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**LOVE AS AN ORGANIZATIONAL NORM: AN EXPLORATION AT A
VALUES-CENTERED ORGANIZATION**

A Research Project

**Presented to the Faculty of
Pepperdine Graziadio Business School**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
in
Organizational Development**

**by
Vangie Marie Bogaty-Rodríguez**

August 2020

This research project, completed by

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under the guidance of the Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the faculty of Pepperdine Graziadio Business School in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE
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Abstract

*“Love is at the root of everything—all learning, all relationships—love,
or the lack of it.”*

— *Fred Rogers (Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood)*

This study investigated to what extent, if any, developing a norm of love might be accepted, incorporated, sustained, and beneficial to an organization. Participants included 18 directors, managers, and supervisors of a 24-year-old telecommunications company located in Puerto Rico. Data were collected through individual interviews where interviewees shared their perspectives on the possibility of adopting the norm of love, their acceptance of it, and how they would implement it. Findings indicated that a majority (83.33%) of the participants acknowledged that love is part of the human essence and whole selves, and that such a norm would be beneficial to employees and the organization. Findings additionally suggested that the norm could be sustained when supported by a thorough implementation strategy, including all stakeholders in the effort, and preparing the organization to face challenges and risks that emerge before, during, and after implementing the norm. Based on these findings, it may be concluded that love could become an organizational norm.

Keywords: Love, organizational norms, norms, organization, whole-self, values, leadership, leading by example

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Don't spend your precious time asking: "Why isn't the world a better place?" It will only be time wasted. The question to ask is "How can I make it better?" To that there is an answer."

— Leo Buscaglia (*The Way of the Bull*, 1973)

To love is to be human (Harrison, 2008). Since the beginning of time, love has colored human existence and has been the inspiration for many of its masterpieces. It is the source of one's greatest joys and deepest sorrows. Love has moved people to take significant risks in the name of country, family, faith, and dreams. It is what makes anything that one does worthwhile. Human beings long to love and be loved. Love is central to life. Harrison emphasized, "the need to express love is fundamental in humans" and "humans have an innate need to love" (p. 2).

Despite the centrality of attachment and love to human existence (Bowlby, 1973), love remains largely unexamined within organizational settings—with the exception of warning employees against romantic or sexual connections with coworkers (Doll & Rosopa, 2015; Mainiero & Jones, 2013). Research on 209 U.S. working women's attachment styles indicates that women with an avoidant attachment style tended to have low-quality relationships with their supervisors, while securely attached women were more likely to be satisfied with their jobs, experience low conflict at work, and report few physical symptoms (Towler & Stuhlmacher, 2013). While these results suggest that important associations exist between job-related quality of life and workers' social

relationships, this only begins to shed light on the potential impact and power of greater love in the workplace. Harrison (2008) notes that few managers and consultants pay attention to love's impact in organizations, to the degree that there seems to be a taboo against the word love. Still, despite a general discomfort with love in the workplace, bold companies on the edge have chosen to include it indirectly as a value in their vision statements.

Companies often do not go to the extent of naming this quality *love*, instead opting for terms such as compassion, caring, and kindness (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014). Examples of such organizations include Whole Foods Market, whose management principles begin with "Love;" PepsiCo, which lists "caring" as its first guiding principle; and Zappos, which focuses on caring as part of its values (i.e., "We are more than a team though . . . we are a family. We watch out for each other, care for each other and go above and beyond for each other.") Southwest Airlines notably chose LUV as its stock exchange ticker and further "service with LUV" as one of its values. Although this move toward kindness, caring, and compassion is promising, failing to acknowledge and leverage the power of love in the workplace potentially stops organizations short of the impacts they could be enjoying, as indicated by Demorest's (2019) comparative study of the relative effectiveness of happiness, love, and compassion as antidotes for anxiety. Demorest found that although all three positive emotions significantly reduced anxiety, happiness and love yielded significantly greater reductions than compassion.

Caldwell and Dixon (2010) encourage leaders to embrace and embody love as a way to motivate and inspire others, noting that their research suggests that strategic competitive advantage is enhanced when leaders create a culture of love, forgiveness, and trust. They explained that such cultures are characterized by authentic leader interest in

employee welfare. In turn, employees feel empowered to access previously untapped capabilities and increase their commitment.

Barsade and O’Neill (2014) similarly have examined how love (which they term *companionate love* in organizational settings) affects organizational culture and boosts performance. Still other researchers have examined how cultures of unconditional love are created in organizations (Fernández-Aráoz, 2014) and whether organizations could be powered with love (Coombe, 2016). Nonprofit organizations also are emerging to support and educate others about the impact love has in all human interactions. One such organization is The Institute for Research on Unlimited Love (2020), which expresses its mission as follows:

We seek to increase public awareness of the growing dialogue on Unlimited Love that is taking place at the interface of (1) new scientific investigations (e.g., in the health sciences, psychology, sociology, neuroscience, physics, and mathematics); (2) insights of the world’s great philosophical, spiritual and theological traditions; and (3) inspiring works of love by exemplars across the world. (para. 1)

Another such organization is Lead with Love, which operates according to the mission to empower individuals to choose love in every aspect of their lives. This organization also asserts that the calling of our time is to lead with love and to empower others to do the same (Lead with Love, 2020). The question this study sought to explore was whether love could be imbibed within an organization as the way they do things—termed an organization’s *norms* (Schein & Schein, 2016)—and, if so, what effects (if any) result from and, if so, what those effects are.

Importantly, love as a norm must become more a statement in an organization’s vision or mission. It must become an action and an experience. As a norm, love might be a driving force that impacts how the members of the group interact with each other,

creating an inviting environment that fosters integrity, collaboration, higher performance, and a commitment to do their best.

The construct of love has various definitions and interpretations, given that it is a subjective yet universal quality. The ancient Greeks described love as fraternal/friendship love (*philia*), passionate love (*eros*), playful love (*ludus*), longstanding love (*pragma*), love of the self (*philautia*), and divine love for everyone (*agape*). Sophocles is known to have said, “One word frees us from all the weight and pain in life, that word is love” (Sophocles & Jebb, 401 B.C.E./1889). Hinduism depicts love in the Bhagavad Gita as *bhakti yoga*: the path of devotion and love, where help is proffered, and spirits are healed. *Ahava* is the word for love in Hebrew. For Jews, Ahava is an emotion that involves action; it is a way of life closely related to acts of generosity and kindness. Buddha established four behaviors or virtues to describe true love. These are *Maitri* or kindness, *Karuna* or compassion, *Mudita* or joy/happiness; and *Upeksha* or freedom. In Islam, a believer who loves God is expected to love His people and be kind to them. The Qur’an tells us the following regarding human love for fellow humans: “And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive. [They tell them:] we only feed you for God’s sake: we desire from you neither reward nor thanks” (*Quran* 76:8 & 9, Oxford World’s Classics edition). And in Christianity, Jesus said:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matthew 22:37-40, New King James Version)

St. Peter, in his letters to the early Christians, similarly invited them to live in love:

Live in harmony with one another, be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil, or insult with

insult, but with blessing, because to this you are called so that you may inherit a blessing. (1 Peter 3:8-9, New King James Version)

All these religions and the cultures they inspire coincide in the way love exists among humans. They all depict a fraternal love, where caring for one another is of the utmost importance. Love is an emotion that manifests in behaviors representing kindness, respect, compassion, humility, generosity, joy, harmony, and freedom. Love becomes a way of everyday life.

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1963/2019) said, “Hatred paralyzes life; love releases it. Hatred confuses life; love harmonizes it. Hatred darkens life; love illuminates it” (p. 37). The quote invites people to live while choosing love as their driving force. It shows how love enriches life. This study sought to better understand the positive emotions and behaviors that could make people stronger, help create the best version of themselves, and be the means to demonstrate love for others. This investigation sought to inspire others to transform their work environment tapping into our most basic nature...Love!

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate to what extent if any, developing a norm of love might be accepted, incorporated, sustained, and beneficial to an organization. The research examined four research questions:

1. Can love be part of an organization’s culture?
2. How does love manifest in a workplace environment?
3. What benefits does it provide to the company and its employees?
4. How can the norm of love be implemented?

The works of Barsade and O’Neill (2014), Buscaglia (1972), Berscheid (2010), Siegel (2010), and the Hebrew word for love, *ahava*, influenced the definition of love

established for this research. Love was defined as altruistic behaviors that enrich people's daily interactions and relationships with kindness, respect, clear and honest communication, authenticity, inclusion, acceptance, validation, hope, teamwork, excellence, joy, and freedom. Dan Siegel, in *Mindsight* (2010) said that humans long to feel *felt*; this research sought to discover how people can feel felt in their daily work.

In his book *Love* (1972), Leo Buscaglia described love as a learned phenomenon; yet, he did not consider his mission to be a teacher of love. He believed his mission was to persuade others to act upon love. In this book, he also presented ways in which people could reinforce love in their daily lives, including love themselves first (self-care); abandoning labels; recognizing and acting upon responsibility; acknowledging the needs of others and oneself; and having the freedom to learn, change, and become. An intention of this study was to determine whether these recommendations could be applied to an organization and to inspire organization members to find ways they could choose, act, and feel love.

Study participants received the definitions of love, values, and norms, as they were defined in this study. After of the data collection and analysis, results were presented to the participants and the organization, along with recommendations to help the organization develop a norm of love that speaks to them. The presentation allowed the organization to see that love needed to be embraced and enacted within each member in order to yield a group-level impact. By transforming individually, they could become the change they want to experience and motivate others to do the same.

The recommendations sought to inspire the organization to adopt love as a set of sustainable norms that could meet the organization's needs. Helping organizations establish a way in which love can become a norm was anticipated to provide OD

practitioners a fresh perspective on how they can address their clients. Love can be a complementary approach to any OD interaction. Once love is better understood, organization members can then become the source of love toward each other, creating an environment of trust needed to support the organization in achieving its goals. Imagine a workplace where everybody understands that even if they disagree, they will have each other's back, or an environment where decisions are made keeping in mind all stakeholders' needs, or a workplace where change is embraced with hope and conflict is handled with kindness, or an organization where people feel seen, felt, respected, validated, free, and encouraged to act in kind ways. It was hypothesized that this a norm of love is the foundation for such an environment.

Research Setting and Process

The setting for the study was a privately-owned telecommunications company established in Puerto Rico in 1996. This company was created with the idea of breaking away from and transforming the business world by demonstrating success through an uncompromising commitment to integrity, teamwork, caring, and excellence. The organization's mission is to:

Develop and cultivate relationships (with our clients, with each other and with our community) providing prosperity through technological solutions and in conjunction with our values. View prosperity by dedicating attention to action.

Its vision is:

Prosperity from kindness in action. We aspire to build productive and lasting relationships with our employees, our customers, and the community. To achieve this, we have the support of talented and kind employees who are dedicated to making our mission and vision a reality. We encourage innovation, creativity and personal initiative. Our employees know that it is in their hands to achieve results. Our goal is to promote an atmosphere of motivation in which our people feel challenged

to always offer the best of themselves to their colleagues, clients and the community.

Based on the experience and observations of the researcher, who has had a long-standing relationship with the organization, the company strongly holds its values and wants to make sure that all its stakeholders can “feel” that their vision is alive and real. Even though they do not call it love, kindness shows up in both their mission and vision statements. The following describes the process in which this study was developed:

1. Research how members of the organization would define an environment of love. Would they welcome such environment? What is important for them in order to feel loved by their peers and by the organization? What would they consider as the best manifestations of love? Would they support the norm of love?
2. For the participants to be able to respond, “the norm of love” was defined in an initial presentation. They also received information of how the study would be performed.
3. Participants included a self-selected sample of company directors, managers, and supervisors. Data were collected through individual, confidential interviews.
4. Recommendations for building employee awareness regarding the value and impact of love for employee interactions with each other, customers, and the community were outlined. The aim was to reveal obstacles to love in their daily interactions and outline strategies for making small changes to transform their workplace without increasing costs for the organization. These recommendations served as an invitation to practice a new

behavioral standard while offering hope to enrich and improve their daily lives, performance, and relationships in the process. Organizational leaders also were encouraged to revisit the vision statement and include love as an organizational value. This action serves as a bold statement by all the members of the group, representing a stronger commitment to “walk the talk” and live by its values. A workplace environment does not have to be broken to be improved; it can be improved just because as human beings need and deserve it.

5. The results and recommendations were shared with the organization and its employees. Guidelines for sustaining love as a norm were evaluated and presented. The suggested behaviors were shaped by the employees and the organization’s preferences and specifications. The proposal described the conduct necessary for love to emerge as a norm.

Positionality

Until 2004, the researcher was the human resources director of the telecommunications company where the study was conducted. As part of that role, she contributed to developing the company into its current state. At the time of the study, the researcher was 50% owner the organization, a role she shared with the founder/CEO. She has not had an active role in the organization since her resignation in 2004.

The researcher notified all participants about her relationship with the company, the reason for performing the study, and what this study meant to her. This information was shared by e-mail and during the presentation to introduce the study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

“Love is a consciously chosen mindset that allows us to see others differently – a deep respect based upon the oneness with others” - Rodney Ferris (1988).

