an individual can be identified in one study as having the trait role of Early Adopter to new

technology. When observed in conjunction with the roles identified in this study, such the roles: Shirker/Relationship Building and Maintenance, which focuses on that individual's relationship to others within his or her workgroup it will hopefully shed light as to why the Shirker Relationship Building and Maintenance: Early Adopter's influence or lack of influence was able to encourage others to follow in his or her footsteps or not.

The framework in this dissertation offers a practical way in which to understand employees and group members within a bounded system. The boundedness of this approach allows a researcher to better understand the nature of group members' actions because those actions can be weighed against the formal and informal "laws" and or culture of the group and how the group decides to handle the consequences of those roles' action.

**5.4.2 Practical implications: A systematic framework.** The practical implications of having a system to understanding the relational dynamics of coworkers reach beyond just understanding how well group members get along. Understanding a workgroup or team's relational composition can, for instance, be a benefit when introducing new policies, technologies, and practices into a workgroup or the greater organization. Although there are many factors that help and hinder the adoption of new technologies, policies, practices and changes (Iverson, 1996) the results in this dissertation can be a helpful aid in helping an organization structure their strategy when deciding on whom and how to best launch and introduce the new organizational change, policy, and innovations too first for best adoption results. Rogers (2003) explained, "Individuals depend on their near peers for innovation evaluation information, which decreases their uncertainty about the innovation's expected consequences" (p. 203). Rogers (2003) uses the example of the introduction of a new drug at the

time, tetracycline to illustrate how doctors who decided to prescribe the new drug to their patients relied more on the opinions of their fellow doctors than they did on the information that they received from the pharmaceutical firms that distributed it to them:

[...] at the persuasion and decision stages, near-peer networks became more important sources or channels of communication about the new drug, and the commercial role became somewhat less important [...] Awareness-knowledge that a new drug existed could be communicated by commercial sources or channels, but doctors tended to rely on the experiences of their peers for evaluative information about the innovation. The pharmaceutical firms that sold the tetracycline were regarded as less credible by medical doctors at the persuasion stage than were peers when they were deciding whether or not to adopt the innovation. (Rogers, 2003, pg.203)

Rogers (2003) notes that “this role of interpersonal channels is especially important in persuading an individual to adopt a new idea” (p.205). Identifying the most effective individual to initially train or introduce the new change, technology, or idea too could potentially affect how well the new innovation will be received and diffused within an organization or workgroup. In another example Rogers (2003) explains how important identifying the trait role of early adopter is when introducing an organizational change, innovation, or policy:

Early adopters are a more integrated part of the local social system than are innovators. Whereas innovators are cosmopolites, early adopters are localites. This early adopter category, more than any other, has the highest degree of opinion leadership in most systems. Potential adopters look to early adopters for advice and information about the innovation. The early adopter is considered by many to be “the individual to check with” before adopting a new idea [...] because early adopters are not too far ahead of the



average individual in innovativeness, they serve as a role model for many other members of the social system. Early adopters help trigger the critical mass when they adopt an innovation” (Rogers, 2003, p.283).

As important as identifying an early adopter is, it would also be important to understand the early adopter’s relational dynamics to his or her peers within his or her group or organization. The trait role of early adopter alone does not necessarily mean that her peers like, trust, or will follow her in adopting the new technology. If the early adopter is not well-liked, for instance, for her unreliable work ethic, and is also seen as a shirker by her peers, this could be an obstacle in their “buy-in” to the new technology in an effort to not be associated with the group shirker.

It would be important to initially train or introduce new technologies and policies to those whom others would look to. In SIRIS these would be people identified as Informal leaders or Key Advocates. Even if none of the people holding these SIRIS roles would be able to proficiently learn the new system, practice or technology, having their support and backing would go a long way in getting other employees to be willing and open to giving the new technology, system, or practice a try. Their SIRIS role indicates their ability to influence, even if just by a few degrees. For example, when Freight Services International decided to change their computer system in a way that would affect the way everyone did their jobs they did not send up the obvious choice based on her formal role. Instead, they chose an unlikely pair of women who were not in the IT department and were not sure themselves why they were chosen.

**5.4.2.1 Observed example.** At Freight Services International Sharon was their full-time Information Technology (IT) person. Her job was to help employees with their computer and technology needs. Among many things, Sharon would download new programs, update and fix the old ones, and order new hardware. When something went wrong with a computer or some

other technology someone would say, “better get Sharon” and someone else would inevitably add something to the tune of, “we’ll see how long that will take” or “oh, great”. When I first started my observations at FSI I asked Leila what Sharon’s job was? Leila responded, “She just sits in her office and do nothing.” When the company decided to leave their current computer system and adopt a new one in which to input and keep track of their shipments and freight they did not send Sharon to Boston for the training classes. Instead, they sent Leila (Dispatch supervisor), Mia (Dispatch), Maria (Office Manager), and Reed (General Manager).

Mia ended up being the go-to person when employees needed assistance or had questions and concerns about the new program. When their computer program wasn’t working or they didn’t understand what was happening they went to her. When I asked Mia how she ended up being the go-to person for the new program she said that she didn’t know. She said she didn’t even know why she was sent in the first place. Leila was not sure why she was sent either. I can understand why she wasn’t sure, the extent of Leila’s computer skills included email, the internet, and putting on her music. When she wanted to change her screen saver she got so frustrated Mia ended up helping her. However, both Mia and Leila both agreed that the new program was pretty good and when employees got frustrated with the program Mia was quick to explain what needed to be done in a way that seemed to calm their frustrations. Mia would then teach them how to navigate the program more effectively— as many times as they needed to.

Mia and Leila were interesting choices to send up and within the framework of this study, it made sense. It may not have been purposely strategic but having Mia and Leila both on board when the new system was launched might have been a contributing factor in its generally positive acceptance by others. I observed that when employees were frustrated with the program they seemed to chalk it up to their lack of understanding of the program and their confidence

seemed bolstered in their knowledge that “those in the know” thought it was a pretty good system and knew how to help them when they were having a hard time with it.

**5.4.3 Flexibility of the framework.** The framework is composed of three main parts: part 1, part 2, and part 3, with part 4 essentially including the instruments in which to implement the other parts of the framework. Although the framework was organized as a system with each part building upon and being an important contribution to the whole offering an added brush stroke in which to have a fuller and more robust picture of the group and its members the framework is not a monolith. I believe that this framework can be flexible with some of its parts, particularly parts 1 and 2 being adaptable to the needs of researchers with similar but otherwise different objectives. I was interested in exploring the relationship between informal roles and formal roles. However, if a researcher were only interested in identifying informal roles within workgroups, but not their relationship to their formal counterparts Part 1: Identifying the Individual Informal Roles, Social Processes, & Environment within the Workgroup, focuses on just identifying the informal roles within the workgroup. Implementing the following apparatuses from part 1 could help identify those informal roles and could act as a standalone instrument depending on the objectives of the researcher.

- Supportership Informal Roles Identification Spectrum (SIRIS)
- Contextual Relational Categories & Descriptions
- Bonding Rituals
- The Social
- Social Currency Exchange
- Perceived Social Needs

- Social Flaws, and Social Strengths

Likewise, part 2: Gauging an Individual's Informal Role's Productivity in their Formal Role's Workgroup Context, which measures the productive and relational patterns of group members' formal roles using Informal Roles Productivity Analysis (IRPA), could also be implemented as a standalone instrument depending on the objectives of the researcher. However, I am unsure if using part 3 of the framework as a standalone instrument would be very effective since it relies heavily on part 2. It would most likely need to be used in conjunction with part 2.

Although this framework, when used as a whole and in its entirety, offers an interesting and useful perspective of the workgroup and its members, it is also a flexible tool that can be used in parts and adapted to fit the needs of other researcher and their objectives.

## **5.5 Developing the Informal Roles Productivity Analysis Model and Moving Beyond the Literature**

The foundation for the Informal Roles Productivity Analysis (IRPA) model is rooted in the work of Benne and Sheats (1978) who developed three categories to accommodate and understand the phenomena that they were observing in their work. They laid an insightful groundwork that explained much and their work resonates throughout the Informal Roles Productivity Analysis model proposed here.

During laboratory studies conducted in 1948, Benne and Sheats created and observed groups. From these observations, they identified and classified three general categories of group member roles from their observations: 1. *Group task roles*: Participant behavioral patterns related to the task which the group is deciding to undertake or has undertaken with the purpose of facilitating and coordinating group efforts in the selection and definition of a common

problem and in the solution of that problem. 2. *Group building and maintenance roles*: Behavioral patterns in this category are oriented towards the functioning of the group as a group. These roles are designed to alter or maintain the group's way of working, to strengthen, regulate, and perpetuate the group as a group. 3. *Individual roles*: the behavioral patterns in this category are focused on an individual versus the group and are identified as an individual placing their needs above the group in a counter-productive manner that is not for the betterment of the group. Because Individual roles are essentially counter-productive in nature, Benne and Sheats did not classify this category as member roles.

Benne and Sheats' role categories were very helpful and were used as a jumping-off point. However, during this study over time these roles evolved and were altered to understand the observations and informal interviews that were conducted. Benne and Sheats' categories were expanded by first altering the original three that they provided and then by adding five additional categories in an inter-related perspective totaling eight categories in all.

In their work, Benne and Sheats' listed specific trait roles for each of their categories. For instance, in the task roles category, some participants were labeled "initiator contributors" and others as "information seekers". Because the objectives and overall design of this study differed from Benne and Sheats' this study assigns trait roles in the SIRIS portion of this framework and in the IRPA section of the framework focuses on sorting communicative patterns into one of the eight thematic categories listed in IRPA. Furthermore, unlike Benne and Sheats, this study broadens its focus beyond just the decision-making process but also to include how individuals at the leadership and workgroup levels manage their communicative patterns in all aspects of workgroup life.

## 5.6 Symbolic Interaction Theory

Fram (2013), in explaining her understanding between the terms “methodology” and “method” states, “My understanding of the terms parallels Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) definitions; Methodology is ‘a way of thinking about a study and social reality,’ (p.3), whereas, method is a ‘set of procedures and techniques for gathering and analyzing data’(p.3). Oliver (2012) explains that “A key SI principle is that human complexity can only be understood through inductive inquiry” (Oliver, 2012, p. 412) and explains that Blumer (1969) “criticized theory-driven deductive research as bad science, claiming that hypothesis rarely addresses the totality of the theory to be tested. They force the researcher to start from a fixed position that might have no connection to the ever-changing world of the participants [...]” (Oliver, 2012, p. 412) in addition, “no a priori theory could possibly encompass the multitude realities that likely to be encountered; rather theory must emerge or be grounded in the data” (Thorne, Reimer Kirkham, & O’Flynn-Magee, 2004, p. 5; Oliver, 2012).