This research was an exploratory, qualitative study that investigated the extent to which, if any, developing a norm of love might be accepted, incorporated, and beneficial to an organization. The study addressed the questions: Can love become an organizational norm? How can we achieve it?

Available literature addressing similar ideas was reviewed, and the information was organized based on the following: universal concepts of love, norms and organizations, love, norms, and the whole self in organizations.

Recent literature suggests that even though love is a central aspect of our society, it has not received the attention it deserves in the study of organizations (Tasselli, 2018). The business and management related research have overlooked the connection, influence, and validity of love in organizations. One goal of this research was to help fill such a gap while providing an accessible way in which love can become an essential part of the daily interactions in organizations.

Universal Concepts

The literature allowed visibility of the universality of the following concepts: organizations, norms, and love. Sociologists studied the relation between man and society. Margaret Mead, among others, believed that society affects the individual, and therefore, the individual helps in the formation of society and its culture. This perspective

was analyzed by Hossain and Ali (2014), who concluded that society and the individual go hand in hand and that both are interdependent.

An organization can be considered a society. Pérez López (1993/2018)

elaborated:

It is a group of people who coordinate their actions to serve a common purpose aimed at achieving certain results that they all consider desirable, albeit for different reasons, and that they can achieve only—or at least more effectively—through joint action, with some prospect of continued joint action in the longer term. (pp. 14-15)

Social norms are the informal rules that govern behavior in groups and societies (Bicchieri, Muldoon, & Sontuoso, 2011). Similar to the human need and desire to live in society, the development of norms to thrive and survive in an organization is equally important. Elster (1989) stated that “norms are a fundamental element of social structure; the cement of society” (p. 251)

Defining love as a universal concept is a difficult undertaking due to the subjectivity of the matter, despite the fact that, throughout history, humanity has been captivated in understanding what love is and how it manifests in our daily lives. Love is present and discussed in religious scriptures and in philosophical, classical, and modern literature. Therefore, there are many sources that attempt to define love, even though it is an intangible concept influenced by cultural and individual perceptions. According to the common definition in *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, one way in which our society interprets love is as “a strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties; an unselfish loyal and benevolent concern for the good of another: such as the fatherly concern of God for humankind and the brotherly concern for others” (“Love,” 2020, para. 1). “Some anthropologists and social psychologists maintain that love is a cultural universal” (Berscheid, 2010, p. 2). They believe that love has always been

present in our minds and that it is evidenced by ancient human artifacts (Berscheid, 2010). One of the oldest examples is Plato's Symposium, circa 385 BCE (Plato & Jowett, 385 B.C.E./2012).

The literature also shows how the concepts are interrelated and how they impact each other. The relationship between values and norms was studied by Ehrhart and Naumann (2004), who examined how values and beliefs influence norm formation in organizational citizenship behavior. Francis J. Flynn and Jennifer Chatman cited in their study that "research suggests that norms play a critical role in determining group effectiveness and individual group member performance" (as cited by Levine & Moreland, 1990, p. 561), confirming the relationship between norms and organizations. Finally, Argandoña (2011) discussed how love is present in all facets of people's lives, including the organizations to which they belong. In his research, Argandoña defended the importance of love being present and acknowledged in organizations. The present study examined the relationship among organizations, norms, and love as well as the effect love has on the other two. It additionally explored whether the relationship between the three can be cyclical and perceived as sustainable.

Love

Love as a value. Religions and philosophies all over the world have similar definitions for what love is and its importance in the human experience. One way in which humanity has explained love as a value is with the ethical conduct or guiding principle referred to as the golden rule: "do to others as you would have them do to you."

Society defines values as principles or standards of behavior one's judgment of what is important in life ("Values," 2020). Values could be considered as the standards of what a group holds as desirable and good, and what they strive to create or become. Love

is a value as well, and values are the highest aspirations of what a group attempts to become or create. Love as a value can be a source of aspiration and inspiration. It is a central value in society, thus, in an organization as well (Argandoña, 2011).

Love as it relates to organizations. A common theme among the different studies reviewed is that there is a perceived resistance to discuss love and the impact it has within organizations. Tasselli (2018) used Kanter's myth of separate worlds in his study of love and organizations to explain that "organizational research treated work and love as non-overlapping constructs, fueling the myth of separate worlds" (p. 1082). Tasselli also stated that possible reasons for this myth are that love is personal and subjective, and that it speaks to passion and desire. However, organizational life is public and generalizable, focusing on rationality and authority. Barsade and O'Neill (2014) also stated that the word *love* is rarely found in managerial scholarly works. The literature shows that love can be a large and unruly area of investigation that is difficult to predict. Nevertheless, recent research tells us that any complete science of behavior must incorporate this all-important facet of the human experience called love (Reis & Aron, 2008).

Some researchers, like Berscheid (2010) and Barsade and O'Neill (2014) have identified the kind of love that shows up in organizations as *compassionate love* or *companionate love*. Berscheid (2010) defined compassionate love as "agape, selfless love, love for another being, sacrificial love, pure love, true love, altruistic love and communal responsiveness" (p. 12). Barsade and O'Neill (2014) defined a culture of companionate love as:

the behavioral norms, artifacts, an underlying values and assumptions reflecting the actual expression or suppression of affection, caring, compassion, and tenderness, and the degree of perceived appropriateness

of these emotions, transmitted through feeling and normative mechanism within a social unit. (p. 558)

The researchers observed how a culture of companionate love influenced employee and client outcomes in a long-term care facility. Barsade and O’Neill (2014) concluded that companionate love relates positively to employee’s satisfaction and teamwork and decreases employees’ absenteeism and emotional exhaustion related to work. Their longitudinal study motivated the researchers to look at this equation in reverse. Instead of looking at how love (the value) impacts an organizational culture, it was interesting to assess the beliefs about which benevolent behaviors would be meaningful to a particular organization in order to be perceived as sustainable love norm. Their study encourages to do related research and also, validates the importance of having the “love conversation” in organizations.

Tasselli (2018) suggests in his study that when people get to know and welcome strangers it is a manifestation of love in the form of *philia*. An example is a study among indigenous Chileans showed that when members of different groups became in contact and got to know each other, prejudice among themselves diminished. Getting to know each other’s culture was critical in allowing these indigenous people to show kind and positive behaviors toward each other (Zagefka et al., 2015). Argandoña (2011) concluded based on his conducted in Spain that:

if a firm is a human community that is capable of achieving both internal and external outcomes, and also of surviving and developing, then it is necessary that the virtues—including love, which is the virtue that promotes the other virtues and puts order and unity among them—be lived in the firm (organization). (p. 80)

Tasselli (2018) also explained:

love in the form of ‘*philia*’—defined by the Greeks as brotherly love—is portrayed in those organizations that are open to others, that welcome

others. *Philia* contributes to assimilate the newcomer, or the stranger in the organization and to make her or him a citizen of the organization. (p. 6)

Although love is rarely mentioned in organizational or managerial literature, similar concepts have been reviewed. Some of the ways in which studies refer to them are compassion, caring, and a virtue in leadership. When analyzing the interpretation of these concepts, one cannot find a significant difference between them, and this study's definition of love. The following sections describe some of these studies.

Compassion. In a study about how compassion supports the development of sustainable leaders, this virtue was defined as: "(1) empathy or understanding the feelings of others, (2) caring for the other person, and (3) willingness to act in response to the other person's feelings" (Boyatzis, Smith, & Blaize, 2006, p. 13). Similar to love, it has been said that compassion lies at the core of what it means to be human (Himmelfarb, 2001). It has also been considered to be those expressed feelings of affection, caring, and tenderness toward subordinates or colleagues without the expectation for specific organizational benefits (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014). Eldor (2018) concluded based on an analysis of the effect of compassion in an Israeli public service workplace that when employees receive compassion from their supervisors, it positively affects work engagement and negatively affects work burnout. This study presents similar results to Barsade and O'Neill's (2014) report of companionate love, providing a correlation between compassion and love. Based on the previous definitions, Barsade and O'Neill's study, and Eldor's research, one could interpret that compassion is a manifestation of love.

Caring as an expression of corporate citizenship. Coombe (2011) argues that corporate citizenship is an expression of love and that love is an intentional concern, care,

and appreciation for others. Coombe adds that love is an equal intention and commitment to take care of the well-being of others and the well-being of self. In his study, Coombe states that corporate citizenship is a conduit through which we can support the intentionality and behaviors of love, it is a key to make love and its expressions normal in organizations. Autry (1992) suggested that if members of an organization are uncomfortable with the word love, the term *caring* should be used. Other scholars suggest that real love is caring and having an unconditional commitment to the welfare of others (Baer, 2007).

A virtue in leadership. Most of the literature found for this study was related to love as a leadership virtue. This literature mostly focused on management as leaders, and also included love as a worthy virtue that any member of the group could adopt. Ferris (1988) suggested that love should become an essential component of leadership. His experience has led him to conclude that love is a choice and that it is the key to solve any organizational and leadership problem. Tasselli (2018) concluded that organization members often embody their managers' values and virtues. In his study, he encouraged managers to be the source of change that would include love in the organization. A study in Portugal indicated that managers associate love with two core dimensions: love as an expression of virtue and love as a sense of *communityship*. The group of managers investigated in the study practiced some form of being a loving leader, creating a virtue-oriented community-ship or *Gemeinschaft*. The foundations for this community are the leader's virtues, where loving leaders inspire others to act in similar ways, therefore creating a community driven by love (Cunha et al., 2016).

Norms

Sherif (1936) defined norms as “customs, traditions, standards, rules, values, fashions, and all other criteria of conduct which are standardized as a consequence of the contact of individuals” (p. 3). Feldman (1984) chose to use Hackman’s definition of group norms in his study regarding the development and enforcement of group norms, wherein norms are the informal rules that groups adopt to regulate and regularize group members’ behavior. Feldman also explained that groups would enforce such standards to facilitate their survival and to increase the predictability of group member’s behaviors. Also, groups would want to prevent as much interpersonal discomfort as possible. Norms become the tool to accomplish such a goal. Feldman’s research also established that norms would be enforced if they represent the group’s core values and its identity. Bettenhausen and Murnighan (1985) defined norms as persistent patterns of behavior that are relatively stable within a particular group. These different definitions can be summarized by establishing that norms are the rules or standards of behavior that are considered acceptable in a group or society. They guide the interaction among members of a group, as well as the interactions of the group with its environment. Finally, norms are the behavioral manifestations—explicit and implicit—of the organizational culture created by the group’s values and beliefs. Since norms are the embodiment of values and love is a value, it is probable that love could become a norm as well.

Types. Prescriptive norms define the socially appropriate way to respond to a situation. Descriptive norms explain what most people usually do, feel, or think in a particular situation (Forsyth, 2014). Cialdini, Kallgren, and Reno (1991) concluded through their Focus Theory of Normative Conduct that norms provoke different powerful and systematic outcomes on behavior, depending on whether they are descriptive norms

(norms of prevalence) or prescriptive norms (norms of approval). They also advised to use prescriptive or injunctive norms when choosing to enhance a beneficial social behavior in others. A prescriptive norm is more likely to impact a greater number of situations or individuals. Given how norms can influence behavior, a new field of study has emerged, known as *social norms marketing*. The purpose of this discipline is to use norms in interventions designed to increase socially desirable behavior (Moreira, Smith, & Foxtrot, 2009). Although there is evidence supporting how influential norms are in predicting and changing behavior, management scholars have not given much attention to or taken advantage of the power that norms have over behavior (Goldstein & Cialdini, 2011). Based on their conclusion, this proposed study has tremendous opportunity to offer evidence that would validate or undermine this perspective and would help fill that void in the field.

Development. Understanding norm formation is instrumental in this investigation. Some of the best-known theories are the ones proposed by Sherif (1936), Feldman (1984), and Opp (2001). Their arguments create a framework that will allow this study to explore how norms are developed.

Sherif (1936) proved through his autokinetic effect experiment, wherein a stationary light in a dark room appears to move, that people look to others for guidance and conform with their decisions in ambiguous situations. In other words, people adopt the prevailing norms in ambiguous situations.

Later, Feldman (1984) established that norms develop in one or more of the following ways in most groups:

- (a) *Explicit statements by supervisors or coworkers*—Norms that facilitate group survival or task success often are set by the leader of the group or its influential members;
- (b) *Critical events in the group's history*—A

significant incident in the history of the group that establishes an important precedent; (c) *Primacy*—Often, the first behavior pattern that emerges in a group sets group expectations; (d) *Carry-over behaviors from past situations*—Individual group members bring set expectations with them from other work groups. (pp. 50-52)

Opp (2001) presented the Theory of Instrumentality Proposition, in which he discussed that both planned and unplanned norms emerge if they are instrumental for attaining the group's goals.

All three theories apply to the present research and will be examined for their contribution to the concept of love becoming a norm. Sherif's (1936) theory could explain that the "love norm" may emerge as a result of members of a group adopting the behavior of others within the same group. Feldman's (1984) theory could support the formation of new norms, since it suggests that norms emerge as an explicit statement by supervisors or coworkers. Opp's (2001) theory could similarly drive the new love norm, since it has been discussed that love in organizations is a conduit for positive emotions and supports organizational success (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014).

Norms in organizations.

Behaviors. Barsade and O'Neill (2014) established that mechanisms are needed to translate the culture of companionate love into action and influence employee and work outcomes. The first ones are *feeling mechanisms*, through which employees actually feel companionate love. The second mechanisms are *normative enactments*, where employees express companionate love only to conform to the expectations. Both types of mechanisms are considered behaviors that represent the feeling of companionate love.

Some behaviors described by Barsade and O'Neill (2014) describe that represent the feeling mechanisms include genuine display, generated internally and individually; emotional contagion, through authentic and subconscious actions; and deep acting,

wherein employees try to feel and act the emotion required to display. The feeling mechanisms differ from the normative enactments because, in the latter one, people conform to group expectations no matter how they feel. Behaviors that are representative of normative performances are described as surface acting, similar to norms or rules that govern everyday interactions. Another type of normative enactment is perceived when a person imitates other's behaviors or emotions in order to be accepted by the group. Such behavior is considered similar to Sherif's (1936) norm development theory, explained in his autokinetic effect experiment. These behaviors become the norm in the organization when practiced enough (Lilius, Worline, Dutton, Kanov, & Maitlis, 2011). Barsade and O'Neill (2014) articulated in their companionate love study that it is irrelevant whether the source of practices is genuine (feeling mechanisms) or conforming to expectations (normative enactments). What matters is that the behaviors ultimately create an emotion cycle, encouraging members of the group to continuously participate in the behaviors more vigorously or eventually feel the emotion that drives the action because of emotional contagion, leading the members of the group to enact the behaviors again. These feelings and normative mechanisms become the channel through which the norm is cemented in the organization's culture.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), is "a discretionary individual behavior, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal rewards system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization" (Carrall & Organ, 1988, p. 4). OCBs have a positive effect on both the individual and the organizational outcomes. At the individual level, they increase performance ratings and rewards allocations and decrease turnover and absenteeism. At the organizational level, they increase productivity, efficiency, customer satisfaction, and negatively impact costs and

turnover. A study by Jacobson, Jacobson, and Hood (2015) concluded that the perception of norms for OCBs guide individual action, thus influencing work-related behavior. They additionally found that norms predict not only the behavior, but also its frequency. Their study was among the first to that norms predict OCB and that, as discussed earlier in this chapter, norms are manifestations of individual and organizational values. Their study adds to the mounting evidence that norms play a significant role in what behaviors individuals choose to enact. For the purpose of this study, their conclusion could suggest that love (the value) can become love (the norm), thus, guiding employees' OCB behaviors, which are ultimately needed to create an enriching and successful organizational environment.

Impact. An example of how norms impact organizations is Google's 2015 Project Aristotle, which aimed to uncover what makes and drives the perfect team. The project researchers started sifting through the data to identify behaviors that would reveal the team norms that explained its culture (Duhigg, 2016). The researchers concluded that how teammates treated one another influenced team efficacy, wherein teams that established norms to support their functioning and success became effective teams. Google's Project Aristotle also provided information regarding other consequences norms have in organizations. The most significant outcome is that norms are the foundation to develop a psychologically safe environments, thus, supporting team success. One way of creating psychological safety is listening and talking—in other words, getting to know the other. Google also concluded that norms and emotional conversations need to become part of the way of doing business. Consequently, when norms and emotions are included in data reports and discussed like any other important business asset, emotional conversations become easier to have (Duhigg, 2016). This is

possible because the environment is considered safe, the team appreciates the value of norms, and the team succeeds.

Descriptive and prescriptive norms work at both individual and group levels, thus, impacting behavior. Managerial adoption of the norm strongly influences subordinates. Managers' behaviors encourage employees to "follow the leader," allowing all members of the group to contribute to their environment. If the manager acts in a positive, benevolent, and ethical way, a positive emotional cycle will be created in the organization (Kashif, Zarkada, & Ramayah, 2016).

Norms also impact the organization by facilitating an enriching experience for the employees. One way is by rewarding and recognizing employees' contributions to the organization's environment. Thus, if employees know that they will all be acknowledged for their support of the norms, it enables the group to develop mutual trust and commitment to the organization (Kashif et al., 2016).

"Whole Self" in the Organization

The link between love, norms, and organizations is the individual, the *whole self*. He or she is the one who feels love, belongs to a group, and enacts the appropriate behaviors (norms) expected to be a part of the organization. He or she is someone who can mindfully choose to have love become the norm that drives any exchange, interaction, and intervention in an organization. Bringing the whole self to work requires being vulnerable, humble, and authentic. Showing up in an organization as one's whole selves is a significant risk; instead, it often feels easier to create a work persona in order to be seen as a competent and successful professional. In his book *Bring your Whole Self to Work* (2018), Mike Robbins tells us that when we do not bring our whole selves to work, we suffer in the form of diminished engagement, productivity, and well-being.

Moreover, the consequent lack of psychological safety makes it difficult for the group to thrive and perform at its best. If the organization encourages and practices an environment where love is the norm, psychological safety will emerge, thus encouraging people to bring their whole beings to work. Employees will be able to connect and acknowledge each other—not only as workers but as humans as well. Our human nature is one where our intellect and our emotions coexist. One cannot be without the other. As Aristotle noted millennia ago: “Educating the mind without educating the heart, is no education at all.” This quote suggests that the relationship between love and intellect is a symbiotic one: For one to make sense and be impactful, the other has to be considered its equal. Hall and Mirvis’s (1995) study indicated that when an organization cares for its people, it provides a valued mission and challenging, meaningful work, combined with an environment of fairness, good pay and benefits, and support. This organization will not only meet the needs of the whole person; it will also engage that person and thus profit from a vast supply of untapped human potential.

Similarly, Tasselli (2018) observed that organizational values often mirror those of the founder. In this case, if the founder values love, the organization will include love or one of its representations (e.g., compassion, kindness, respect, acceptance) as one of its values. This is another way in which the whole person influences the organization and its norms, reinforcing the concept of the symbiotic nature of values, norms, and the individual.

Summary

Although no literature was found to explicitly address how to transform love (the value) into love (the norm), researchers have addressed the impact of norms and love in organizations. Based on this body of literature, it is hypothesized that having love as an

organizational norm creates an environment where people can have difficult conversations and discuss their feelings and concerns with coworkers. In organizational environments characterized by love, employees feel that they are heard and seen as a whole person (Duhigg, 2016). Argandoña (2011) emphasized, “Love—love for others—is present one way or another in all facets of people’s lives, including in economic organizations” (p. 82).

Thus, it may be concluded that literature validates the desire and need to create an awareness of how love impacts and manifests in organizational life. Moreover, these findings concerning the universality of love, values, norms, and organizations have been validated by researchers located around the world, including Argentina (Fernández-Aráoz, 2014), Australia (Cunha et al., 2016), Chile (Zagefka et al., 2015), Greece (Kashif et al., 2016), Israel (Eldor, 2018), Malaysia, Pakistan (Kashif et al., 2016), Portugal (Cunha et al., 2017), Spain (Argandoña, 2011), The Netherlands (Tasselli, 2018), and the United States (Barsade & O’Neill, 2014).

The present study examined love within a mixed culture of Latin, African, Native, and American influences and where affection and emotional expression is ingrained in its people, therefore influencing organizational life. In so doing, the study aimed to fill a gap in management literature by examining whether a norm of love could be accepted, incorporated, sustained, and beneficial to an organization.

Chapter 3

Methods

“There isn’t any secret formula or method. You learn love by loving”

—Aldous Huxley (Time Must Have a Stop, 1944/1988)

This research used an exploratory qualitative design to investigate to what extent if any, developing a norm of love might be accepted, incorporated, sustained, and beneficial to an organization. The research examined the following questions:

1. Can love be part of an organization’s culture?
2. How does love manifest in a workplace environment?
3. What benefits does it provide to the company and its employees?
4. How can the norm of love be implemented?

This chapter explains the methods used to conduct the study. The setting and participants, contracting steps, and procedures for collecting data, analyzing data, and protecting participants’ confidentiality are discussed.

Setting and Participants

The study was performed at a telecommunications company founded 24 years earlier, which was privately-owned and established in Puerto Rico. The organization’s directors, managers, and supervisors were the targeted participants. A total of 28 potential subjects were invited to participate. All presentations and interviews were performed in Spanish, consistent with participants’ native language. All written communication was in English, which is the business language of the organization.

Contracting and Study Introduction Phase

The contracting and study introduction phase proceeded as follows:

1. An email addressed to the company's president explained the scope and purpose of the project and requested approval. The company was notified that the investigation is a graduation requirement for the MSOD Program at the Graziadio Business School. The researcher requested a letter approving the study at the site.
2. A proposal on how to introduce the project to the staff was discussed with the president. The suggestion was to offer an introductory presentation of the study to all possible subjects and ensure them that participation was voluntary.
3. The corporation was informed on how the study would use the collected data and that recommendations would be provided based on the findings.
4. Furthermore, the study required the president to agree not to incur, endorse, or allow consequences that would impact employees and their job security. It was imperative for the development and facilitation of the investigation that employees felt free to choose their participation in the process.
5. Another goal of the contracting phase was to reach an agreement regarding the overall timeframe of the study, and the dates to offer the presentations for orientation. The proposed period to conduct the orientation presentation and the interviews was November 1 and December 6, 2019.
6. The potential subjects were invited to voluntarily participate in a presentation about the study. The invitation email guaranteed that there would be no risks or consequences for their collaboration in the study. Also, they were informed about the confidentiality of the process and that the research would not request any identifiable information.

7. The purpose and requirements of the project were explained to prospective participants during the presentation. Employees also had the opportunity to ask the researcher questions. The presentation provided an opportunity for the researcher to explain her relationship with the organization and assure that the process would remain confidential.
8. The contracting and introduction phase culminated with the researcher sending an email inviting employees to participate in the face-to-face interviews. The invitation was sent to the employees' private email addresses to keep their participation confidential from the organization.

Data Collection

The data collection method used was one-on-one, face-to-face interviews. Interviews were voluntary and confidential. The interview script (see Appendix A) was designed to examine whether employees were willing to accept and implement the norm of love in the organization. The researcher approached the interviewees with a list of already prepared questions but stayed open to the probability that other questions could have arisen depending on how the interviews proceeded.

Prospective participants received email invitations to the study in order to provide the researcher's contact information and explain the interview process. Interviews were conducted at a place and time of the participant's choosing to promote confidentiality.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data collection and analysis processes happened simultaneously. The recorded audio was transcribed after each interview, therefore, expediting the analysis procedure. The analysis process was manual, with data being organized and coded based on emerging themes and patterns. The collected information helped identify

whether participants accepted a norm of love, whether they perceived it as beneficial, and how it could be implemented. The researcher relied on the coded data to suggest steps for developing and implementing a norm of love. These findings became the foundation for norm creation and recommendations for implementing a norm of the love in the organization. The data helped uncover patterns in employees' experiences and preferred behaviors that could establish a starting point for norm formation.

Confidentiality

The following precautions were taken to guarantee that participation in the study was confidential:

1. The invitation to participate was sent via email. The interviewer (principal investigator/researcher) used the Pepperdine email address to which only she has access.
2. The interviewer sent all invitations to the potential subjects' personal email addresses to protect their confidentiality.
3. The invitation for the interviews included the principal investigator's contact information and the timeline for the interview process so that interested participants could schedule a date for the meeting.
4. The message reminded them that participation was voluntary and that the study did not require any protected personally identifiable information.
5. Staff were informed about the confidentiality of the process, whether or not they chose to participate.
6. Any risk to the participants' confidentiality was mitigated by conducting the interviews in a neutral location of their choosing, such as a coffee house or

restaurant. The participants determined the place and time that was most convenient for them.

7. The interviewer notified all subjects that they were giving consent to the study by participating in the interviews.
8. The researcher digitally audio recorded the interviews. All recordings were kept confidential. After each meeting, the recordings were transferred to the principal investigator's Pepperdine G-Suite drive and then deleted from the recording device. The recordings were transcribed by the researcher and each document was labeled with a number. No personally identifying information was included in the transcripts. The transcribed interviews were filed in a locked cabinet at the investigator's home office.
9. The laptop and phone used during the process are protected with passwords, and only the interviewer had access to them. All equipment was protected with File Vault disk encryption.
10. The investigator's password-protected Pepperdine G-Suite account was used to safeguard interview recordings and transcripts, researcher's notes, data spreadsheets, and analyses.
11. All recordings, transcripts and notes were protected by remaining in the possession of the researcher at all times.
12. The collected data were deleted and destroyed by the principal investigator once the study was published.

These safeguards ensured that participants' confidentiality was assured when analyzing the data and presenting results to the company. The company did not have access to any collected and recorded data. Furthermore, the researcher discussed the

study's findings and made recommendations based only on aggregated data, and only after the research was published.

Summary

This chapter provides an overview of the qualitative methods used to conduct the study, including the setting and participants, contracting steps, and procedures for collecting data, analyzing data, and protecting participants' confidentiality. The next chapter presents the results.

Chapter 4

Results

“And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see clearly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.”

— *Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (The Little Prince, 1943/2014)*

The research project was an exploratory qualitative study to investigate to what extent, if any, developing a norm of love might be accepted, incorporated, sustained, and beneficial to an organization. This chapter presents the findings and analysis of the interview process performed as the data collection method. The first section describes the presentation and interview process, followed by a description of the analysis method.