Although I was familiar with symbolic interaction theory prior to beginning my research it did not consciously direct this dissertation. However, in retrospect, I can see how much of the underpinnings of my paper and perspectives are aligned with the methodology encompassed in the symbolic interaction tradition. In addressing the methodological stance of symbolic interactionism Blumer explains:

Symbolic interactionism recognizes that the genuine mark of an empirical science is to respect the nature of its empirical world—to fit its problems, its guiding conceptions, and its theories to that world. It believes that this determination of problems, concepts, research techniques, and theoretical schemes should be done by the direct examination of the actual empirical world rather than by working with a simulation of that world, or with

a preset model of that world, or with a picture of that world derived from a few scattered observations [...] For symbolic interactionism the nature of the empirical social world is to be discovered (Blumer, 1969, p. 48).

Carter and Fuller (2016) explain, “Symbolic interactionism is a micro-level theoretical framework and perspective in sociology that addresses how society is created and maintained through repeated interactions among individuals” (Carter & Fuller, 2016, p. 932). Carter and Fuller explain that a central idea to symbolic interactionist thought is the idea that individuals use language and significant symbols in their communication with others and that instead of addressing how “common social institutions define and impact individuals, symbolic interactionist shift their attention to the interpretation of subjective viewpoints and how individuals make sense of their world from their unique perspective” (Carter & Fuller, 2016, p. 932). Carter and Fuller continue, “Symbolic interactionist are often less concerned with objective structure than with subjective meaning –how repeated, meaningful interactions among individuals come to define the makeup of society” (Carter & Fuller, 2016, p. 932). Blumer writes:

Symbolic interactionism views meaning as [...] arising in the process of interaction between people. The meaning of a thing for a person grows out of the ways in which other persons act toward the person with regard to the thing. Their actions operate to define the thing for the person. Thus, symbolic interactionism sees meanings as the social products, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact (Blumer 1969, p. 4-5).

Blumer Continues:

Symbolic interactionism is a down-to-earth approach to the scientific study of human group life and human conduct. Its empirical world is the natural world of such group life and conduct. It lodges its problems in this natural world, conducts its studies in it, and derives its interpretations from such naturalistic studies. If it wishes to study religious cult behavior it will go to the actual religious cults and observe them carefully as they carry out their lives. If it wishes to study social movements it will trace carefully the career, the history, and the life experiences of actual movements. If it wishes to study drug use among adolescents it will go to the actual life of such adolescents to observe and analyze such use. And similarly with respect to other matters that engage its attention. Its methodological stance, accordingly, is that of direct examination of the empirical social world—the methodological approach that I have discussed above. It recognizes that such direct examination permits the scholar to meet all of the basic requirements of an empirical science: to confront an empirical world that is available for observation and analysis; to raise abstract problems with regard to that world; to gather necessary data through careful and disciplined examination of that world; to unearth relations between categories of such data; to formulate propositions with regard to such relations (Blumer, 1969, p. 47).

Although George Herbert Mead, John Dewey, Charles Pierce, William Thomas, and Charles Cooley (Charon, 2007) are considered key founders and pioneers of symbolic interactionism it is Herbert Blumer who is attributed to be the first person to coin the term “symbolic interaction” in 1937 (Waskul, 2009, p. 117). Blumer’s book, *Symbolic Interactionism* has since become considered a classic; the most seminal text for students of symbolic interactionism (Waskul, 2009). Waskul (2009) explains that “no other text more clearly defines the perspective method



of symbolic interaction, and few others are more widely cited among students of symbolic interaction” (Waskul, 2009, p. 118). There are three basic premises of symbolic interaction as outlined by Blumer:

1. “Humans beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them” (Blumer, 1969, p. 2).
2. “The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows” (Blumer, 1969, p. 2).
3. [T]hese meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the thing he encounters” (Blumer, 1969, p. 2).

Handberg, Thorne, Midtgaard, Nielsen, and Lomborg (2014) explain that people interact both individually and collectively and that they “do not respond directly to objects but attach meaning to them, modify that meaning, and act on the basis of that meaning”. In addition, Handberg et.al. (2014) continues, “The world and the individual human are separate but the world is interpreted by the individual through symbols and during the interaction.” Mead is noted to have drawn his ideas from behaviorism but then redefined behaviorism as, “a response to individual interpretations of the world rather than the world itself. He maintained that we engage in a constant process of meaning-making, or “mind action” (Charon, 2007), which intercedes between external stimuli and human behavior” (Oliver, 2012, p. 410). Olive writes, “Although our behavioral choices are constrained by context, history, and social structures, they are not determined by them. In SI the focus is on how we interpret our circumstances and chose one course or ‘line of action’ over another” (Oliver, 2012, p. 411). Mead proposed that meaning is not inherent in “things” and that although there is a “reality external to our thoughts of it, all

awareness of that reality is actively constructed” (Oliver, 2012, p. 411) and comes through the engagement between the subject and the object.

In explaining premise two, Handberg et.al. (2015) point out that whether it be individually or collectively the meaning that one makes of things ultimately arises from the social interaction one has with his or her fellows. Because meaning is “founded on the way other individuals act, SI presumes that individuals act based on a shared understanding of meaning in their environment” (Handberg, Thorne, Midtgaard, Nielsen, & Lomborg, 2015). Oliver (2012) points out that in symbolic interaction meaning-making is a social process and that to define the situations that we are in we put ourselves in the position of the other actors in the situation and consult our inner voice, otherwise referred to as, “the generalized other”. As we engage in this internal conversation we seek to gain a perspective, or angle, of the reality in an attempt to define our current situation and in turn determine how we should behave (Oliver 2012).

In the third premise, meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretive process. Handberg et.al. (2015) points out that although we have the freedom to choose our courses of action those choices are, in some ways, being defined by society and cultural norms. Handberg et.al. continues, “through choices and interpretations, people form new meanings and lines of new actions to shape their future course in the process of interpreting meaning” (Handberg, Thorne, Midtgaard, Nielsen, & Lomborg, 2015, p. 1025). The following table, Table 5. 1: Symbolic Interaction Applied, gives an overview of how symbolic interaction applied to this dissertation. The first column gives a brief description of the theory and the second column shows its application.

Table 5.1

*Understanding “My Dissertation” Through the Lens of Symbolic Interaction*

Symbolic Interaction Theory	Study Example
Human beings act towards things based on the meanings that the things have for them	Individuals within the workgroup either consciously or subconsciously seek meaning within their environment by assessing their environment and those they interact with. They assess the needs of the group, potential social alliances, and everyday situations; and respond by taking on an informal role of their choosing or going along with an informal role conferred upon them by the group and other individuals within the group.
Meaning arises out of the social interaction that one has with fellows	This is not a static assessment but an ongoing one to continually determine their place within the social structure.
Meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters	Onsight observations for a total of 11 months.
The genuine mark of an empirical science is to respect the nature of its empirical world [...] determination of problems, concepts, research techniques, and theoretical schemes should be done by the direct examination of the actual empirical world rather than by working with a simulation of that world, or with a preset model of that world, or with a picture of that world derived from a few scattered observations	The constant comparative method in which categories and results were rooted in observations and informal interviews conducted in the field.

In his seminal book, *Symbolic Interactionism*, Blumer (1969) explains that human groups are seen as people engaging in action. These actions consist of many activities that “individuals perform in their life as they encounter one another and as they deal with the succession of situations confronting them” (Blumer, 1969, p. 6). Whether the individual acts on their own accord, collectively, on the behalf of others, represent an organization or a group of others the activities belong to the acting individual(s) and “are carried on by them always in regard to the situation in which they have to act” (Blumer, 1969, p. 6). Although this simple characterization may seem redundant Blumer explains that fundamentally since human groups exist in action they must also be seen in terms of action. Blumer continues:

This picture of human society as action must be the starting point (and the point of return) for any scheme that purports to treat and analyze human society empirically. Conceptual schemes that depict society in some other fashion can only be derivations from the complex of ongoing activity that constitutes group life. This is true of the two dominant conceptions of society in contemporary sociology—that of culture and that of social structure. Culture as a conception, whether defined as custom, tradition, norm, value, rules, or such like, is clearly derived from what people do. Similarly, social structure in many of its aspects, as represented by such terms as social position, status, role, authority, and prestige, refers to relationships derived from how people act toward each other (Blumer, 1969, pp. 6-7)

As noted at the beginning of this section, I did not begin this dissertation with symbolic interaction as its core methodology. Instead, I began by deciding on a method in which to execute this dissertation that I believed would best help me root my findings empirically. However, as a theoretical framework, symbolic interaction theory has been able to shed light on my findings and explain the how behind the why.

### **5.7 Moving Beyond Followership Theory towards Supportership: Another Lens**

In a section titled “Rethinking followership” from the book *The art of followership: how great followers create great leaders*, Kelley (2008) states “We need to pay attention to followers. Followership is worthy of its own discrete research and training. Plus, conversations about leadership needs to include followership because leaders can neither exist nor act in a vacuum without followers” (2008, p. 5). He acknowledges that interest in the subject of followership is rising, people are recognizing its importance, including many universities who now teach some

part of followership in their leadership courses. On the other hand, it is also being met with a lot of resistance as well. Regarding the reaction to his work, *The Praise of Followers*, he explains that its reception has been very controversial “some people just flat out don’t like it, comparing followers to sled dogs whose destiny is always to look at the rear end of the dog in front of them.” (2008, p. 6.). Kelley responds, “If I had a dollar for every time someone said to me, ‘you need to come up with a better word other than follower because it’s socially unacceptable...then you’d be able to sell this concept much more easily’ my response is always, ‘I would be glad to do that as soon as we get rid of the word leader, once you are ready to do that then we can talk.’” Kelley continues by explaining that his rigid stance stems from the exact point that these people are making, that language does make a difference. He asks, “if we stop using the word ‘follower’ (as some businesses, such as Wal-Mart, have done, using words like ‘associate’ in its place), can we really continue to use the word leader?” (2008. p.14). Kelley writes:

Language is more important not only in terms of the words we use but also in terms of the script that they suggest. The word “leader” and “follower” bring to mind a common script in which the leader is in charge, saying, “you do this, and you do that.”

Meanwhile, followers are imagined as inferior beings in need of the leader’s direction, motivation, and protection. We need to rethink this outdated script. What societal purpose does it serve? Is it still functional in today’s world? Can we start to reframe the entire conversation in a new way? (Kelly, 2008, p.14)

One purpose of this paper was an attempt to answer the questions set out by Kelley that, yes, there is a better word than followership, yes, the language that we use and the labels that we assign are important. Yes, we can still address leadership in all its current forms without using the word “followership”. Yes, we can rethink the outdated leader-follower scripts and we can

start to reframe the conversation in a new way, but not under the tainted perceptions and implications of the term followership. Instead, maybe under a term that suggests that there is still a leader, but that those that surround the leader have their own degree of agency and dignity—Supportership.