Next, findings related to the acceptance of the norm of love are presented to answer the research question: Can love become an organizational norm? Thereafter, findings related to implementation of the norm of love are presented, thus exploring the second research question: How can we achieve it? Finally, participants’ voices regarding how the norm impacts the whole self are presented. This section outlines participants’ reflections on the impact the norm can have on organizational, professional, and personal values. The summary will present the common themes among each previous section, setting the foundation for Chapter 5.

Presentation and Interview Process

The study was performed at a 24-year-old, privately owned telecommunications company established in Puerto Rico. The targeted participants were the organization’s directors, managers, and supervisors. A total of 28 potential subjects were invited by

email to participate voluntarily in an introductory briefing, and 24 out of the 28 attended. During this presentation, the researcher provided information regarding the scope of the study and what their involvement would entail. Additionally, to facilitate candid responses, they were reassured that all information would be kept confidential. The investigator addressed any concerns or questions that the potential participants had. The presentation was interactive, and the group participated with their questions and comments. Practically, most questions were related to the purpose of the study and about the literature that supports it. Finally, the definition of love, was provided to the participants. In Chapter 1 of this research project, love was defined as altruistic behaviors that enrich our daily interactions and relationships with kindness, respect, clear and honest communication, authenticity, inclusion, acceptance, validation, hope, teamwork, excellence, joy and freedom. Correspondingly, the volunteers were invited to participate with an open mind and think outside of the box regarding love as a norm, since love in the workplace is considered an emerging concept in the business world. Appendix B displays the PowerPoint deck used during the briefing/presentation.

At the end of the group briefing, all attendees were invited to schedule an interview, and six requested time for immediate interviews. The remaining attendees scheduled their interviews at a later date, either through email or phone call. The subjects chose the location for their interviews that provided the most comfort, as the researcher had recommended. Three participants requested to meet at a café outside the business. The other 15 chose to have their interviews at their workplace during business hours. Each interview lasted 1 to 2 hours. The data collection period lasted 2 weeks.

Analysis Method

The interview process encouraged curiosity, allowing the participants' voices to emerge, which is an essential component for unbiased analysis. The approach to analyzing data was inductive; therefore, categories and themes surfaced from the participants' voices. The results were compared and studied to see if they would answer the research questions: Can love become an organizational norm? If so, how can we achieve it? Finally, the whole-self theme was uncovered in the answers provided by participants.

As a result of reviewing the interview transcripts and previously studied academic research, 3 categories, 9 themes, and 15 subthemes of acceptance and implementation were delineated (see Table 1).

Table 1

Research Categories, Themes, and Subthemes

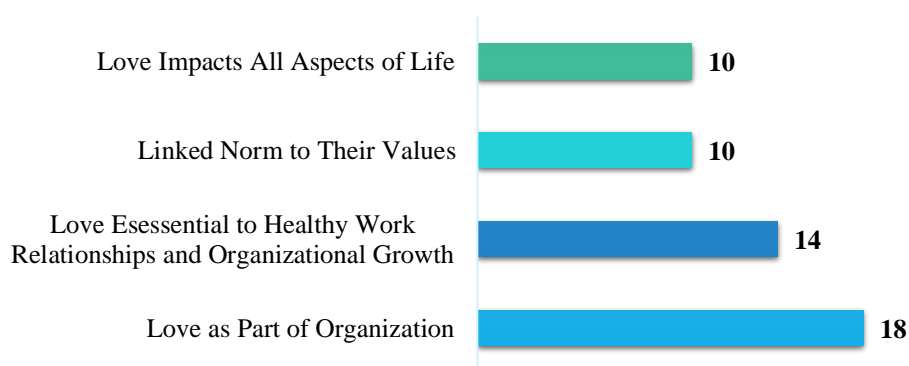
Categories	Themes	Subthemes
Acceptance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance • Reactions and feelings towards the norm • Benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance • Feelings • Reactions • Benefits to the company • Benefits to employees
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading by example • Definition • Education and training Program • Managing risks and challenges • Sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading by example • Definition • Education and training program • Ambassadors Program • Risks • Challenges • Sustainability • Hiring and onboarding
Whole Self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is impossible to separate love from the whole self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole Self

Acceptance of the Norm of Love

All 18 interview participants responded they would accept the norm of love (see Figure 1). They believe that love could be part of an organization. Fourteen participants (77.77%) stated that love is essential to establishing healthy work relationships and organizational growth. Ten (55.55%) interviewees linked the norm to their values, stating that they could not work in an organization that did not uphold values similar to theirs. One comment that stood out was, “If love were not part of this organization, I would not have lasted here, I would have left already.” This last group acknowledged that love impacts all aspects of their lives; therefore, they could not “leave love outside the company’s door every morning when walking in.” One participant said, “As human beings, we are made up of mind, body, and soul. One cannot exist without the other. We cannot disconnect from our true essence.”

Figure 1

Participant Acceptance of the Norm of Love

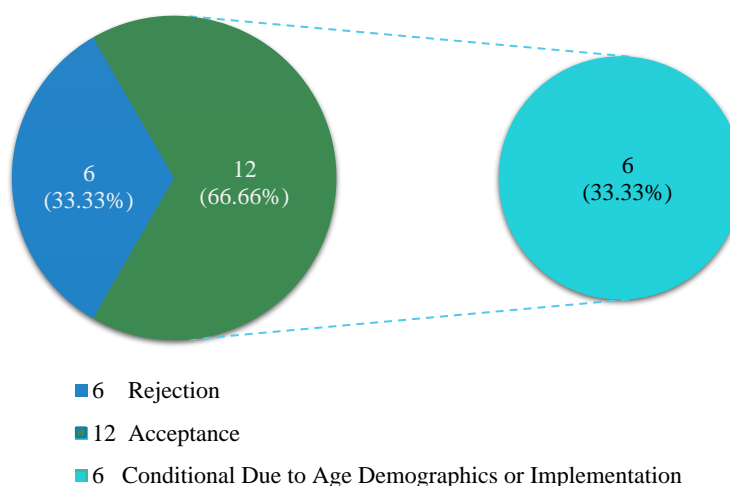


Note: The 18 participants provided more than one response.

When asked about accepting the norm, all participants said they would welcome it. As presented in Figure 2, 12 participants (66.67%) believed that other employees would accept it too.

Figure 2

Perception of Employees' Acceptance of the Norm



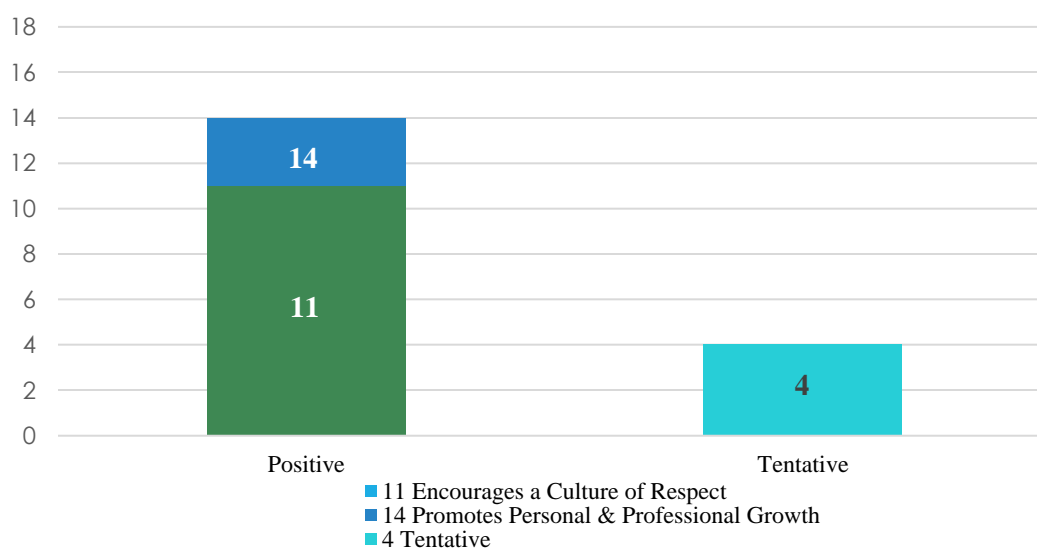
Although six participants (33.33%) of the remaining 12 believed the rest of the company would agree with the norm, they felt it would be conditional, based on employee age or the implementation method used. A remaining six participants (33.33%) thought employees would not accept the norm. Three reasons they believed employees would reject the norm included that love does not belong in the workplace, that members of an older generation would not feel comfortable, and that male chauvinism would not allow it. Overall, the majority of the participants thought most employees, if not all, would welcome the norm.

Reactions and feelings towards the norm. Three of the questions explored the reactions and feelings the participants would have if the norm were to be implemented.

When asked how they would react to the norm, 14 responded positively or affirmatively (see Figure 3). Similarly, these 14 interview subjects supported the norm believing it would encourage and promote personal and professional growth. Also, 11 of them believed that the norm would encourage a caring culture generating respect. Other participants' reactions included: happy, trusting, excited, or tentative. In contrast, four participants out of the total, responded that even though they would accept the norm, they were curious and tentative about how the norm could be implemented; therefore, they did not know how to react or feel about it.

Figure 3

Participant Reactions to the Norm



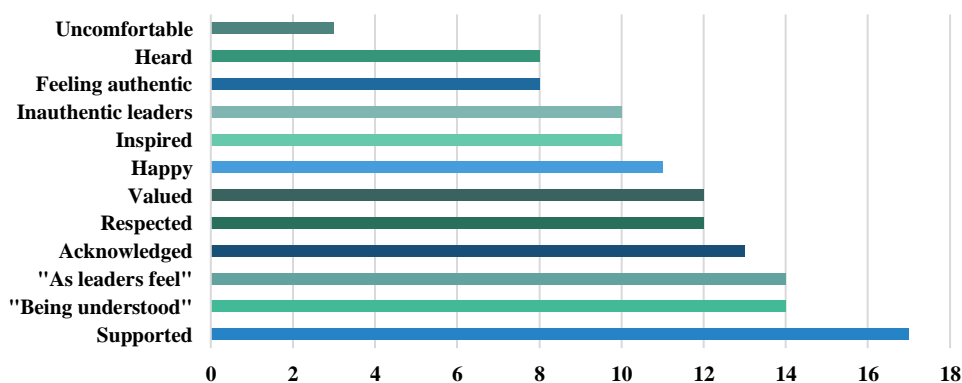
When asked about how others would react to the norm, the responses were more varied. Ten participants stated that employees would react positively, as they would be glad to be seen as people and not as numbers. Other reactions voiced were that it would depend on the employees' philosophy of life or experiences, the generational group, and approach to implementation. Six participants expressed concern, cautioning possible

rejection of the norm based on several factors, including the belief that love does not belong in an organization. Other factors were that people do not understand the norm, that some employees belong to an older and less receptive generation, male chauvinism, and feeling threatened by the vulnerability associated with love. On the other side of the spectrum, other participants thought the majority would take ownership of the norm and go the extra mile to implement and protect it.

One of the questions probed how participants thought others would feel about implementing a norm of love (see Figure 4). Opinions of how others would feel included: respect (12 or 66.67%), being understood (14 or 77.77%), valued (12 or 66.67%), inspired (10 or 55.55%), heard (8 or 44.44%), and acknowledged (13 or 72.22%). The subjects also mentioned happiness (11 or 61.11%), authenticity (8 or 44.44%), and support (15 or 83.33%). All of the participants are leaders in the organization, and 14 (77.77%) members stated that employees would feel as they thought their leaders felt. Therefore, they acknowledged the need to lead by example.

Figure 4

How Would Others Feel About Implementing the Norm?



Note: The 18 participants provided more than one response

However, 10 (55.55%) interviewees expressed that not all leaders would be authentic and would fake the implementation to look good. They were concerned about how this behavior would impact such efforts. Furthermore, three interviewees (16.66%) conveyed that a small group of employees might feel uncomfortable or confused about the norm. Therefore, they emphasized the importance of including everybody in the implementation process.

Benefits of the norm of love. When asked to identify the benefits of such a norm, all participants reacted positively. They also connected how the norm would benefit the company with how it would benefit themselves as employees and individuals. Figure 5 presents the benefits participants associated with the norm of love.

Benefits to the company. Seventeen participants (94.44%) said that the norm of love would improve employee morale, commitment, and the feeling of belonging. With improved morale, they thought employees would be motivated to take ownership of their role; therefore, positively impacting efficiency and productivity. Sixteen participants (88.88%) thought that implementing a norm of love would enhance the company's culture by creating the ideal work environment. The interviewees also stated that if leaders of the company modeled the desired change, significant benefits to the organization could result. For example, 11 participants (61.11%) anticipated a boost in the quality of their actual service standards resulting from successful implementation of the norm, and that this would sustain the excellent market recognition they have already earned. These participants added that the norm could be included in the company's mission, vision, and values and, thus, could be used as the driver of the business strategy, allowing the organization to explore the possibility of being values-driven rather than goal-driven, as expressed by 10 participants (55.55%). Another 10 participants (55.55%)

mentioned that the norm would validate the original company values implemented by the founder. They reported that caring is the most espoused value in the company, and they recognized it as an expression of love.

Benefits to employees. Fifteen participants (83.33%) identified an increase in employees' positive behaviors as the main benefit of implementing a norm of love (see Figure 5). Among the most common positive behaviors identified by interviewees were respect, empathy, caring, kindness, authenticity, vulnerability, and returning the favor in kind. Other behaviors were grouped by similarities. For example, 14 participants (77.77%) mentioned communications and related behaviors as benefits. The related behaviors were curiosity, listening, and "getting to know my people," and having clear expectations and well-defined policies and rules. Other associated behaviors related to communication are honest, transparent, open, and respectful interactions. Furthermore, managing difficult conversations and situations with clarity, dignity, and respect is a quality of effective communications. Teamwork, inclusion, and a positive team mindset were other benefits mentioned by 13 participants (72.22%). The subjects also shared that creating growth opportunities and development plans to support employees' growth and maximize their strengths would be another benefit of the norm. Finally, 14 participants (77.77 %) stated that "seeing people as people," acknowledging feelings and efforts, being human, encouraging employees' participation, being fair and ethical, and not abusing power were ways of leading by example, yielding a positive consequence of the norm as well.

Figure 5

Benefits of the Norm of Love

Benefits to the Company		Benefits to Employees			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivates employees to take ownership of their roles 	➔	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leads to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiency Productivity Commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases Positive behaviors 	➔	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respect Caring Kindness Authenticity Vulnerability “Returning the Favor in Kind”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhances company’s culture 	➔	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates the ideal work environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves communication 	➔	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curiosity Listening “Getting to know my people Having clear expectations Well-defined policies and rules Managing difficult conversations/ situations with clarity Dignity Respect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boosts the quality of service standards 	➔	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustains the excellent market recognition already earned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generates Positive team mindset 	➔	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teamwork Inclusion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Norm of love driver of business strategy 	➔	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopts management by values as strategic model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages leading by example 	➔	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Seeing people as people” Acknowledging feelings and efforts Being human Encouraging employees’ participation Being fair and ethical Not abusing power
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Validates founder’s values 	➔	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caring as an expression of love 			

Implementation of the Norm of Love

During the interviews, several participants asked when the norm of love would be implemented. The researcher responded to each one, “It will depend on you, the employees, and what you decide as a group.” Out of the 18 questions, 10 explored the possibility of implementing the norm. The next sections study the themes and ideas that emerged from the participants’ responses on how they would implement the norm of love. Figure 6 presents the implementation themes as a cycle, since 12 participants (66.67%) called implementation a never-ending process of trials and errors.

Figure 6

Implementation Themes and Ideas



Leading by example. One of the themes that emerged from 15 participants (83.33%) was “walk the talk” or lead by example. Figure 7 presents the participants’ beliefs regarding the behaviors that would impact the leading by example effort to implement the norm. Twelve participants (66.67%) mentioned that it was their responsibility to implement the norm successfully. Fifteen participants (83.33%) said that employees would follow and support the norm, depending on their example. One quote

that epitomized this sentiment was, “I need to lead by example. If my people see that I do not comply, they will not comply. Who am I to ask someone to do something that I am not willing to do?” Another perception shared by 10 participants (55.55%) was that employees would know if management was being authentic or not. A comment representative of this perspective was:

Our efforts as leaders and the efforts of the human resources department to improve our culture need to be genuine. People know when HR and we are not authentic. The implementation of this norm needs to be and feel real to our people. Anything else would be boycotting the effort.

Figure 7

Behaviors Impacting Leading by Example



Modeling the norm was considered by 14 participants (77.77%) as one of the critical drivers of successfully implementing the norm. Participants discussed this when referring to the possible benefits of the norm. Eleven participants (61.11%) feared the risk and negative impact management might create if they do not support the norm. They even mentioned how important it was to “sell the norm” among the management team first, in order to “sell it to the employees.” The proposal to implement the norm in a top-down effort was recommended by 11 participants (61.11%), so employees could have a chance to experience it before being invited to practice it. They thought this approach would provoke an emotional contagion of the norm. Twelve participants (66.67%) asserted that if management walked the talk, employees skeptical about the norm might then consider the norm as a possibility themselves. One participant said:

If employees see that it is working at a managerial level, they will be inclined to try it, and it will be easier to spread love in the organization. If we all act according to the norm of love, the reluctant or skeptical employees might give it a chance.

The interview subjects added again that “walking the talk” during the implementation phase was as important as the role of education and the norm’s definition.

Definition. Participants shared their ideas about how to implement the norm. Definition of the norm was one suggestion voiced by 16 participants (88.88%). Their thoughts on why the definition is essential and supportive of the implementation process are illustrated in Figure 8. One interviewee stated, “The norm must be real and achievable for everybody. How the norm will end up looking like, must be the result of collective negotiations. We need to invite all employees to participate in the norm’s development.”

Another participant shared:

Education regarding the norm is imperative. The CEO and the President need to be clear on the norm’s definition of love. It should then be worked

out with HR and the departments' directors, so they understand and agree with the definition of love. Once management is clear, the company can establish how to measure the norm and how to adjust it when needed. The norm should be clear, measurable, and flexible to adaptation.

Figure 8

How is Definition Essential and Supportive of Implementation?



Participants stated the importance of having a clearly defined norm and educating employees about it. Establishing one definition across the organization and launching a marketing campaign to create awareness were mentioned as critical components of the implementation efforts. The group of participants came up with several ideas to successfully achieve the implementation. Fifteen participants (83.33%) offered suggestions that required management to establish a strategy and structure to implement the norm and include all internal stakeholders in the process. Thirteen participants (72.22%) added that inviting all employees to contribute to the definition of the norm would enhance employee's ownership of the norm. Sharing and enacting positive

behaviors associated with the norm and talking about it during company meetings (allowing clarifying concerns or doubts about the norm), represent 13 participants' (72.22%) viewpoints. One participant shared that love already exists in the organization. It is just a matter of reminding people about it and giving the culture its real name: "This organization already has a caring culture. The norm of love will amplify that culture and name it for what it is, a loving culture." Another interviewee shared:

I need to remind employees that this company was created on a foundation of love. I need to remind them how different is our work environment compared to other companies out there. This will help them see that we already practice some aspects of the norm. Calling it love is just the next step.

Honest, respectful, and transparent communication was considered essential by 14 participants (77.77%) for defining the norm, and a behavior imperative for implementing the norm. The idea that if employees felt their leaders communicated authentically, they would be inclined to follow the lead and be willing to share more, was shared by 12 interviewees (66.67%). Some suggestions to improve communications among all members of the company were to invite and encourage small dialogue groups between the manager or supervisor and their people, as presented by 13 participants (72.22%). The idea was to create an environment where employees would feel comfortable speaking up or bringing ideas to their bosses. One participant's quote is a sample of what was expressed by 16 interviewees:

We need to provide clear and honest information about the norm. When people do not have information, they tend to assume and create their definitions. Also, as we implement the norm, we need to keep the team informed of the progress, what we want to create, and how we want to achieve it. This should be done in small groups, so employees feel more comfortable voicing their concerns or approval.

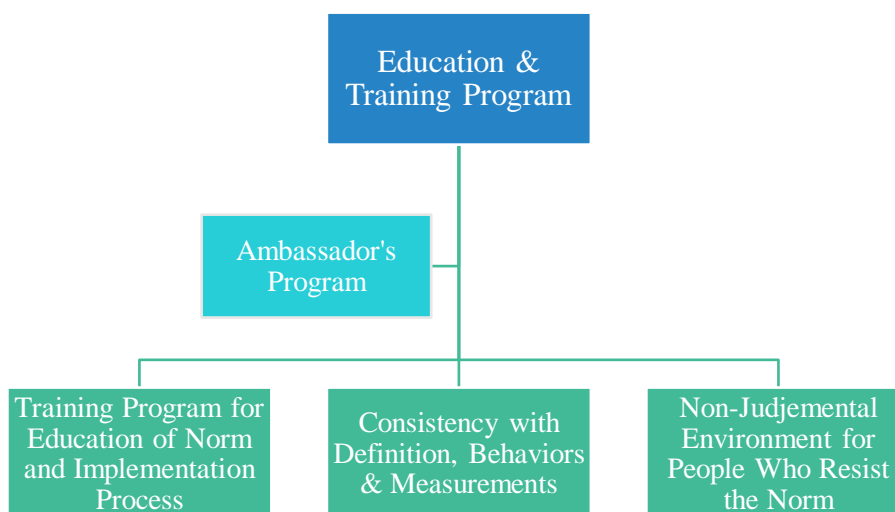
Education and training program. Participants also recommended developing a training program (see Figure 9) to educate about all aspects of the norm and create awareness. One interviewee stated,

Every trait of the norm must be clearly defined. Everybody needs to see the structure created to support the norm and understand how they fit in it. The quickest and most effective way to do this is by creating a boot camp and enforcing the norm with active supervision.

Sixteen participants thought that a training program would be a powerful tool to implement the norm.

Figure 9

Components of the Education and Training Program



The interviewees talked about the importance of being consistent with the definition, the behaviors associated and opposite to practicing the norm; and the tools needed to measure the impact of the norm. Consistency would support receptivity of the norm and a successful implementation, creating an environment where those opposing the norm would not be made wrong. Therefore, a training program would guarantee that

all employees have the same level of exposure and understanding of the norm. A quote that stood out was, “We need to be consistent with the norm. We cannot leave room for misinterpretations or employees creating their definitions of the norm. A formal training program would take care of consistency. One norm, one definition.” A training program also could create an inviting environment for those resistant to the norm. They can share their voices, allowing others to respect and take into consideration their ideas. A participant shared:

We need to figure out ways to show them how the norm positively impacts the company. We should work with others that are not in agreement with the norm and figure out alternatives to either support or respect it. By observing the culture being created, we can show that it is possible to implement a norm like this one.

Ambassadors’ Program. During the interviews and while discussing ideas about a training program, 11 participants recommended what they called an Ambassadors’ Program. They thought the company could create a group of volunteers trained in emotional intelligence and all the components of the norm of love. They saw this group as the experts that would champion the norm, and everything related to it. Some suggested that this team could lead small-group dialogues among employees, so people would feel comfortable expressing their concerns or support for the norm. This team could also design activities to reinforce positive, respectful, and kind behaviors. They would be true representatives of the norm by modeling it for all. They would also support the company’s president when evaluating or measuring the impact of the norm in the organization. One participant described the role by stating:

We need to develop a structure that will support the norm’s implementation. This will facilitate teaching how the norm will be practiced. A team of volunteers representing all departments can become part of this structure by taking on an ambassadors’ role. They can be role

models and help us navigate through the difficult circumstances that we will probably face while adapting to the norm and making it a way of life.

Another explained the role of this team by expressing:

Assign key employees in each department to be champions of the norm. With their help, all employees will understand how important the norm is for the company, the benefits it will bring for all, and how it will be implemented. They can also be the spokespeople for the norm and keep everybody informed on its impact within the organization and with external stakeholders.

Managing risks and challenges. Two questions addressed the risks and challenges that participants could associate with the norm. As they were taking account of both subthemes, the interviewees perspective was to become aware so that they could manage the risks and challenges when they arise. Table 2 shows their expectations regarding each subtheme.

Table 2

Expected Risks and Challenges Associated to the Norm of Love

Risks	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misinterpretation • Manipulation • Management coercion • Undermining the norm • Turnover due to discomfort or disagreement • Possible violations of labor laws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design of implementation method • All employees agree with definition • All employees agree with the norm • Create paradigm shift about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Love belonging in the workplace ○ Ineffective managerial styles • Resistance to the norm • Tough love in disciplinary actions

Risks. Fourteen participants (77.77%) anticipated that misinterpretation would be the most evident risk associated with the norm. The second highest risk expressed by the group was manipulation of the norm. One interviewee stated:

The most probable risk is a misinterpretation of the definition, employees could develop individual definitions and act upon those definitions. Therefore, the norm will look different in various areas of the organization. If the norm is implemented, the company should establish checklists to verify that the norm is understood and implemented the same way across the board.

Another person said, “The biggest risk is how people interpret the norm because love is an intangible concept. Maybe we can present case studies for discussion among the workforce to help them understand the value and the company’s definition of the norm.”

Regarding manipulation, a participant stated:

Some employees will take advantage of the norm and manipulate their coworkers, subordinates or superiors. If management is not clear on the company’s definition and fails to recognize possible deviations to the norm, it will create confusion among employees. Thus, it will create mistrust towards the norm.

Additional participants stated, “Some employees will see the norm as a license to kill and will try to take advantage of the company,” and “Some employees might take advantage of the company’s good intentions.”

Other risks discussed were undermining the norm, the lack of support or coercion from management, and turnover due to discomfort or disagreement with the norm. One quote representing undermining the norm states: “Leaders concerned of being perceived as weak, will not take it seriously, will not practice the norm, and eventually we will lose it,” while another participant expressed, “Other employees will not like the norm, will try to undermine it and be a negative influence on the team.” One participant said, “If management does not deliver the message correctly, people will feel it is imposed. The norm will be rejected, eventually becoming a failed effort.” Another interviewee asserted, “If management does not enforce and practice the norm, we will lose the norm.” One employee expressed concern about turnover because people will not agree or feel

comfortable with the norm. Another person shared, “One risk is that employees who are shy or reserved, might feel uncomfortable and leave the company.”