Kelley is right when he points out that words and terms have power within themselves and have the ability to imbue objects, events, people, subjects, and ideas with a certain life and meaning beyond the entity itself with many words and terms at least having implications. Silverman (2004) credits Richard Asher for having said, “A rose without a name may be just as sweet, but it has far less chance of being smelt” (Silverman, 2004, p. 929). Asher was talking about diseases that usually remain unrecognized until they have acquired a name but this could also be applied to labels given to social processes or phenomena that carry with them cultural stigmas. Silverman (2004) explains that “the grip of misconceptions embodied in old terminology is hard to shake. As the astronomer, Fred Hoyle said, ‘Words are like harpoons...once they go in, they are very hard to pull out’” (2004, p. 929). Granello and Gibbs (2016) studied how language and labels affect the way people view and respond to people with mental illnesses. Their study was grounded in the principle of linguistic relativity, also known as the Sapir Whorf hypothesis which states that “language shapes perceptions of the world and significantly influences cognitive processes” (Granello & Gibbs, 2016, p. 31; Wolff & Holmes, 2011). They explain that philosophers from Plato to Kant have argued that language influences our thinking and the type of language that we use, as well as the biases attached to them and can “become a spotlight that highlights certain attributes or qualities of objects or people, making selective aspects of the world more prominent than others” (Granello & Gibbs, 2016, p. 31).

Granello and Gibbs point out that it has been recognized that how we address and label groups of people have an effect on how those groups and peoples are treated:

Over the past several decades, the recognition that premodified nouns label groups of people as equivalent to their disability has resulted in the proliferation of organizational name changes to postmodified language. For example, in 2003, “The President’s Committee on Mental Retardation” became “The President’s Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities,” and, more recently, the “National Alliance for the Mentally III” became the “National Alliance on Mental Illness” (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2015).” (Granello & Gibbs, 2016, p. 32)

In their study, Granello and Gibbs examined the effects of using different terms to address people with mental illness, a group that has been characterized as devalued and feared by the rest of society. They hoped that their findings would minimize stigma and increase tolerance. Many of the implications here also reflect on the term followership. As noted earlier in the literature review section on Followership, much of the literature on leadership implies that followers are just followers, passive people, waiting to be influenced and motivated (McCauley, 2010). The attention being devoted to building the literature on followership, although on a rise, remains minimal when compared against the attention given to individualistic leader centric ideals such as the idea of leaders as the lone wolves taking their companies to victory. To highlight again what Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson, and Morris point out, there is so little research on followership because of the misconception that leadership is more important than followership and the general assumption held by many “that good followership is simply doing what one is told, and that effective task accomplishment is the result of good leadership, doesn’t amplify the merits of the follower role” (Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson, & Morris, 2006). Kelley (2008) was

right in pointing out that there are negative scripts associated with the term follower, however, it may be that those scripts are so ingrained socially and culturally that the stigma may never be effectively cleaned away, especially when the term follower in other contexts works to reinforce the implications that the followership literature is trying so hard to change. This does not mean that the prevailing social belief of followers does not have a place. The idea of follower can posit as a helpful foil to an active supportership. The question can then be, are we cultivating a followership or a supportership within our own workgroups and organizations.

There are those who are just followers and they just go along with whatever is happening and for them, all of the negative societal implications of the term followers apply. But it is not a monolithic representation of all labeled followers merely because there is a lack of a better term. There are also many individuals who care and strive to make real differences within their group. These individuals are not the leader, formal or informal, but their contributions are deliberate, active, and real, and they want to be productive, and they make a difference in their groups. These individuals work to see results and make a tangible difference or at least actively work towards it. They deserve a different term; their active participation warrants it. These individuals are supporters. They conscientiously decide who is worth supporting and throw their lot in with them and informal as well as formal leaders benefit greatly from their support. One purpose of this study was to identify the different roles that occur within the workgroup with the hope that by identifying specific roles workgroup members would be recognized for who they are, what they contribute, as well as how they may need more support.

The framework proposed in this study, which includes the Supportership Informal Role Identification Spectrum (SIRIS) and Informal Role Productivity Analysis (IRPA), is a spectrum that spans possible forms of supportership and the productive contributions they make, from



Informal Leaders and Key Advocates to Impeding roles, those individuals who withhold their support to the point of impeding the group altogether. SIRIS acknowledges that group members have agency and may decide to have different roles in different contexts, that formal as well as informal leaders are an important dynamic of the productivity and life of a workgroup, and that their supportership and understanding their supportership is key. This study is not suggesting that this framework is the ultimate end to viewing leadership and supportership, however, it is another way and hopefully a suggestion in a more productive direction.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

### Chapter Overview

#### 6.1 Limitations

6.1.1 Safety Concerns

6.1.2 Employees' perceptions of my relationship with upper management

6.1.3 Getting it right.

#### 6.2 Contributions

6.2.1 Literature contributions

6.2.2 Practical contributions

6.2.3 Conceptual contributions

6.2.4 Theoretical contributions

#### 6.3 Future Directions

6.3.1 Additional workgroups & more informal roles

6.3.2 Added perspective through a questionnaire

#### 6.4 Conclusion and Reflection

### 6.1 Limitations

Some key limitations that I experienced were: safety concerns, employee's perceptions of my relationship with upper management, some subject's initial weariness with my observing them and my constant internal tug of war with trying to stay on track with my main purposes and goals.

**6.1.1 Safety Concerns.** Due to safety concerns, I was limited to certain places in the building. I never went into the warehouse unattended and I always had to wear a safety vest and hard hat when I did which usually meant finding one that was not already being used. The warehouse was a constant rush of forklifts, trucks, and machinery, as well as merchandise that could topple at any time and warehouse workers, were constantly jumping on and off forklifts to move freight. Fortunately, the primary groups that I monitored did not need to go into the warehouse very often. When Mike went I was usually invited along and when Leila went onto the dock she was usually visible from where I sat. Going into the warehouse could be dangerous

and nerve-racking because the warehouse workers drove their machines as if they were racing each other and sometimes they were.

Another place that I was discouraged to go to was the “men’s lunchroom”. Although management did not explicitly ban me from going into the men’s lunchroom I got the distinct feeling that they were apprehensive and uncomfortable with me going in there. The men’s lunchroom was where the warehouse workers and drivers predominantly hung out during their breaks or downtime. It was tucked away in the back of the warehouse and it generally went unobserved by the rest of the organization. I believe that they thought it would be a safety risk since they participated in a prison work-release program and employed employees with criminal records.

**6.1.2 Employees’ perceptions of my relationship with upper management.** I was introduced to the different employees by the General Manager whose overall responsibility was to oversee the Pacific Division of the company. He was also my contact. In the beginning, I got the impression that employees were unsure of my role and thought that I might be “reporting” my observations to the General Manager, their boss. I took steps to assure employees that it wasn’t the case. I explained to them the purpose of my observations—that it was for school; I personally handed out a confidentiality form that explained who would have access to the data I was collecting and who the paper was for (my dissertation committee) and that I would not be using anyone’s real names. I explained to them that if they did not want me to include them in the study in any way to please let me know and I would honor their wishes without any penalty or loss to them. In addition, on the confidentiality form, I included my advisor’s name and contact information in case they did not feel comfortable talking directly to me. I was also very

conscientious about not spending time alone with the General Manager in his office or talking to him for long periods of time. This was not a problem because he was often very busy and left me to do what I needed without any interference.

Fortunately, no one from the workgroups I was observing seemed uncomfortable with the arrangements. Initially, a couple of individuals who were not from my main workgroups seem a little apprehensive about my presence. They never stated this explicitly but I would see them glance at my notebook or my audio recorder even when it was not in use. They insisted that they were fine. I tried to put them at ease by attempting to minimize my appearance of “listening” to them and “writing” on them. Along with my notebook I often carried around a text, reading a book, or a “homework paper” to edit which I would open and “take notes from” or “read from”. This seemed to help ease the feeling that they were always being observed. However, since none of them were from the workgroups that I was observing and they did not end up in the final results of this study; besides no one opted out.

By the second month most employees, especially the workgroup members I was observing seemed comfortable enough with me. One sign that I took as an indication that they were becoming comfortable with my presence was the tidiness of their desks over time. In the first month, one particular desk was always neat and tidy, but by the second month it was a little messier and by the third month it was a well-organized mess. Some other indicators were the type of language that they used and their willingness to causally “bad mouth” their supervisors to me as well as in front of me. One participant starting surfing gambling sites with me at his desk during work hours which I highly suspect he used to do before my arrival and stopped for a while to “feel me out”.

**6.1.3 Getting it right.** Lastly, I was also worried that I had biases that I was not aware of that would taint my work and observations. Ultimately, I had to trust in the patterns I perceived I was observing and allow that to be a guiding point of consistency, review my research questions every morning as well as throughout the day, and continually make a conscious effort of honesty with myself during my reflections and analysis in ways that were genuine to my subjects. Richard and St. Pierre (2005) give a comforting sentiment, “Postmodernism claims that writing is always partial, local, and situational and that our selves are always present no matter how hard we try to suppress them—but only partially present because in our writing we repress parts of ourselves as well. Working from that premise frees us to write material in a variety of ways—to tell and retell. There is no such thing as ‘getting it right’, only ‘getting it’ differently contoured and nuanced” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 962).

## **6.2 Contributions**

**6.2.1 Literature contributions.** This dissertation contributes to the literature:

- By adding to the limited literature regarding followership.
- By extending the work of Benne and Sheats (1978) regarding informal roles in workgroups.
- By addresses the literature gap highlighted by Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson, and Morris (2006) concerning the interconnected relationship between an organization’s formal structure and the organization’s informal social structure.

**6.2.2 Practical contributions:** This dissertation introduces a framework in which to:

- Identify the social structure of a workgroup.

- Identify two types of informal roles that, together, address the social and task elements of the workgroup.
- Systematically explore the interconnected nature of the formal and informal social structure of the workgroup.

**6.2.3 Conceptual contributions.** This dissertation introduces the concept of Supportership as an alternative to the term Followership.

**6.2.4 Theoretical contributions.** This dissertation contributes:

- An alternative perspective to the informal leader role as an indication for potential problems in a workgroup.
- The finding that informal leaders in a structured workgroup with preassigned formal roles are similar to informal leaders and informal roles found in emergent groups that have no formal structure or preassigned formal roles.

## **6.3 Future Directions**

**6.3.1 Additional workgroups & more informal roles.** This was a case study and although the findings here could potentially be used to address different groups in various fields and organizations the sample size is relatively small. These findings should be replicated and tested under various circumstances. I believe that more informal roles will be revealed if the findings of this study are applied to additional situations and workgroup environments. In addition, new environments may shed more insight into how different combinations of informal roles either increase or diminish group synergy, productivity, or promote lackluster performance

and different ways in which to address those concerns. Workgroups in their structure can be very similar but when combined with various individuals, motivations, and situations there will always be something to learn that could potentially modify this framework for the better. The likelihood of workgroups and teamwork fading from the organizational scene anytime soon is unlikely and the findings of this study are only a hint of the future possibilities and sights that might be gained.

**6.3.2 Added perspective through a questionnaire.** Currently, this framework relies heavily upon the perspective of the researcher. Although the data is derived from subjects and is empirically based, the decision of who fills what informal roles was ultimately based on my own interpretations of the data. If I were to ask group members in an interview who they believe would fill certain roles, they are only basing their decisions on their understanding of what it means to be a leader, or an advocate or follower. Even at that, there would be variations between group members, each having their context and understanding instead of the definitions in which the terms are rooted in the study.

By developing a questionnaire for participants to take I would have the opportunity to access participants' perspectives regardless of their personal beliefs of what makes someone a leader or a shirker or a follower. Potentially, the questionnaire could include hypothetical scenarios and communication patterns based on the different informal roles identified in SIRIS and IRPA. Respondents would indicate who they thought would best fit each communicative pattern. Subjects' responses would not be perfect, however, it would be a helpful tool for data gathering and would hopefully strengthen the framework.

## 6.4 Conclusion and Reflection

The purpose of this study was to explore the interconnected relationship between the formal structure and the informal social structure of an organization through the lens of the workgroup and add to the relatively limited literature that focuses on followers and supporters as key participants. This was done with a specific focus that included but was not limited to:

1. How workgroup members managed and negotiated their informal roles with others within their workgroup.
2. How those informal managements and negotiations affected the influence or standing of their formal positions within their workgroups.
3. How to present a framework in which to examine how the reflective and sometimes dialectic nature of the formal and informal roles of workgroup members collectively impacted the workgroup.
4. How to diminish some of the stigma associated with the notion of followership by presenting a new term and notion, Supportership.
5. To explore how influence in the informal structure manifested itself in the formal structure.

I hoped that by observing workgroups that were not in a laboratory setting—but in actual organizations with relationships that existed prior to the observations—over a considerable length of time (11 months), that the findings would be empirically rooted in naturally occurring professional situations and environments. I hope that the finding in this dissertation will encourage future researchers to see and acknowledge the value of everyone involved in the workgroup system.



After completing the bulk of this dissertation I stepped back and looked at the major points and findings of this study. I asked myself, “What is this really all about?” This dissertation is about understanding influence, it is about ways to identify the informal social structure, identifying informal roles, improving productivity, and finding the meeting points between the formal and informal realms within the organization and workgroup. But what I realized was that it was also about the importance of relationships and the individual within the whole. In the leadership literature, the focus is primarily on the leader and followers are often glossed over. When we use the term followers we are talking about real people who have real agency. Not strawmen whose presence has no bearing or consequence on the world and the leaders around them.

Recently, there have been efforts to include the importance of followers but the dialog pales in comparison. Glossing over other people’s contributions that surround the influence of a leader does not mean that those contributions are insignificant, but it does imply that we are drawing conclusions based on incomplete data.

This dissertation does not discount the importance of the role of the leader. Instead, I want this dissertation to highlight that a leader, whether formal or informal, is not a lone isolate. What makes someone a leader is that he or she has followers or supporters. To portray an identified leader as someone somehow disconnected or removed from their group or other people and not recognize how the stakeholders of that leader uphold or threaten that leaders standing paints an incomplete portrait.

As much as the leader is recognized as an individual of importance, this dissertation recognizes that those who surround the leader, formal or informally, are more than just a faceless Greek chorus. They are individuals with dynamic and consequential relationships and some with

roles just as influential as the leader. Through this dissertation, I want to not only continue the needed dialogue that advocates the need to recognize group members as active individuals with agency but also add to it. Identifying the informal roles group members take on and their significance to the workgroup increases the likelihood that those individuals will be recognized and addressed.

By identifying the different informal roles each group member takes on and the socio-relational elements that connect them to each other and the leader we can better understand how leaders are able to acquire the influence that they have and be closer to a more comprehensive understanding of the workings within the workgroup and organization.

By addressing and giving a face to different informal roles that occupy the social structure along with leaders and introducing the concept of supportership; I hope that this framework and perspective provides a helpful context in which to analyze future research. How we “talk” about and address leaders and supporters can go a long way towards how we think about and treat them, analyze and understand them. Focusing solely on the leader figure ignores the reality that other individuals are involved. Within the framework introduced in this dissertation future research can have a reference and a contextual context for the involvement of other individuals.

One aspect of linguistic relativity asks, “Does the particular language we speak influence the way we think about reality?” (Enfield, 2015; Lucy, 1997). Enfield continues:

Some have even said that reality itself can be different from the perspective of different languages. As Sapir put it, ‘The ‘real world’ is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group” (Sapir 1949, p. 162) [...] Searle (1969, 2010), following Austin (1962), has long argued not only that social or institutional reality can

be created using language [...] but that *all* social- institutional reality, from monetary values to property rights to corporate identity, is built from language and cannot exist without it [...] If we acknowledge that language by its nature is the tool through which our social selves are created, through the creation and distribution of rights and duties, then different languages will differently determine the kinds of selves we have [...] if a language makes fine distinctions in meaning in some domain, people who speak that language will be subject to a different normative background for interpretation and accountability than they would be in the context of a language that does not make the same fine distinctions. (Enfield, 2015, pp. 217-218)

Enfield (2015) explains that how interaction itself is conducted may be influenced by our different language practices. Simply changing the language and terms in which we address supporters, followers, and informal roles is not a panacea and rarely is there a silver bullet to social change but by spotlighting what was once eclipsed, through cumulative and thoughtful contribution the scope of a field can change and hopefully broaden for the better.

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## Appendix A

### Terms and Definitions

**Advocates (AD):** Advocates for the formal or informal leader actively showing their support for someone. They feel that who is leading them and their workgroup makes a difference and matters. They differ from Key Advocates in that they do not have the same degree of influence

**Bonding Rituals:** A reoccurring pattern signified by the participation of two or more individuals involved in the same shared experience. Bonding rituals promoted camaraderie, a certain level of community, a sense of fitting in, and a shared experience. It was also observed that a change in bonding rituals could indicate a shift in the norm or general social of the workgroup. Continual participation in the bonding ritual could also potentially lead to opening channels of communication not previously accessible to certain individuals. This study observed two types of Bonding Rituals: Spontaneous Bonding Rituals and Organizationally Organized Bonding Rituals.

**Diminished Standings (DS):** When an individual is treated less than their formal title would suggest they be treated and those who report to him or her show them less respect despite their formal title.

**Followers (FR):** Tend to go along with the majority of the group. They are not really invested in who is leading as long as the job is getting done and things are working out. This is not a negative category. Followers are not necessarily bad workers and they can contribute much to getting things accomplished it just doesn't matter to them who is managing the workgroup as long as the work is getting accomplished

**Formal Roles:** With formal roles, there is an emphasis on the behavior associated with a particular position in the organization or group (Salazar, 1996).

**Healthy Versus Struggling Evaluation (HVSE):** Part 3 of the framework that examines the workgroup as one functioning system, each group member a part of the whole. This is done by plotting the workgroup IRPA score onto the Healthy Versus Struggling Assessment (HVSA) chart to determine the health of the workgroup. The HVSA spectrum ranges from a healthy workgroup environment on one end to a struggling workgroup environment on the other. All results are then examined using the *Healthy Struggling Workgroup Assessment Profile Worksheet* and the *Generalized Organizational Hierarch Pyramids Worksheet*.

**Impeders (IP):** Negative roles that disrupt productivity or the tone of the group in impeding or bad ways and can be characterized as hostile and disruptive, and use deliberate forms of intimidation. Ultimately, they are roles that are negative and impede the group effort.

**Obstructing Oriented roles (D):** Behavioral patterns that result in blocking productivity and other positive roles, sometimes even in malicious ways that can be overly aggressive or passive-aggressive. Some of these obstructing communicative patterns are fueled with the intent of showcasing themselves over the needs of the group and at the expense of productivity. Not all

obstructing oriented roles are self-centered. Sometimes even too much relational building and maintenance behavioral patterns can become a hindrance, for instance, excessive socializing.

**Indifferents (ID):** Indifferent do not care about the group and may even be disenchanted with the group for some reason but cannot afford to get kicked out or fired or do not want to leave the group because their leaving may result in pay cut, loss of seniority, affect a potential future promotion or a personal reason. They have lost the fire of the vision, never had it, or no longer relates to it. Basically, they are there for the paycheck only. Has no desire to better the group. Just wants to get their job done and will usually go along with whatever direction the rest of the group members want to pursue. They have no real opinion about who the leader is or how they are doing. Indifferent are no real harm to a workgroup as long as they understand what their formal role's responsibilities are and are productive, however, too many Indifferents in a group could lead to underachievement in overall group performance.

**Informal Leader (IL):** Informal leaders were observed to have the ability to key into what group members perceive as lacking and somehow provide that need. Like most leaders, they can be motivational for the group, fill in where formal leadership falls short and can be the driving force to move the group towards productive goals and outcomes

**Informal Role Productivity Analysis (IRPA):** Part 2 of the framework that IRPA aims to understand how productive an individual's informal role is in accomplishing organization and workgroup formal objectives and is made up of eight role categories: (A) On-Task oriented roles, (B) Relationship building and maintenance roles, and (C) Self-centered roles. (AB) On-Task oriented /Relationship building and maintenance roles; (AC) Task-oriented/ Self-Centered role; (BC) Relationship building and maintenance roles/ Self-Centered roles; and (ABC) On-Task oriented/ Relationship building and maintenance/ Self-Serving roles and lastly (D) Obstructing Oriented roles.

**Informal Roles Productivity Analysis Score:** After IRPA informal roles are assessed two IRPA scores are assigned: an individual IRPA score and a workgroup IRPA score. Each IRPA role has a corresponding IRPA score to indicate how productive that role is in relation to the other roles. The higher the IRPA score the more productive it is. The workgroup IRPA score is determined by calculating all of the individual group members' IRPA scores and finding the average for the workgroup. That score can then be plotted along the Healthy Versus Struggling measurement chart to determine the overall health of the workgroup.

**Informal Roles:** Informal roles are adopted or bestowed upon by actors who have decided either at a conscious or subconscious level to take on for themselves or to categorize another in. The perspective adopted for this paper "views roles as the enacted behavior of individuals in a particular context" (Salazar, 1996, p. 477).

**Key Advocates (KA):** Potential informal leaders, individuals that have resources such as knowledge, specific or specialized skills, connections, or experience --this list is not exhaustive-- that result in them having a degree of influence in their own right. They have the capacity to contribute to the group in very significant ways and because of this they are recognized by others

as key, or important in some way, they have the ability to legitimize the standing of an Informal Leader with their support.

**Non-Advocates(NA):** Non-Advocates are open about their disfavor for either a formal leader or an informal leader. This does not mean that they are hostile or unproductive like Impeders (IP), but they are not shy about voicing their concerns with the current leadership that may be contrary to the current norm

**On-Task oriented roles (A):** Task-oriented communicative patterns assist in focusing group and interpersonal efforts in goal achievement and productivity. Task-oriented roles are productive in that these roles are task-focused and the work will most likely get accomplished. However, alone, it lacks the relationship-building aspect that can potentially add to the effective longevity of the group.

**Perceived Social Flaws:** Negative behavioral patterns that individuals repeated until others began to associate that behavior with that individual's character. These patterns of perceived weakness detract from an individual's influence can result in a diminishing of their Social Currency Exchange.

**Perceived Social Needs:** A way of identifying an individual's social values, or what they perceive as socially important. Needs are specific to each person and can move beyond demographics or the physical exchanges of material goods and are about understanding what it is an individual desires socially or perceives as important such as feeling a sense of belonging, the need to connect with others, intellectual stimulation, or to feel appreciated. Within the scope of this paper Perceived Social Needs function under the premise that each person has a preconceived notion of their level of social comfort or homeostasis in each situation that they desire to reach or be at socially. This homeostasis is not static and may differ in different situations. An individual is able to reach homeostasis, a state of general comfort when they perceive that their social needs are satisfied or are being met in some way. This perceived social need can sometimes be fulfilled by another individual or individuals or themselves as they perceive it.