The violation of labor laws was named as a risk as well. This concern was expressed by five participants, who were emphatic about considering damaging behaviors to the norm. Legal risks were seen as a result of misinterpreting or manipulating the norm. One participant shared,

As a Puerto Ricans, we are very expressive and show affection easily, even in the work environment. It is part of our culture. My concern is that some people will not be professional in their behaviors and take advantage of the norm by showing excessive and uninvited familiarity with coworkers. Situations like this will inevitably bring legal consequences to the company.

Another person shared, “We need to be careful during implementation because we might not be aware of violations of labor laws done intentionally or not. We need to protect the company.”

Challenges. Once the norm is defined and accepted by employees, the next step will be implementation. The interviewees shared challenges they thought the company would face during this phase. Twelve participants (66.67%) discussed the following two challenges as the most important: how to design and achieve a successful implementation and how to get employees to agree with the norm’s definition. They explicitly stated:

How to establish the norm in different departments? Maybe we need to start with those areas that are willing to participate. Then move to the areas that might be resistant. If people do not see good results, they will not support the norm.

Another participant indicated, “What we need is receptivity to the norm and successful implementation. Employees need to understand that changes will not happen overnight. This will be a lengthy process, and we need to be patient.” A third participant said, “The biggest risk is to fail at implementing the norm because if we try later, people will not

believe in us. Therefore, we need to have a clear strategy, definition, and training program.”

The importance of having all employees agree with the norm, or at least agree to give it a chance, came up as a significant challenge to consider. Twelve participants expressed their thoughts. One stated:

We need to learn how to work with others that will disagree with the norm. We need to figure out ways to show them how the norm positively impacts the company. We need to protect a loving culture and be observant of our people, so we can show those who resist the norm, the possibilities that emerge when we include love in the work environment.

Another participant questioned, “How do we get everybody on board? Different generational groups or differences in professional experiences will be challenging to manage. We need to get everybody in agreement and make sure we take into consideration these different perspectives.”

Creating a paradigm shift came second to the challenges mentioned above. Ten participants (55.55%) expressed the need to create a shift to guarantee a successful implementation. The shift should be regarding management’s old leadership styles, ideas and approaches, and some employees’ perception of love not belonging in the workplace.

One research subject said:

Management needs to understand that they might need to implement new leadership styles that are more inclusive. For example, we need to invite all employees to participate in the process. We need to listen and understand them. If they see us modeling the behaviors that we are asking them to do, they might support the norm. We need to understand that we need to do things differently to have different and positive results in the organization.

Another participant remarked:

How can we break away from paradigms that hurt and hinder our growth as an organization? Love does not belong in the workplace is one of those

paradigms. We will be successful by creating an environment where love equals respect, and people do not mistake it for passionate love.

Still another expressed:

The challenge will be to convince all the company leaders that they have to operate differently. They need to understand themselves, so they can understand their people and support each employee individually. It is a change in awareness. There is no magical way to implement this norm that we need because if there were one, we would have implemented it already.

Tough love came up as an example of love in the workplace. Some of the participants compared it to how a parent disciplines their children. They thought it would be a way to implement disciplinary actions in a culture where love is the norm. One participant speculated:

A culture of love does not mean that we will bypass or ignore other company values and rules. Tough love needs to be defined and become part of the norm. It is one of the aspects of love, sometimes the most difficult one. We do it because we love the other.

Another participant said, “We need to keep a balance between love (tough love) and discipline (responsibility). We need to be vigilant about employees’ compliance with their responsibilities so that we can manage disciplinary actions with respect and humility.”

The last challenge was about how to deal with resistance to the norm. The participants shared their ideas on how to lessen the resistance and find ways to encourage tolerance towards it when applicable. Common ideas expressed were approaching resistance with compassion, modifying their behaviors to model the norm, and acknowledging the value of finding a solution together. Seventeen participants (94.44%) agreed that curiosity about understanding the reasons for resistance and confirming such understanding with employees was the first step in managing this challenge. The following statement was shared during the interviews:

I will approach resistance with love, with curiosity. Having an honest dialogue and asking why. I need to remember that every human being approaches life based on their circumstances. If I do not approach with curiosity, I will not understand and not know how to help. I would show support, and I will model the norm for them. When there is resistance, if I attack their perspective, people will close up to anything. However, if I live and model the norm, they will see it, be receptive to it, and eventually, the norm will positively impact them.

Another study subject stated:

I will approach resistance with curiosity. I will ask why and listen carefully. My responsibility as a leader is to find out the reasons for resistance, acknowledge those employees and their feelings, confirm my understanding with them, and together look for solutions and ways to tolerate or support the norm.

A third participant noted, “Employees want and need to be heard, seen and loved, and it only happens when a leader takes the time to get to know its people.”

Sixteen participants (88.88%) said that having compassionate, honest, respectful, and positive dialogues was another way of managing resistance. They also mentioned that these dialogues could become a safe and open space for employees to express themselves freely about the norm. One participant said:

As a leader, I need to let them know that I will create the space to communicate freely and honestly about the norm. Maybe they did not understand the norm or cannot see how to comply with it. This could be an opportunity to help them see the norm from a different perspective. It could also be an opportunity to find a way for them to be tolerant of the norm.

Another statement shared was:

The company will have to sponsor positive dialogues. These could become a space where people feel comfortable talking about the norm and will allow us to understand the reasons for resistance. Once we understand, we can develop a plan to address the non-believers, so they feel part of the company. The dialogues could also deal with defining deviations to the norm and its corrective measures so that employees are not compelled to act however they want and with no respect for the norm.

Sustainability. The questions regarding sustainability addressed different

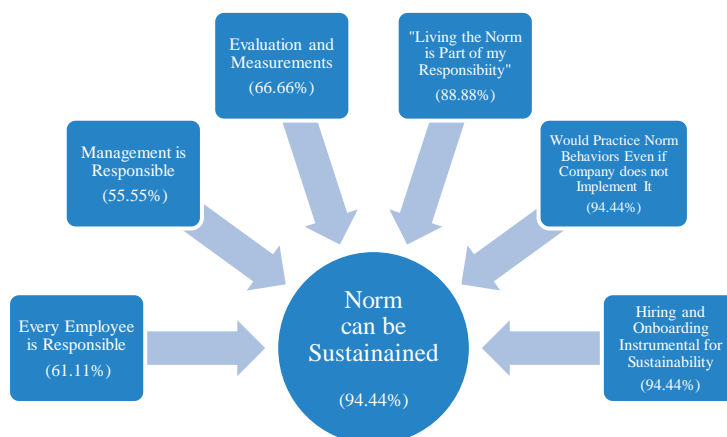
approaches to achieve the continuation of the norm. For example, participants were asked if the norm could be sustained and who would be responsible for that. Furthermore, new-employee onboarding was explored as a tool to support the norm. Additional perspectives on managing the norm's sustainability are dealing with conflict and disagreements in a loving environment and operating in a loving way when the environment does not support it.

Figure 10 illustrates what the participants believed would contribute to the norm's sustainability. Seventeen (94.44%) participants believe that the norm can be sustained, and 11 participants (61.11%) stated that every employee in the company is responsible for it. Ten participants (55.55%) said that the responsibility falls on the management team. One participant shared the following statement:

Maslow taught us that to reach the top of the pyramid, we need to satisfy the basic needs of a human being. Love is at the top of the pyramid. Consequently, if employees have their basic needs met, love can blossom among them. If the norm is implemented, and the basic needs are always met, the norm will sustain itself.

Figure 10

Contributors to the Norm's Sustainability



Another idea that emerged across 12 participants (66.67%) was that it had to be evaluated and measured in order for the norm to be sustained. To include the norm in employees' evaluations would be a sign of how important it is to the organization. It would send the message that *how* (norm of love) is as important as *what* (goals). One recommendation was to change the employee's evaluation process into a 360-degree one, where people would be assessed by their peers, subordinates, and superiors. Some study participants shared that the company could measure market share and profitability before and after the norm was fully implemented. This measure would be an indicator of the impact on all stakeholders. Finally, the group presented the idea of including the norm in employee satisfaction surveys and verify if the norm would also impact the customers.

The participants also shared that they would deal with disagreement and conflict in the workplace, similar to how they would manage resistance to the norm. Others also mentioned that rules and guidelines would have to be implemented to guarantee consistency in including the norm during such interactions. Curiosity, compassion, respect, acknowledging feelings, and leading by example were part of the solutions offered by the group.

Seventeen participants (94.44%) said they would practice behaviors corresponding to the norm of love even if their environment did not support or require it. Sixteen participants (88.88%) believed that living the norm was part of their responsibility. One interviewee stated:

We should not deviate from the norm. This way, we can continue leading by example and be effective with our team. We are all here to comply with the goals associated with our job, but if we choose to do it in a caring and kind way, I think it will be a contagious movement. It will make our work environment one desirable for all.

Another person said, “We need to be courageous to be a model of the norm. We need to be the example they follow.”

Participants agreed that for the norm to become part of the organization, love must influence the hiring process and become an integral part of onboarding new employees. Seventeen participants (94.44%) supported this initiative. One participant commented:

Definitely, I would make this an essential component of all employees’ onboarding process. It should be included in the interview process. We should set up checkpoints to support the new employees during their probation periods. We need to remember that human behavior is as important as human performance.

Another said:

We need to start during the hiring/interviewing process. We need to choose candidates that match our company values. We need to make sure the norm is a topic discussed during the onboarding process. As new employees take the training for their jobs, we also need to train them regarding the norm. We need to make sure we are all rowing in the same direction.

Yet another participant mentioned, “This could be one way the Ambassador Program can support the norm. They can be mentors to new employees, facilitating their integration to the company, and encouraging them when needed.”

Whole Self

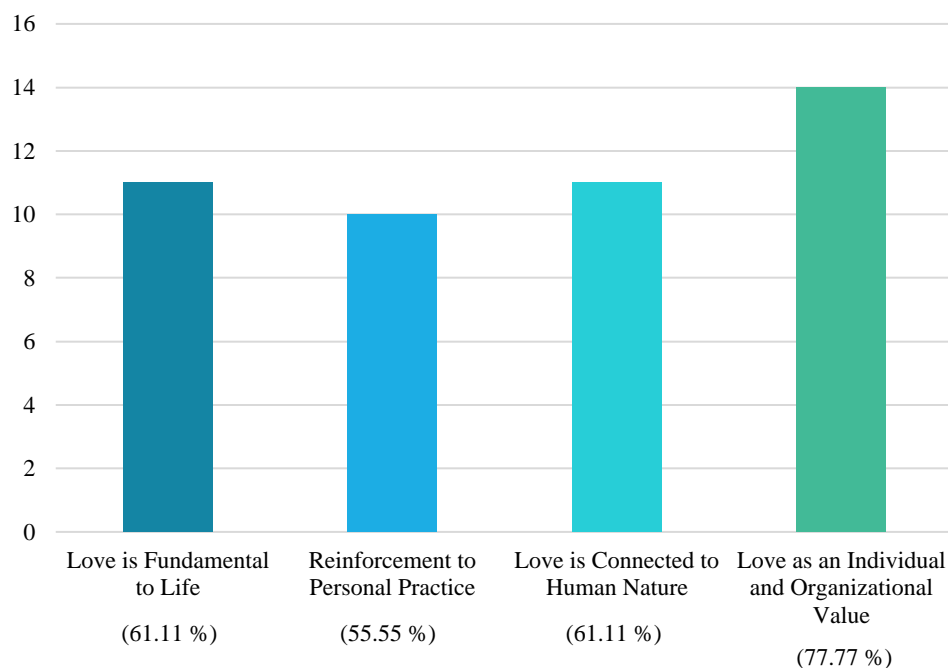
The connection between the norm of love and the whole self emerged as a category during the data analysis. No question directly approached this subject; but during the interviews, participants talked about the significance love has in their lives and that it was impossible for them to separate this from the whole self (see Figure 11). Eleven participants (61.11%) stated that love is fundamental to life, even calling it their philosophy of life. One participant shared, “Acting in a loving way is fundamental to life.

We all need to find our way to live the norm in our personal and professional lives.”

Another said, “Love is my philosophy of life. I would love it if everybody understood that love is the only thing that unites us as human beings.”

Figure 11

Connection Between the Norm of Love and the Whole-Self



Note: The 18 participants provided more than one response

Ten participants (55.55%) expressed that having a norm of love would reinforce what they already practice in their personal lives. The norm would allow them to freely be themselves in the workplace. One participant noted:

This is a value I choose to apply in my life. I can see every day its positive impact. I already live the norm of love. I grew up in a loving environment; therefore, I think this has helped me develop a loving way of being. I am not afraid or concerned about what others think of me. I treat others how I like to be treated.

Another participant also shared that the company values were an inspiration while developing their family values.