**Perceived Social Strengths:** Positive behavioral patterns that individuals repeated until others began to associate that type of behavior with that individual's character. These patterns enhance an individual's influence and may result in the boosting of an individual's Social Currency Exchange with their co-workers.

**Relational Categories:** Possible types of relationships that exist between workgroup members that shed light on how workgroup members may be connected beyond the formal structure. The context of these relational categories is the workgroup and its purpose is to identify and characterize the relationships between individuals and analyze what the nature of that relationships might imply for the workgroup dynamic. The findings of this study suggest that it is possible that the nature of the relationship itself can sometimes add or diminish the strength of an individual's influence.

**Relationship building and maintenance roles (B):** Roles oriented towards the functioning and strengthening of the group as a group and can occur at either the group or interpersonal level. Individuals engaging in positive relationship building and maintenance communicative patterns on a regular basis can cultivate a “safe” environment and context in which contribution and risk-taking is accepted and encouraged, tend to be friendly with others, sometimes talk about things non-work related, and engage in positive rapport.

**Self-serving Oriented Role (C):** Role patterns are mainly directed towards satisfying the needs of an individual above the betterment of the group. When taken to the extreme these patterns can be counter-productive and a detriment to the group. Self-serving behavior can be perceived by other group members as distrustful and distasteful and can be an obstacle on the road towards productive collaboration.

**Shirkers (SR):** Shirking, social loafing, and free riding are essentially withholding effort, or the propensity to withhold effort due to motivation and or circumstance which can be equated with unproductive behavior (Kidwell & Bennett, 1993).

**Social Currency Exchange:** What is being exchanged in everyday interactions that either boost, maintains, or degrades relationships. Social currency is not a set item or value but differs for each person, context, and relationship based on the Perceived Social Needs of the individuals involved. These exchanges can be viewed as a type of economy of influence and relationship management. Possible currencies include but are not limited to companionship, status, validation, reliability, knowledge, security, comfort, and stability. Individuals that are perceived by others as already having a degree of influence may have a stronger Social Currency Exchange than those who do not. In an exchange withholding social currency may also be a path to influence.

**Supportership Informal Roles Identification Spectrum (SIRIS):** The first section of the three-part framework. SIRIS can be used to identify and understand the informal social structure of the workgroup by identifying the informal roles that group members hold, keying into the overall sociality of the group, identifying group member dynamics or how they interact and analyzing the informal relationships between group members. SIRIS can be useful in identifying alternative flows of information, the workgroup’s hierarchy of influence, and information bottlenecks. SIRIS is made up of nine informal roles: Informal Leader (IL), Key Advocates (KA), Advocates (AD), Non-Advocates (NA), Followers (FR), Indifferents (ID), Diminished Standings (DS), Shirkers (SR), Impeders (IP).

**Supportership:** An alternative perspective to followership in which group members are recognized to have agency in their choice of who they want to give their support to. Supporters conscientiously decide who is worth supporting and throw their lot in with them and informal as well as formal leaders benefit greatly from their support.

**The Social:** All things occupying or within that particular space and time including animate and inanimate objects and all interactions with them.

**Workgroup:** For this study, workgroups will be identified by the following indicators:

1. The group consists of at least two group members; the maximum number is flexible and depends on the nature of the workgroup and their purposes.
2. Group members communicate formally concerning work-relevant topics.
3. Group members have opportunities to communicate informally on a regular basis.
4. Group members share common overarching objectives or purposes.
5. Group members share the same physical environment. This study is interested in groups that have common physical spaces with opportunities to interact face to face such as a breakroom, commons room, or shared cubicles.

## Appendix B

### Action Plan & Proposal Sent to Organization

**TO:** Reed Kim  
**FR:** Taunalei Wolfgramm  
**Date:** January 31, 2014  
**RE:** Research informal roles in workgroups

#### Overview of the Study

The nature of informal leadership and supporting roles in workgroups within organizations

#### Purpose:

My name is Taunalei Wolfgramm and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa (UH), in the Communication Information Science (CIS) program. As part of my studies, my program requires me to conduct research. The purpose of this study is to observe informal roles in workgroups within organizations. The major elements in this study are essentially workgroups within organizations, informal roles within the workgroups and informal leadership.

#### Identifying a workgroup:

For the purpose of this paper a workgroup will be identified by the following indicators:

1. Group members share the same physical environment. This study is interested in groups that have a common space with opportunities to interact face to face such as in a breakroom, common room, shared cubicles, or open-concept offices.
2. Group members have opportunities to communicate informally on a regular basis.
3. Group members communicate formally. Some examples include meetings, memos, or formal emails.
4. Group members share common overarching objectives or purposes.
5. The group consists of at least two group members; the maximum number of group members is flexible and depends on the nature of the workgroup and their purposes.

#### Duration of the Study:

This study would be for eight months and I would come in at least 2 times a week. It would preferably begin in May or June of this year (2014).

#### Method:

This is an exploratory study taking an ethnographic approach including observations of subjects going about their daily routines and informal interviews that will often take on the tone of casual conversation. A social network analysis survey will also be conducted in three phases.

#### The Social Network Analysis Survey:

People often work outside their formal job roles regardless of their formal titles. In addition to observations and informal interviews, this study seeks to understand this phenomenon through a series of phases.

Survey 1: Survey 1 is distributed to the entire organization to understand the informal structure of the entire organization and to seek to understand where the workgroup fits within the context of the entire organization.

Survey 2: Four months after Survey 1 is distributed to the entire organization Survey 2 is distributed to just the workgroup. Survey 2 is a shorter version of Survey 1 but allows the researcher to “check” data gathered up to that point.

Survey 3: Four months after Survey 2 is distributed Survey 3 will be distributed. Survey 3 is similar to Survey 2, and its purpose is also similar to Survey 2, to “check” data gathered up to that point.

One example in which data will be organized is in a sociogram. Diagram 1 is one example of a sociogram. Sociograms are one way of representing the data gathered from a survey using Social Network Analysis. The dots, or nodes, will represent people within a network or organization, the lines represent how they may be connected or related to one another depending on the questions asked in the survey. No one person’s response is identifiable; instead, the sociogram is comprised of the cumulative responses to the survey. The sociogram is not about right or wrong answers but is a representation of the combined perspective of participants. The purpose of the survey is to have a better understanding of how others perceive their peers in a workgroup setting.

#### **Confidentiality and Privacy:**

All data gathered during this research project will be kept in a secure location. Only I will have access to the data, although legally authorized agencies, including the University of Hawai’i Human Studies Program, have the right to review research records. The University of Hawai’i Human Studies Program is a department established by the University of Hawai’i (UH) that is responsible for the federally-mandated program that ensures UH compliance with government regulations and institutional policies written to protect the safety, welfare, and rights of human subjects who participate in research. The Human Studies Program has the authority to review, approve, and oversee human subjects research on all UH campuses.

When I report the results of my research project, and in my typed transcripts, I will not use participants’ names or any other personally-identifying information. Instead, I will use pseudonyms (fake names) and eliminate identifiable indicators.

#### **Voluntary Participation:**

Participation in this research project is voluntary. Group members can choose freely to participate or not to participate. In addition, at any point during this project, group members can withdraw their permission without any penalty or loss of benefits.

#### **Questions:**

If you have any questions about this project, please contact me via phone (X0X) 369-0000 or email (TWK@hawaii.edu). My adviser on this project is Dr. Rich Gazan, he can be contacted at gzn@hawaii.edu.



## Appendix C

### University of Hawai'i

#### Consent to Participate in Research Project:

##### *The nature of informal leadership and supporting roles in workgroups within organizations*

My name is Taunalei Wolfgramm and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa (UH), in the Communication Information Science (CIS) program. As part of my studies, my program requires me to conduct research. The purpose of this study is to observe informal roles, with a special focus on informal leadership, as they would emerge in workgroups within organizations. The major elements of this study are essentially workgroups within organizations and informal roles within the workgroup.

**Project Description-Activities and Time Commitment:** If you participate, you will be included in the general observations of your workgroup and informally interviewed, meaning, informally asked questions as well as participate in an online or paper survey (your preference). Interview questions are based on observations; their main purpose is to offer clarity and insight to your workgroup. Observations will be recorded in two ways: 1) Field notes by hand in a journal and then transferred to my computer notes. 2) Audio recordings may be transcribed into computer notes for research reference. In the surveys no one person's response is identifiable and there are no right or wrong answers. Instead, results represent the combined perspective of all participants. The purpose of the survey is to have a better understanding of the overall structure of the workgroup setting. All raw data obtained in the observed sessions, interviews, and surveys will be stored in a private database and not be available for public use. No formal commitment is required on your part.

**Benefits and Risks:** I believe that there are no direct benefits to you in participating in my research project. However, the results of this project might help me and other researchers learn more about the interplay between the formal and informal roles as they emerge within workgroups. I believe that there is little or no risk to you in participating in this project. If, however, you are uncomfortable or stressed by my observing or by answering any of the research questions, you do not have to answer any of my questions or you may withdraw from the project altogether.

**Confidentiality and Privacy:** During this research project, I will keep all data from the interviews and observations in a secure location. Only I will have access to the data, although legally authorized agencies, including the University of Hawai'i Human Studies Program, have the right to review research records.

When I report the results of my research project, and in my typed transcripts, I will not use your name or any other personally identifying information. Instead, I will use a pseudonym (fake name) for your name. If you would like a summary of the findings from my final report, please contact me at the number listed near the end of this consent form.

**Voluntary Participation:** Participation in this research project is voluntary. You can choose freely to participate or not to participate. In addition, at any point during this project, you can withdraw your permission without any penalty or loss of benefits.

**Questions:** If you have any questions about this project, please contact me via email at TWK@hawaii.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in this project you can contact the University of Hawai'i Human Studies Program by phone at (808) 956-5007 or by email at uhirb@hawaii.edu.

Please keep this consent form for your records.

**Appendix D**  
**IRB Approval Letter**



UNIVERSITY  
of HAWAII  
MĀNOA

Office of Research Compliance  
Human Studies Program

May 15, 2012

TO: Taunalei Kau  
Principal Investigator  
Communication Information Science (CIS)

FROM: Ching Yuan Hu, Ph.D.  
Interim Director  
Human Studies Program  
Office of Research Compliance  
University of Hawaii, Manoa

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ching Yuan Hu".

Re: CHS #19983- "The Spontaneous Transient Nature of Informal Leadership and Supporting Roles in Work Groups Within Organizations"

This letter is your record of the Human Studies Program approval of this study as exempt.

On May 15, 2012, the University of Hawai'i (UH) Human Studies Program approved this study as exempt from federal regulations pertaining to the protection of human research participants. The authority for the exemption applicable to your study is documented in the Code of Federal Regulations at 45 CFR 46 (2).