Love is a significant value in the participants' lives, as stated in the answers they gave during the interviews. While talking to the researcher about how the norm could be implemented or show up in the organization, 14 interviewees (77.77%) suggested that the norm should be considered a significant value in the organization and become part of the company's vision, mission, and values. All of them stated that it should also be called love, and not compassion or kindness like other organizations do. This statement represents their recommendation:

We also need to spread the message to our customers, our vendors, and the community in which we operate. The mission and vision should include the value of love, and we need to make sure everybody understands what it means. We need to live the norm daily, being consistent and honest about it. We cannot let the norm die and become just pretty wording on our mission and vision.

Participants shared the connection they see between the norm and human nature. They also suggested alternative behaviors through which employees can feel the company is taking the norm seriously. Eleven participants (61.11%) concluded that people cannot separate and ignore all the parts of their whole being. The recommendations given to achieve this integration included seeing people as people and not as numbers, being human, keeping employees' well-being always at the forefront of every decision, and expressing love as a lifestyle we choose. Other recommendations included were to always consider the human aspect of situations; encourage others to live with a set of values as the driving force of life; understand that when the company wins, we all win; and to take ownership of the norm is a way to successfully sustain it. One statement supports their perspective:

We only need the power of one. We only need one person planting the seed of change. Even though discord, conflict or disagreements might arise, if one person continues to operate within the parameters of love, it will be contagious to the others. This person will be responsible for creating a haven for its colleagues.

Summary

The data collection was a process of discovery for the researcher and the participants as well. It presented a concept traditionally not discussed or even considered in the workplace; love as an organizational norm. Some research subjects welcomed the idea openly, while others welcomed it with concerns. Nonetheless, the idea of the norm of love was examined in depth by all.

Acceptance, implementation, and the whole self were the main categories in which the different themes were organized. Regarding the whole self, it was argued to be unreal to separate love from our whole self, extract it, and leave it at the door when people enter work. Love was seen as a philosophy of life that colors everything people do. Love was considered a choice. Other themes addressed the reactions for acceptance or rejection of the norm. Among the most prevalent were the importance of being seen and valued as a person, the positive behaviors inspired by the norm, encouragement of personal growth, professional growth, and the support of a caring culture. The most common reasons for rejecting the norm were discomfort from feeling vulnerable or perceived as weak, belonging to an older generation, male chauvinism, and not understanding the norms' purpose or importance.

When exploring how to implement the norm, the ideas shared by the participants covered five significant areas: definition, education, training program, risks and challenges, and sustainability. The participants went to great lengths to cover as much as they could with their recommendations. They stated multiple times the importance of

leading by example. All participants are members of the company's management team, and most of them understood that their reaction and support would be critical to the norm's success. They also discussed how creating an ambassador's program could support the implementation phase and be a vital component to the onboarding of new employees; thus, supporting sustainability as well. The definition of the norm, the design of the implementation process, the challenges they might have to overcome, and the risks they might need to prepare for were examined carefully and in detail.

The team of participants expressed their willingness to support the norm. They shared personal values and how the norm would make the workplace more human and inviting. However, they voiced their concerns regarding how the norm would impact disciplinary actions or vice-versa. Finally, most of them acknowledged wanting to implement the norm but not knowing where or how to start. One statement comprises the complexity and simplicity surrounding the norm of love:

I believe that the norm will be accepted, but it will take a long time. Unfortunately, having a norm like this is a double-edged sword because some people might be supportive, others might not. Some might be scared; others might see it as an adventure. Some might be uncertain about it, and others might be excited and ready to apply it. To live the norm and make it real, we need to inspire our employees to walk on the path of love. I can only do that if I believe in the norm and model it every day. My growth and success depend on the growth and success of my people. As a leader, I can only shine if my people shine.

Chapter 5

Discussion

“Choose the way of life. Choose the way of love. Choose the way of goodness. It is up to you, it’s your choice.”

— *Leo F. Buscaglia, Ph.D. (Living, Loving and Learning, 1982)*

The research project was an exploratory qualitative study to investigate to what extent, if any, developing a norm of love might be accepted, incorporated, sustained, and beneficial to an organization. This study attempted to answer the questions: Can love become an organizational norm? How can we achieve it?

Chapter 5 is divided into six sections. The first section presents the conclusions derived from the research study and how they relate to the existing literature. The next section discusses recommendations on how an organization could implement a norm of love, should they choose to do so. Recommendations for future research possibilities are then outlined. The next section proposes ideas for how organization development practitioners may use this data and how the study contributes to the existing literature. Limitations of this study are then identified, followed by a reflection to conclude the chapter and the study.

Conclusions

The themes that emerged from the data analysis indicate that love can become an organizational norm. Participants also suggested different ways in which to implement it. The participants saw the value of implementing the norm of love and were eager to ask when it could be implemented. Therefore, the first conclusion of this study answers the first research question. “Can love become an organizational norm?” Findings indicated

that all 18 participants would welcome, support, and be willing to model the norm in the organization's daily interactions. They also believed most employees would share their viewpoint. This conclusion is supported by Barsade and O'Neill (2014), who stated that a culture of companionate love positively impacts employees' satisfaction and teamwork, and that the way to transmit this culture is through feelings and normative mechanisms within the organization. Argandoña's (2011) study also validated the acceptance and importance of love in the workplace. He stated that love is a central value in society and in economic organizations as well.

The second conclusion is that love is part of the human essence and a fundamental component of one's whole being. Therefore, people cannot separate themselves from it. People cannot pretend that love is reserved only for their family and friends outside of work. It is possible to create a norm of love that would nurture the work environment and turn it into a place where they could all feel safe to be their true and whole selves. Hall and Mirvis's (1995) study supported this conclusion. They asserted that when companies care for their employees, the companies will meet the needs of the whole person, and in return, profit from the vast supply of untapped human potential. A related study finding is that because love is intrinsic to the whole self and the whole self belongs to an organization, love also belongs to organizations. Argandoña (2011) validated this conclusion by noting that love is present in all facets of people's lives, including in their workplaces. Siegel (2010) proposed that curiosity, openness, and acceptance, are fundamental ingredients of love, adding that all human beings long to feel felt. The same ingredients of love allow people to feel the "self" in others and themselves. When people feel acknowledged and seen, they can then be vulnerable, humble, authentic, and whole: People can love and be loved in their organizations.

The third conclusion is that it is possible to achieve the norm of love. It can be implemented. Participants shared several components needed to support the implementation efforts and the success of the norm. One component is management support and modeling of the norm, consistent with Sherif's (1936) assertion that norms emerge when members of a group adopt the behaviors of others within the same group. Feldman's (1984) theory of norm development also supports this conclusion by stating that one way for norms to develop is when group leaders or its influential members set the norm. A second component is clear definition of the norm, its purpose, implementation strategy, measuring mechanisms, and its deviations, consistent with Opp's (2001) Theory of Instrumentality Proposition, where planned and unplanned norms emerge if they are instrumental for attaining the goals of a group. A third component is that all employees should agree to enact and support the norm—or, at least, agree to give the norm an opportunity. Barsade and O'Neill's (2014) similarly concluded that certain mechanisms are needed to influence employee and work outcomes. In this case, the means are “feeling mechanisms” through which employees feel the norm, and “normative enactments,” where employees behave supportive of the norm, but only to conform to the group's expectations. Yet, Barsade and O'Neill concluded that believing in the normative behaviors was irrelevant to the success of the norm. They established that what was important for the normative behaviors to succeed was the actual enactment of the behaviors, because this creates an emotional and normative contagion. The fourth component to support implementation is education, such as a mandatory training program or boot camp or a marketing campaign to educate employees about the benefits of the norm. These concepts reflect the discipline of social norms marketing, which endeavors to use norms in interventions to increase socially desirable behaviors (Moreira, Smith &

Foxtrot, 2009). Despite participants' positivity about implementing the norm, they understood that its realization would take time, discipline, effort, and commitment. Nevertheless, they were eager to adopt it.

A fourth conclusion is that the norm of love would be beneficial to the organization and its employees. Participants noted benefits of this norm for employees and the company. Management-level participants asserted that company-level benefits would become apparent a result of employees feeling acknowledged, heard, and seen by their superiors. Similarly, Cunha et al. (2017) noted that loving leaders inspire others to act in loving ways, therefore, creating a community driven by love. Love becomes the driving force and the source of benefits for all. They believe there is nothing to lose but so much to gain by implementing the norm.

The fifth conclusion is that the norm of love can be sustained. Participants agreed that for the norm to succeed and endure, it has to evolve parallel to the organization and the team of employees. It must also stay true to those altruistic behaviors that enrich employees' interactions with kindness, respect, clear and honest communication, authenticity, acceptance, validation, hope, teamwork, excellence, joy, and freedom. These behaviors constitute the definition of love for this study and would generate an environment of trust, kindness, respect, and collaboration, encouraging employees to embrace and adapt to change. The participants emphasized that everyone must take ownership for the norm to be sustained. Similarly, Argandoña (2011) stated that organizational survival and development relies upon certain virtues, including love, which then creates order and unity. Tasselli (2018) also concluded that love in the form of *philia* is portrayed in organizations that welcome others and contributes to assimilate the newcomer to the organization. It can be inferred from both studies that love is

essential for organizational development and that welcoming others and making them feel part of the organization is a way of expressing love for them, teaching them about the norm, and sustaining the norm.

The sixth conclusion is that if the norm's implementation strategy is thorough and includes all stakeholders, the organization will be ready to face the challenges and risks that emerge before, during, and after this process. The fundamental ingredients of love, mentioned in the previous conclusion, provide a frame of reference through which we can act when facing challenges and risks. Therefore, the norm of love will be the guide to successfully navigating the situations that negatively impact the norm and the organization's environment. When we get to know the other, we create a safe environment that encourages a team mentality fostering ownership and psychological safety. This environment creates an open and safe space to have difficult conversations with respect and including all the impacted voices.

Recommendations

The second research question addressed the possibility of implementing a norm of love. Beyond finding out if a norm of love would be accepted, the critical element is finding a way to implement it. When talking to businesspeople about the subject matter in the past, some responded that "soft skills are of no interest to organizations." "What matters to leaders is how to impact profitability or effectiveness." Therefore, due to these previous experiences, the readiness of the study's participants to apply the norm in their organization was unexpected. The study was an enlightening and hopeful process regarding love's perceived positive impact on an organization. The following recommendations address how to approach the definition, implementation, and

sustainability of the norm; and are based on the researched literature, the participants' answers, and the conclusions.

The first recommendation is that for the norm to be adopted and embraced by the organization, its definition must be clear, understood, and accepted. Given that love is not a typical subject in organizations, an appreciative inquiry (AI) approach may be a practical and nonthreatening way to accomplish this because AI can be used by teams and organizations to help people move toward a shared vision by engaging others in strategic innovation. Teams and organizations use AI to understand best practices, develop strategic plans, shift culture, and create forward momentum on large-scale initiatives. Moreover, the nature of AI promotes a safe environment for people to have difficult and real conversations and to explore how the norm of love would look like in their organization. AI fosters collaboration, equality, and inclusion when proposing a change of this magnitude. If the internal stakeholders feel that they have a valuable role in the definition of the norm, it will facilitate acceptance of the norm or the willingness to try out the norm. The AI process will encourage collaboration between management and their employees, where everyone can feel “felt” and “seen.” It is crucial for management to embrace the norm and live by it, so employees feel encouraged and safe to practice the norm too. Finally, once the norm of love is defined, the AI approach should also be used to establish the implementation process, the measuring mechanisms, the training program, and the sustainability of the norm. This should include how the norm will impact the hiring and onboarding process.

The second recommendation is that the implementation of the norm needs to occur within an adaptable and agile process, where trial and error is the norm. The process must encourage innovation, thinking outside the box, and commitment not to

surrender when it gets tough. First, an implementation strategy must be set in place, and all employees should participate in its development to create ownership and responsibility for the norm. Second, the organization can create a “norm committee” with representatives from all areas of the company, similar to the Ambassadors’ Program recommended by participants. In turn, complying with the norm will require collaboration across departments: The norm will belong to all. Another component of the implementation should be a training program that starts with making honest conversations the only way people have conversations in the company. The company also can develop a program to introduce the practice of the norm, and then have refresher sessions twice a year that are mandatory for all employees. The training program should also develop courses to teach all employees effective ways to communicate, to collaborate, to support the team, to deal with difficult situations, and to embrace changes in the organization.

The third recommendation is that sustainability of the norm is everyone’s responsibility. Participants emphasized that, above all, management must lead by example to promote the norm’s success. Is love an espoused value in the organization? Is it listed as one of the company’s values? Is it felt in daily interactions among stakeholders? Does love impact all members of the organization? Is it perceived as real or fake? An organization needs to decide if it will stand behind its values. If yes, then they need to act according to their values and choose what behavioral manifestations will represent those values. The training program mentioned earlier in this section also can help sustain the norm. Training sessions will become constant way to remind the accepted behaviors in the organization. At the same time, new employees must be oriented to the norm of love, beginning with the hiring process, which must be able to

identify those candidates that will fit into the organization's culture or be open to following and supporting the norm. Onboarding of new employees must also support the process of sustaining the norm to protect it from sabotage or deviations. Finally, attention must be given to how the norm may be measured. Measurements can be established to assess the norm's impact on profitability, recognition by the industry, or market share. Measurements provide a tangible way to see the impact of the norm in the organization and its members.