Exempt studies are subject to the ethical principles articulated in The Belmont Report, found at <http://www.hawaii.edu/irb/html/manual/appendices/A/belmont.html>

Exempt studies do not require regular continuing review by the Human Studies Program. However, if you propose to modify your study, you must receive approval from the Human Studies Program prior to implementing any changes. You can submit your proposed changes via email at [uhirb@hawaii.edu](mailto:uhirb@hawaii.edu). (The subject line should read: Exempt Study Modification.) The Human Studies Program may review the exempt status at that time and request an application for approval as non-exempt research.

In order to protect the confidentiality of research participants, we encourage you to destroy private information which can be linked to the identities of individuals as soon as it is reasonable to do so. Signed consent forms, as applicable to your study, should be maintained for at least the duration of your project.

This approval does not expire. However, please notify the Human Studies Program when your study is complete. Upon notification, we will close our files pertaining to your study.

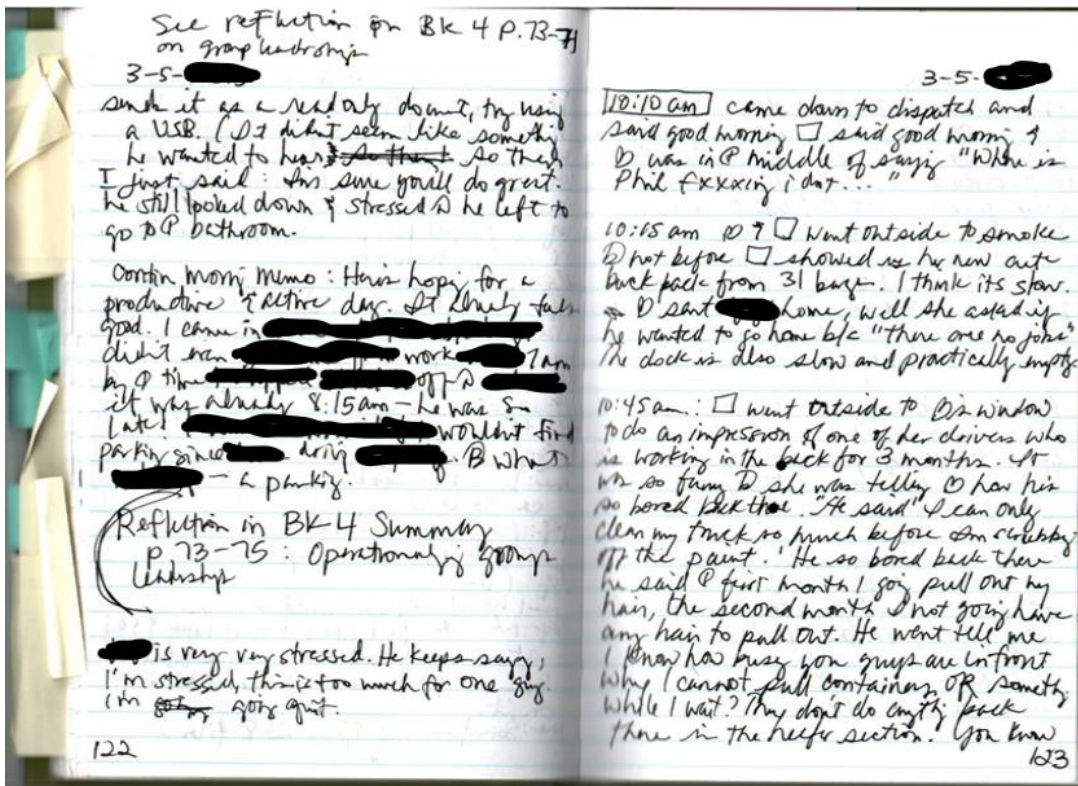
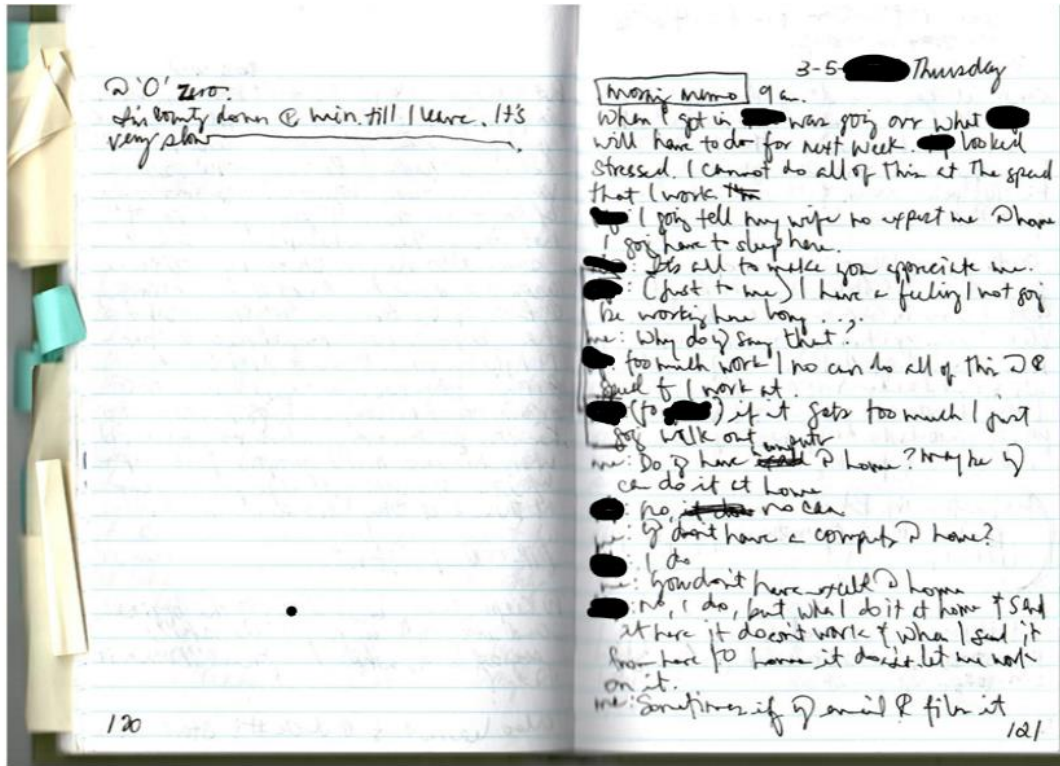
If you have any questions relating to the protection of human research participants, please contact the Human Studies Program at 956-5007 or [uhirb@hawaii.edu](mailto:uhirb@hawaii.edu). We wish you success in carrying out your research project.

1960 East-West Road  
Biomedical Sciences Building B104  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822  
Telephone: (808) 956-5007  
Fax: (808) 956-8683

An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution

## Appendix E

### Samples from Fieldnote Books





3-5-  
 you can tell the good drivers of long drivers. Cause when they gotta go to back of long drivers all excited & good drivers b/c all they like do is sleep and good drivers they like go back there cause huthin to do...  
 According to [ ] all of the drivers have + work & work in back of the refer (refrigerator section) with back to drive any refer stuff they have to wait.  
 a driver came into dispatch to look at a map book. When he came in he said, "Yo, you guys need music in here?"  
 D: Why, no need music by big mouths like by always coming in.  
 Today D & [ ] were in a very jovial mood joking around a lot they seemed to be having fun. I think they're back of fresh story telling helps for relieve stress.  
 11:35 am smoke break  
 12:50 smoke break  
 124

3-5-  
 I did a retelling of her morning conversation with [ ] who is very particular about this delivery. We all laughed, she was very funny. We also talked about the commissary, and they asked if I could take for I said no problem.  
 The dock is very slow its 1:00pm and the dock is empty for sure some of them are at lunch.  
 D: Where are my drivers? I don't got much.  
 stopped by to drop off some paper work (to D) this is for tomorrow (leave)  
 D (to [ ]): [ ] went bring these papers she said @ delivery is for tomorrow but I won't give em to Louise. I guess I wasn't paying attention.  
 D is a little bit about admitting his mistake, this is the 1st time she's been willing to admit...  
 125

4/23/03  
 be adeptly well. His part, that [ ] didn't get was if he was generally liked by the dispatch people if can come in & out of the dispatch office w/o ~~any~~ scrutiny.  
 D seems to be in great spirits and is enjoying work today. [ ] stopped by to pick up a map book of a delivery order for per 1. He & D exchanged some details about it & he said, "But I don't do P per 1 account anymore, I told [ ] to take care of it."  
 D: I was thinking I should send him a mean email, B to I thought, nah, better not.  
 [ ] (laughs) No, send him, you should send him!  
 D's computer wasn't working as she wanted so she started getting irritated & talking to it "What not respond, I don't know if I don't want to respond... I just need it to... ok good Cal started again" & she was ok again...  
 11

On up... you just never heard me on me.  
 - [ ] says something on P phone  
 What was, my phone was on speaker. I hear it hang up. D what was, your interstate pallet delay was on @ truck...  
 To me it seemed like a simple fix, but maybe employees should get a list of trouble shooting techniques when their computer is acting up to give them a sense of empowerment over their technology & maybe they wouldn't harbor as much resentment when the technology doesn't work & they try effort it to.  
 D & P warehouse an upbeat song came on they were all dancing - P mood felt upbeat and up lifted.  
 One of the drivers, [ ] went to [ ]'s window  
 D of course, I wasn't there  
 D: Do I see a dispatch person sitting there?  
 D: What?  
 D: Do I see someone sitting there? 12



3-5- [redacted] Thurs.  
[End of day memo] today is class at 4:30pm. I need to leave soon in about 30-45 min.

It's Thursday and still pretty slow. I'm not sure if it's because of the boats, & slow down on the west coast or what but Thursdays are usually their busy day but it's already past 10:30pm the dock is empty and [redacted] is sending driver home. In fact they're short helpers - in fact I sent Frank, one of the drivers as a helper.

[redacted] tried to call [redacted] but [redacted] I think he never went near me [redacted] I hope he did, he ignores you [redacted] (gets on P's inter com) when I make a way P rate play (to us, the rates are sicker than mice yeah...)  
[redacted] I: When I came away I made will ply, - We all laughed.

[redacted] and [redacted] were sitting in P's neighboring office by P's laptop, [redacted] D: better with out before [redacted] walk by & by going get in trouble. 12-6

3-5- [redacted] Thurs.

[redacted] leaves this Sunday to the mainland so they're going to order paper for her tomorrow.

1:10 pm

[redacted] D: Let's go smoke  
[redacted] I: ok  
[redacted] B: for when we get back & going leave  
[redacted] I: Why you always leave me?  
[redacted] B: Why I going study, nothing for do!  
[redacted] I: We can talk story! (C's son came up to the window, he is 2, drive here as well to borrow \$ for ciggarettes)  
[redacted] I: (to [redacted]) I no more, I just gave my \$ to [redacted] some could pay for P's paper  
[redacted] B: what you need?  
[redacted] I: He like \$ for ciggarettes  
[redacted] D: (to [redacted]) Come here, I got  
[redacted] I: (to [redacted]) ok go dunty [redacted] but by later, pay her back on Monday  
[redacted] D: (to [redacted]) Shut up!  
[redacted] I: (to [redacted]) (Yolla back) no to shut up [redacted] goes to D's window) you better pay her back!  
[redacted] [redacted] (Ashu leave) or just add another \$ go to what I owe you.  
[redacted] I: (to [redacted]) what he want say? 127

4-23 [redacted] Thurs.  
you no need a helper, I going to Pearl Harbor

[redacted] at least it's secure  
D: ok, 7 year, I guess.  
After [redacted] closed P window D yelled out his so irritating!  
She then told me that while he was making a delivery to [redacted] gas station someone knocked him out & stole the cigarettes. Now he's shook up so [redacted] told D she had to send him by a helper. D let out a series of expletives that in [redacted] terms indicated that he was a coward.  
D: I imagine he just crouched by his hands up (I should've hit him) for no, no, no, please don't hurt me (she acts it out). That wimp. I would be fighting them. (I laughed b/c I believed she would be)

It seems like it's not a particularly busy or overwhelming day. Some of P's dock workers are starting around talking story.

at about 10:43 am [redacted] came in & tone of voice softened as she talked about [redacted]

some things she had to do. Not softened in a quiet sense D in a, sweet sense then they left together. I'm pretty sure to go for a smoke, especially since B was waiting behind me w/ an unlit cigarette between his lips.

D is in and out a lot. She been in here alone a bit more today than usual & probably notice it a lot more b/c [redacted] isn't here as company so it's just me. [redacted] this just watch @ clock works b/c there is [redacted] no one to listen to... just me in the office alone.

The dock is a little empty, most of P's guys are on their lunch break.

The air conditioning is leaking all over the counter. I pointed it out to [redacted] who said "No body care" me. Maybe I should care so I went to P's bathroom to get some paper towels.  
It's quiet again & D is focused on [redacted]

## Appendix F

### Sample Transcripts

Transcript	Notes
<p>AUDIO FILE: CWS700131 DATE: 7/31/2014</p> <p>LEILA: I think she's too friendly for me, I'm just not a friendly person, unless I know you..I don't know RESEARCHER: Some people just have a different chemistry LEILA: and her chemistry is just off my dozzz[?], I don't know</p> <p>WINN: Can you help me with role call I need help answer phones fo one ouwa [hour] LEILA: [convulsing and shaking her entire body while sitting in her chair arm and legs stretched out] OUUUUUUU!!!! [to WINN] who said you gotta go ansa [answer] da phones?</p> <p>INTERCOMM OVERHEAD: LEILA, CLARK on line one, LEILA, CLARK on line one</p> <p>LEILA: [Answering the phone] you know I'm just not a good multi-tasker ...hows this one CLARK, she sends an email about setting up the stupid freakers {NOT SURE} for her guys, now Auntie wen come ova hea, "oh you gotta watch will call because I gotta answer the switchboard for one hour", what the hell is going on wit dis people. What do you want CLARK [she listens on the phone and them calmly says with a little humor in her voice] no I'm just venting. [Listens again] yes CLARK...Kava Avenue... [CLARK speaks in the phone] I thought you was going to call him when you got there to talk to him in person! [CLARK speaks on the phone] Yeah, that's what we talked about [CLARK speaks on the phone] Remember you supposed to get his number? [CLARK speaks on the phone] Oh you left, forget it (sounding irritated). Are you on your way back here now? [CLARK speaks on the phone] Oh you gotta go Bakers?...Okay sounds good I'll tell him we'll call him sometime today. [CLARK speaks on the phone] All right tanks... bye [hangs up] [to no one in particular even though there are only the two of us she often speaks to herself] F**k, that means I have to be constantly sitting hea... [she opens the widow dividing her dispatch office from next door's and grabs the paper files] huh, these guys, dey ridiculous. [to me] I sorry but you know if I was an office manager I would have my s**t, like straight. Auntie just does not get it [referring to MARIA office manager] but trust me she's a nice person, she just does not get it, she doesn't... RESEARCHER: Did she go up with you guys when you did the trinium training in Boston...? LEILA: yeah, me her...me, MIA, MARIA, and cocoo [she smiles] you should have seen was so funny. Me and MIA, we was going stay in the same room "oh no we is all going get out own room" [referring to MARIA]. You know, we so loco we no kea yeah. But MARIA was like, "oh no" what evas... [She sits and crosses her arms as if trying to figure out how she will word what she wants to say] This is how I learned, and I observed MARIA throughout the years, and I feel bad...she is a lady that does not have money, not rich but like I think she lives paycheck to paycheck. She lives here with her son, who is an adult, and does work, but they do pay rent, and it's probably really high rent because they live in kahala by those condominiums, so, I've noticed that, she does a lot of spending when it's company time, you know what I mean? Like, to me she, she abuses the company's money, cause she doesn't have...like, I don't know, like me and MIA, could have stayed in the same room, we neva had one problem, half the time we was in each</p>	<p>Comfort with Management</p> <p>Referring to a training in Boston on how to use a certain computer program</p> <p>H &amp; R start bonding as they find their similarities. The informal setting helping to build their relationship</p>

other's room playing game on that Nintendo [she moves around her fingers like she's playing the video game]...I guess cause we come from, you know we local so we always have our family around us, and like MARIA is a, basically like a loner, cause only get her and her son. And then REED, he get his family, and then his wife's family is big so he's always around people, right?...and if you're used to it then you're comfortable, you know what I mean? But REED, we were all on business trip, he was meeting with the guys from LA and stuff, MARIA wasn't I don't know why, she's a manager, and he's the GM, right but...we were at the Boston terminal, dey was taking him around seeing customers, but she wasn't going, so, it's funny 'cause we keep telling REED, "Why you keep leaving us wit her" [she laughs] den, we go to da mall, and she's like, um, we used to have store like sun glasses, I don't know how much was um, I don't know if it was me or MIA, she's [referring to MARIA] like, "can you purchase these for me?" we like "okay". Then wen time to eat dinner she's like, "I going take you guys" like she's spending like dats her money, but it was on the company charge card [she starts laughing] you know what I means it's just sooo...different... [PHONE RINGS: LEILA answers it and hangs up she continues] why we on the subject about her? She's really not a good coordinator. [I laugh] She not.

RESEARCHER: Cause I know she keeps coming up to MIA to learn the program

LEILA: Trivium

RESEARCHER: I though she went up there to learn it that's why.

LEILA: She did go up. I appreciate them having me go and learn but...I just don't have the time for it. Like my job title says dispatch supervisor but I do like, payroll, I schedule all the guys...

RESEARCHER: you do pay roll too?

LEILA: [chuckling] yeah... [and then starts laughing harder] I do fo'real, you know, I'm busy

RESEARCHER: it's like you guys do like, everything I'm surprised, CLARK doesn't do pay roll? [her phone rings she answers then hangs up]

LEILA: Yeah, it's like our title is this (she brings her hands together with the middle fingers and thumb touching to make a circle in front of her) but out work is like that (she widens her arms reaching out)

RESEARCHER: Like work overload?

LEILA: like both of us [indicating she and MIA. [I nod]. Das why I was like, yeah, I getting one free trip to Boston, but then when we got there, we learned and stuff, and then we came back and I was like, ROY, I asked ROY, ROY was under REED, [he was] the operation's manager, which is not in our Boston terminal, I tell him, "ROY, how come I went to Boston, like, who wen pick me 'fo go? I go, not like I don't appreciate it, but I'm not going to have time to do this stuff" and he was like "ME!" [we both laugh] thanks ROY, she smiles. I don't know, like yeah, I really did appreciate it, but we was, I tell you. You guys must never ever do a whole family trip cause there's so much of you...[a driver interrupts to clarify an order]...so like REED, he's funny as hell on our trip, he's like always...he's not around us, never around us, like, he's wit the guys, so we were stuck with MARIA for like the whole time and she like take us go eat hea (here) and hea. I never did tell MIA because MIA used to be close to her, I wasn't that close to MIA before, I used to think to myself, "Oh my gosh she acting like this is all her money" and we were like at some...I don't know where we was eating, like one night and she was like "you guys want margaritas?" [mimicking MARIA'S voice] I tell you [she claps] it's funny I wen die laughing, inside. But one night, Angela, this nice nice Mexican lady, she works in Boston minal, she wanted to take us eat Mexican food so bad, so her and her husband, me, and REED believe it or not was available, came with us, so we're over there somewhere in Boston I don't know where, it's like a little hole in the wall Mexican joint, like we get hole in the wall Hawaiian joint, and when we leave we was outside taking pictures and REED he was like "take one of me! Take one of me!" [she's laughing] and he's like jumping up in the air "make sure you got one of me with my feet off the ground [we're both laughing]. I'm laughing with MIA, this guy is crazy or what! I tell you, even on our way over on the plane, he's like, "you guys cannot sleep, I got my deck cards, we playing cards" [we laugh] I looking at him like...I told MIA, "you sitting next to him 'cause he's so funny. So what happen was. MARIA wen book her flight different from us and REED wen go book mine him and MIA we was on the same plane. I can't remember but I think MARIA was like on one different plane,

R's actual responsibilities are beyond what her formal titles implies

R not sure why she was chosen, the companies overall boss chose her to go. I also think that she was a good choice

R & H strengthen their trust and relationship with K as they spend time with him outside of work. He also begins to trust them more



and we got, us three got there at the same time, and she never get there till after, like we went and got the rental car and then we had to go back and get her, like she was all mad at REED. RESEARCHER: how come she didn't just book it at the same time? LEILA: That's what I told REED, I don't know.... RESEARCHER: Yeah, he's [REED] fun-loving LEILA: He's crazy! He's a scatter brain, like...he's different, she laughs	
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## Appendix G

### Sample of Typed Notes Further Narrowing of Categories

	Text	Narrowed notes	Line #
REF	BOOK 5 PG2-3		1
Date	January 7, 2015		2
Morning Memo	<p>I saw MIKE come in at about the same time. When I got to his desk he was already on the phone and working. He looks busy and there were two open cans of ginger ale on his desk. On my way up I saw HINA and another woman, a little older, "Aunty-ish" at the reception desk. I guess she's training the new receptionist. I think she was also the temp last year while HINA was training for JILL's job. I guess she (JILL) is gone already and starting nursing school.</p> <p>This morning ISAAC is singing aloud to a Taylor Swift song, He keeps singing out pretty loud. Leona also seems chipper this morning. MIKE and I talked a little about our holiday:</p>	Overall social	3
RESERCHER	You look busy today		4
MIKE	Yeah, all this (work, paper) is from Monday		5
RESEARCHER	Wow		6
MIKE	Yeah, the shipment to Lanai didn't get delivered		7
RESEARCHER	What! Why not?		8
MIKE	The weather was so bad that the boat had to turn back and they brought the shipment back		9
RESEARCHER	Whoa...		10
MIKE	Yeah...		11
	<p>MIKE gets an email from ISAAC: Why are we billing HFS HS if we are the same company? ICD: Inner City Delivery</p>	Sharing company info	12
NOTE	<p>Ok, I'm not familiar with ICD. I assume that they're a trucking company that delivers our freight. It has been crazy weather. Regarding ICD, it's a trucking division that I think is part of the New York terminal, but even though it is still HFS they still charge the Honolulu terminal when their services are used. I think that is part of what ____'s job is all about, billing.</p> <p>When MIKE and ISAAC were talking about it MIKE was getting really irritated. He explained that they are all the same company but that the terminal will still charge us. But it seems as though the Honolulu company doesn't charge the New York one</p>	Inconsistency in how each terminal handles inter-terminal	13
REF	BOOK 5 PG 4-5		14
MIKE	We all the same company, we no charge them.		15
RESEARCHER	Why don't you guys charge them?		16

MIKE	There's a lot of paper work and we the same company	MIKE's laziness casts the company but he is able to self-justify	17
ISAAC	(Agreeing) Yeah...		18
NOTE	ON the daily report that Maria puts out every day it noted that ADDY was out sick	Employee tries to get around attendance policy	19
MIKE	Oh, ADDY out sick	Other respond	20
NOTE	Leona made an off handed comment that I couldn't really hear but resonated a "Yeah right she's sick" air. ISAAC laughed and came up to MIKE's desk conspiratorially.	Speaks to their org culture	21
ISSAC	Well, last year ADY was taking so many sick days off that MARIA told her that she couldn't take any more for the rest of the year.		22
MIKE	Oh, but this is a new year.		23
ISSAC	Yup, that's why. She's been out all week. (he laughed and went back to work.)		24
NOTE	Over all it's been a little slow but I think I'll stay upstairs till 10 am and then go observe downstairs.  Right now TROY is up here talking with SALLY, I'm trying to figure out the problem. I guess SALLY is trying to explain that there are 2 pieces missing even though the paper work says that all the pieces are pulled. There also seems to be a mix up with the paper work.	SALLY seems to get her paper work mixed up a lot, it eventually bothers Leonna	25
TROY	What I don't understand is what exactly is the problem.		26
SALLY	[Explains again]		27
TROY	k. (Then he went downstairs)		28
NOTE	At 10:15 am I went outside to eat a sandwich because I thought it would be warmer, but outside is just as cold as inside today. That's weird. I saw REED and exchanged some greetings with him and small chat and then he and TROY were off into the yard.  The "No accident in _____ days" sign read 49. Although I'm not sure how reliable that number is because RYAN will go awhile before changing it.	Artifacts	29
REF	BOOK 5PG6-7		30
NOTE	When I came into dispatch CLARK was talking to LEILA.		31
CLARK	Do you use #39 to call USA FREIGHT SERVICES?		32
LEILA	No, the phones so messed up, I call direct.		33
CLARK	Yeah, ok		34
NOTE	It's nice being back in dispatch. I already feel like things are going on. LEILA is super busy today		35

RESEARCHER	Wow! And it's a Wednesday!		36
LEILA	Yeah, I know, people just gotta stop all these rushes! [She is literally running all around and hasn't even had time to eat yet. It's pretty crazy how crazy she is going.]		37
RESEARCHER	Ho, you're jamming today		38
LEILA	Yeah, I know, it's so irritating [she smiles]		39
NOTE	She doesn't seem as "yelly" as she used to be. She actually seems really pleasant even when she's stressing.	LEILA begins to warm up	40
LEILA	I'm hungry [she grabs a quick bite of her plate lunch that's been sitting at the edge of her desk untouched until now. Phone rings and she answers] Broddah, I'm fxxked up over here. I can only try what I can only try PAM. [she hangs up and says to herself]...Seriously...?		41
NOTE	The dock looks like it's slowed down a bit but the paperwork and phone calls are still a constant flow in here. In fact LEILA is juggling 2 phones. The cell phone that she carries everywhere to keep in touch with the drivers and the land line where clients and other office staffers call to get a hold of her if they don't come down themselves to check up on their deliveries or ask to have deliveries added.  While MIA was out DAVE came in. He is one of the few drivers that feels comfortable coming in to the dispatch office. He came in and saw that MIA wasn't here but he decided to hang out. When she got back they huddled heads as he talked about some personal issues he's going through		42
REF	BOOK 5 PG8-9		43
NOTE Cont.	I caught snippets but not enough to construct an entire narrative which is fine because I wasn't trying to hear his personal issues but it did speak a lot to the nature of their relationship and his comfort with her. I also believe that he doesn't like to tell everyone his problems just for the sake of sharing because of the many in which he shared. Reflection: their relationship on an informal level, I think benefits him when it comes to what truck run deliveries he does		44
MIA	[to Dave] I wen give _____ your run because he has to leave at 2 for a doctor's appointment		45
NOTE	It is important to note that DAVE makes the runs but LEILA hands them out and I'm pretty sure she decides who gets what runs		46
LEILA	[LEILA saw MIKE coming her way through the window and said:] oh, here comes dummy. (MIKE open the window and handed her some papers of different colors) what is all this? (Apparently different color papers indicate which company the deliveries will go to. So, I think orange goes to ISLAND FREIGHT SERVICES, yellow to -I can't totally remember-but MIKE got the colors wrong and LEILA ragged him about it		47
MIKE	Okay okay, I do um again, I do um again... (He then opens MIA's window) note tell me I don't know, I haven't done it long time, I even wen asked ISSAC.		48

	He left but without even looking up from this book I knew when he came back because of LEILA's announcement		49
LEILA	Here comes donkey.		50
NOTE	The following is a note on smoking, which seems to be a big part of the culture here, or at least in some of the groups	Bonding rituals	51
LEILA	(To MIA) TROY wen come say," let's go smoke" but then I stay thinking I told LEILA I going smoke with her		52
MIA	That's okay, maybe he need for vent		53
LEILA	Look he still waiting over there, but I need for vent too.		54
			55
LEILA	(LEILA finally gets up) I need to smoke		56
RESEARCHER	You do that		57
LEILA	I will! I need to! [then to MIA] I was waiting for you but you too long.		58
MIA	I told you go with TROY in case he gotta talk and vent.	Alternative flows of information through these rituals	59
LEILA	[To MIA] but I want to go with you! (She almost yells this and slams the door.)		60
NOTE	This interesting note on the function of the smoking session that they have. It's definitely more than simply sick of smoking alone but a network and sociality attached to it.	Strengthening of ties	61
NOTE	A phone conversation between MIA and Leona. Leona called because she wants MIA to deliver her Chevron delivery		61
LEONA	We've been putting them off all week!		63
MIA	But what you like me do? I don't have anyone to do the run it's already 1 pm and all of my drivers are still on their first run. (MIA listens as Leona continues to speak on the phone) No, LEILA is just as slammed. I can't do this today. Maybe if we can take it after 4 pm (the conversation continues for a short while and then MIA hangs up the phone and explodes)  They should come sit in our position and see how it's done. We sat in their positions already so we know what can and cannot be done! Those stupid...		64
NOTE	At about 12 noon I went upstairs to eat lunch. I could eat at dispatch but I like to go to the lunchroom to talk to the other employees from different parts of the building. Today I ate lunch with CYNTHIA and LEONA who were already up there by the time I got there. LEONA talked to me about how lazy her daughter, who lives and stays at home, is. Apparently she stays at home to watch her baby all day but doesn't even cook rice no matter how many times they tell her to.	The general social	65

## Appendix H

### Sample From Codebook: Further Narrowing of Categories

\*\*\*\*Also see notes for more categories and breakdown

#### SIRIS

- Informal Leaders (IL)
- Key Advocates (KA)
- Advocates (AD)
- Non-Advocates (NA)
- Followers (FR)
- Indifferants (ID)
- Diminished Standings (DS)
- Shirkers (SR)
- Impeders (IP)

#### Relational Categories

Bonding Rituals

The Social

Perceived Social Flaws

Perceived Social Strengths

Perceived Social Need

Social Currency Exchange

#### Informal Role Productivity Analysis (IRPA)

- On-task oriented roles (A)
- Relationship building & Maintenance roles (B)
- Self-serving oriented roles (C)
- On-task oriented/ Relationship building & Maintenance roles (AB)
- On-task oriented/ Self-serving oriented roles (AC)
- Relationship building & Maintenance/ Self-serving oriented roles (BC)
- On-task oriented/Relationship building & maintenance/Self-serving oriented roles (ABC)
- Obstructing oriented roles (D)

#### Artifacts

The Facility

Company background and History

Workgroup: Interisland Transportation

Workgroup: Transportation

Workgroup: Warehouse

Subject: REED

Subject: LEILA

Subject: MIA

Subject: MIKE

Subject: TROY

Subject: CLARK

Subject: ISSAC

Subject: KATE

Subject: DAVE

Subject: JAMES  
Subject: BRIAN (safety officer)  
Subject: FRANK  
Subject: CHELSEA  
Out of the Ordinary Situations  
Problem Solving  
Despite the Policy  
The Dark Side of Power

### **Background on Company & Stuff**

#### **MIKE & RESEARCHER:**

Cws70041

RESEARCHER: is this the main docking area here or is on the mainland the main...

MIKE: the mainland

RESEARCHER: in New York right?

MIKE: There's New York and Florida, Yeah so that's one of the bigger places, then there is Boston.

So my side of the business is different from the rest, the overall picture, I don't know if that's what need to know but I think that's where he (REED) wanted you to start, with the interisland stuff. [9:08]

MIKE talks about how REED purchases UH sport tickets every week so that they can give to upper management customers.

SO then if no body uses them then they give it to the workers

We talk about the big trucks and the containers

MIKE: you these drivers, they're pretty Akamai. It's like the trailer or the container is an extension of their body. You see this guy right here, his name is DENNY he is the most efficient with that piggy pack fork lift.

TROY comes along and MIKE introduces us, we recall that we met earlier when I first came to drop off some papers to REED

MIKE to TROY: I'm just waiting for REED to get here

TROY: is he coming?

MIKE: yeah around 8:30, he just has to take his daughter to uhh....

TROY: Okay, I think people are lining up already to see him. Okay, we'll be around

RESEARCHER: Okay, I'll be around so I'll see you.

MIKE: SO TROY is operations, he takes care of the warehouse, all the (hard to hear....) guys, he's in charge of that...so that guy (back to DENNY) when he drives that forklift he's like optimus Prime on that machine.

RESEARCHER: really?

MIKE: Really, very amazing to watch him load and unload. We did a project in Kailua. They sent all of their weight lifting equipment to Niihau, they donated it or they exchanged it and they sent all of the equipment to the Niihau and he was there to pick up the machines and he was there we had to load them on the truck...awesome, awesome to see him drive. He was jus going in and out in and out putting them inside the truck, and then tie them down.

RESEARCHER: it takes a lot of patience and perception, I just look at these big trucks and I know that I wouldn't be able to do this job, I would be crashing things like crazy

MIKE: yeah, I have that same problem...I mean I started off as a warehouse guy, and then I became a warehouse supervisor and stuff and I worked in the air freight industry... when I was young driving a forklift was easy for me, but now because I haven't been driving it for so long, I would be poking the freight that's on the back, you know and things like that, I could never do it, I have no coordination anymore

RESEARCHER: But even just this judging, you know, where to put things, ahhh, I cannot do that

MIKE: Yup

RESEARCHER: Takes skill

MIKE: Big time, anyways lets go inside it's hot out here

**[END OF SAMPLE]**