Finally, for the norm of love to exist and grow, the organization and its members should always remember that love transforms any interaction. Love is the essence of humanity; therefore, it is always within each one of us. Love belongs in every environment because it belongs to our whole-selves and everyplace we go. Moreover, the norm of love will be unique to the organization. Like every culture, it will have its peculiarities and unique flavor, based on the behaviors chosen by the organization's members.

Future Research

This study contributed to an emerging concept in the management field, initiated by scholars like Ferris (1988), Harrison (2008), Caldwell and Dixon (2010), and Barsade and O'Neill (2014). The following studies are recommended to continue the investigation of love as an organizational norm:

1. Implement the norm in the study organization. The research should describe the trial and error process of implementation and provide information about the impact in the organization and its employees.
2. Examine the impact of the norm of love in all internal and external stakeholders.

3. Conduct a comparative study based to examine participant attitudes across cultures. The present study was performed in Puerto Rico, where the culture is open to showing affection, even in the workplace, meaning the local culture was conducive to the norm of love. This may not be the case in other cultures.
4. Expand the present study to develop a model for defining, implementing, and sustaining the norm of love. Establishing a model for the norm would have been the ideal outcome of this study, had time allowed it. A future study with a timeframe of several years could take the next steps in developing a model for the norm of love.

Contributions to the Organization Development Field

The present study contributes to the organization development field by acknowledging that love can be the driving force behind any intervention. Schein (1999) said it best when he noted that everything is an intervention. Therefore, if love is the driver, then love becomes the intervention. Another contribution is that employees are open to accept and live by the norm of love. Their openness towards the norm provides a way for organization development practitioners to approach interventions and model what is possible for the organization.

This study serves as evidence that can be used to advocate for the importance and value of work-related loving interactions and environments. The evidence is similar to previous research (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014).

Another contribution to the field is that we should not be fearful of calling love by its name. Several interviewees suggested that love should be a value upheld by the organization. In order to positively contribute to an inclusive, kind, and fair work environment, love needs to become an ingredient in the recipe for success. Organization

development practitioners have a responsibility to be curious and creative and incorporate out-of-the-box thinking when it serves their clients.

Finally, organization development practitioners need to choose how to serve clients and their field. Sometimes how they serve is not immediately clear when working with new or challenging clients. A defined norm of love, if implemented into one's practice, would provide the shared language between their clients and them. Love is universal; therefore, it creates a common ground to serve.

Limitations

A limitation of the study is the researcher's relationship with the company where the research was performed. As the company's previous human resources director and as 50% owner of the organization (a role shared with the Founder/CEO), the researcher disclosed to the participants her relationship with the company, even though she had not had an active role since 2004. Participation was voluntary, and the subjects showed excitement about the study. The researcher also reassured them that their cooperation would not have an impact on their employment or role in the organization. Nevertheless, while every effort was made to ensure that participants felt comfortable participating, it remains possible that some may have answered the questions with bias. Another limitation is the small sample size, as the research was conducted with only 18 directors, managers, and supervisors from the organization.

Furthermore, although the researcher's values and faith influenced this study, and references to God and religion were discussed, it was not the focus or purpose of the study. Nevertheless, the mention of God, religion, and personal values was evident in participants' responses on how they relate to love.

Reflection

“If one wishes to know love, one must live love, in action. Thoughts, readings and discourse on love are of value only as they present questions to be acted upon.”

— Leo F. Buscaglia, Ph.D. (*Love*, 1996)

Curiosity was the constant companion of the study, from the formulation of the research questions, to the study’s presentation given to potential subjects, to performing the interviews, and finally, to analyzing data. Love is not a traditional subject matter for organizational research; yet, it is considered a universal force and essence of humanity. Love plays a central role in our lives but does not seem to show up as an essential component to the success of a business or organization. This paradox fueled my curiosity for this study. Why something we claim to be so important, can be ignored in certain aspects of our lives, like the workplace? Moreover, if it shows up somehow, why is it not addressed as love—instead, being called kindness, compassion, or caring? My goal was to explore the concept while calling it by its name, *love*. I chose to address the elephant in the room, provoke acknowledgment of the concept, create curiosity about why it is treated as a taboo, and introduce an alternate perspective of how life in the workplace could “feel.” Love is a value and a verb, and I decided to be vulnerable and act upon my beliefs.

I have to admit that the journey of doing this research was not what I thought it would be. I chose to explore a universal concept that represents my essence—a concept that is difficult and complex to prove because of its simplicity and subjectivity. My experience has been that usually the most simple and basic notions go unnoticed because of the complexity in understanding and implementing them. Love is an excellent example

of this because it has been taken for granted in the business world. My process was not purely academic; instead, I used tools to explore and reveal a deep personal belief. The study was really about finding ways that I could contribute to an organization by showing my core and validating love's importance in every aspect of our lives. It was a way for me to explore how to introduce love in my organization development practice.

I approached the process cautiously and with apprehension about how others would react. This motivated me to change my mindset to one of curiosity and emboldened me to talk about my study. When I presented the study to the potential subjects, they all seemed puzzled. At the same time, the group was engaged, asking questions and participating in the presentation. Many of them acknowledged that they had never thought of integrating love into the work environment. The interaction became a conversation, and every person who chose to contribute was included and acknowledged. The group inspired me to continue with my work and conversations about love. Others reacted with disregard and resistance. They demonstrated their feelings by being disengaged during the presentation, showing closed body language, and leaving immediately after the meeting concluded. Curiosity was my companion once more. I wondered if they thought that by ignoring the presentation, they were not entertaining the absurd idea of love in the workplace? Little did they know that because of their reaction, they had already participated in the study. These six potential subjects had rejected the possibility of the norm of love. Consequently, I realized that I had achieved one of my goals—to provoke a reaction and spark acknowledgment that would lead to having conversations about love. Having these mixed reactions made me feel alive because I was standing up for love, the core value in my life, the root of all my beliefs. I became an interruption to the “status quo” of organizational life.

The journey to complete this study reinforced the power of love within me—as both a value and a norm. Love is my choice: It is the way I decide to face life. It has validated the need to be an advocate for love in all human interactions, to be an agent of change courageous to talk about love, the elephant in the room, and to be an organization development practitioner who is full of hope to serve my clients with love.

As an organization development practitioner, I have learned that “Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom” (Frankl, 2020, para. 1). Thus, I choose to serve with love. Love is what fills up my space. In closing, and in the words of David Wilkerson, “Love is not only something you feel; it is something you do.” Consider this an invitation to walk alongside everyone on this journey of love.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Is it possible for love to be part of an organization?
2. How do you think it can manifest in an organization? What behaviors would be evident?
3. Would a norm of love be accepted?
4. How would you react to it?
5. How do you think others might react to it?
6. How do you think coworkers and employees will feel if love becomes a norm in the organization?
7. How could the norm be incorporated in daily interactions?
8. What would be the benefits of such norm?
9. What would be the risks of having love as a norm?
10. What would be the challenges?
11. What do you think needs to happen for everybody to understand what it means to have love become a norm?
12. How would you manage resistance to the norm?
13. Is this norm sustainable?
14. If yes, who is responsible for its sustainability?
15. How would you help new members to the group follow such norm?
16. How would you deal with disagreement, disappointment and anger in a loving environment?
17. Should you operate from love, even when the environment is not loving?
18. What are the values of this organization?

Appendix B: Presentation to Potential Subjects



CAN LOVE BECOME AN ORGANIZATIONAL NORM?

How can we achieve it?



THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM



Why?

INTRODUCTION



- WNet and me**
- Elephant in the room
 - WNet's first HR Director
 - Helped establish WNet's foundation



Organization Development

"A system-wide application and transfer of behavioral science knowledge to the planned development, improvement, and reinforcement of the strategies, structures, and process that lead to organization effectiveness"
(Cummings and Worley, 2015)



MSOD & Thesis

- Human differences, similarities and interactions are on of my passions
- Why we behave the way we do? Is there a more effective way?
- MSOD graduation requirement



CAN LOVE BECOME AN ORGANIZATIONAL NORM?

How can we achieve it?

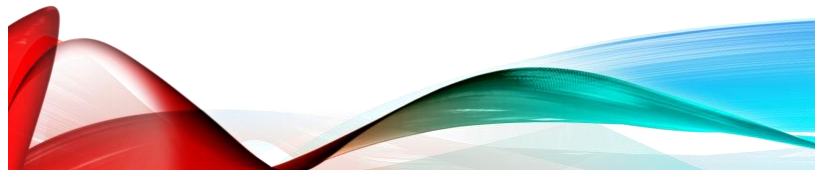


PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to investigate to what extent if any, developing a norm of love might be accepted, incorporated, sustained, and beneficial to an organization.



WHY?





MY WHY...




LOVE IN SOCIETY AND ORGANIZATIONS

- **Universality**
 - Throughout history cultures and religions have placed love at the core of their beliefs
 - Ancient Greeks described love as **Philia** (fraternal/friendship love), and **Agape** (divine love for everyone).
 - Socrates is known to have said: "One word frees us from all the weight and pain in life, that word is love."
 - **Ahava** is the word for love in Hebrew. For Jews, Ahava is an emotion that involves action; it is a way of life closely related to acts of generosity and kindness.
 - Buddha established four **behaviors** to describe true love. Two of them are **Maitri** or kindness, and **Karuna** or compassion.
 - Christianity, though Jesus tells us that we shall love God above everything else and our neighbors as we love ourselves.



LOVE IN SOCIETY AND ORGANIZATIONS (CONT.)

- **Organizations**
 - Lead with Love
 - "Empowering individuals to choose love in every aspect of their life. Leading with love in every aspect of our lives is a choice, and the calling of our time to lead with love and empower others to do the same."
 - A Human Workplace
 - "Building a human-centered workplace based on love not fear"
- **Perspectives**
 - Even though love is a central aspect of our society:
 - It has not received the attention it deserves in the study of organizations.
 - There is a resistance to discuss love and the impact it has within organizations
 - **Myth**
 - Love = personal and subjective (passion and desire)
 - Organizational life = public and generalizable; (rationality and authority)
 - **Management styles**
 - Traditional - Love = soft skill not needed for success
 - Modern - Love = humanity, authenticity, inspiration, active listening, being of service, kindness = leadership qualities for success



LOVE IN SOCIETY AND ORGANIZATIONS (CONT.)

- **Perspectives (Cont.)**
 - Recent research tells us that any complete science of behavior must incorporate this all-important facet of the human experience, called love
 - Companionate Love – research by Sigal Barsade
 - Spain - "if a firm is a human community that is capable of achieving both internal and external outcomes, and also of surviving and developing, then it is necessary that the virtues – including love, which is the virtue that promotes the other virtues and puts order and unity among them – be lived in the firm (organization)" (Argandoña, 2011).
 - Italy - "love in the form of "Philia" is portrayed in those organizations that are open to others, that welcome others. Philia contributes to assimilate the newcomer, or the stranger in the organization and to make her or him a citizen of the organization" (Taselli, 2018).
 - Chile – Curiosity - When members of different groups get to know each other, they to show kind and positive behaviors toward each other.
-



WHAT IS LOVE?

- Altruistic behaviors that enrich our interactions with kindness, respect, clear and honest communication, authenticity, acceptance, validation, hope, teamwork, excellence, joy and freedom
 - "Feeling felt"- Dan Siegel
-



VALUES AND NORMS

- **Values**
 - Principles or standards of behavior; one's judgment of what is important in life
 - The standards of what a group holds as desirable and good, what they strive to create or become.
- **Norms**
 - Customs, traditions, standards, rules, values, fashions, and all other criteria of conduct which are standardized as a consequence of the contact of individuals
 - Behavioral manifestations - explicit and implicit – of the organizational culture created by the group's values and beliefs.

**Since norms are the embodiment of values, and love is a value,
it is probable that love could become a norm as well.**



WHOLE SELF

- **Link between love, norms, and organizations**
 - Enacts the appropriate behaviors (norms) expected to be a part of the organization
 - Can mindfully choose to have love become the norm that drives any exchange, interaction, and intervention in an organization
- **Significant risk for the individual**
 - Requires being vulnerable, humble, and authentic
 - it is easier to "create" a work persona in order to be seen as a competent and successful professional
- **Significant risk for the organization**
 - Work personas creates:
 - lack of engagement, a lack of productivity
 - lack of psychological safety that makes it difficult for the group to thrive and perform at its best



WHOLE SELF

- **Significant gains**
 - When love is the norm
 - Psychological safety will be a characteristic of that environment
 - Employees will be able to have difficult conversations, talk about their feelings and concerns with their co-workers
 - Employees will feel that they are heard and seen as a whole person
 - Employees will connect and acknowledge each other not only as workers but as humans as well.
 - Organizations will meet the needs of the whole person; and engage that person. Therefore it will profit from a vast supply of untapped human potential
 - Human nature
 - Intellect and our emotions coexist; one cannot be without the other.
 - Aristotle "Educating the mind without educating the heart, is no education at all."
 - The relationship between love and intellect is a symbiotic one, for one to make sense and be impactful the other must be considered as its equal.

"Love – love for others – is present one way or another in all facets of people's lives, including in economic organizations" (Argandoña, 2011)



YOUR INVOLVEMENT

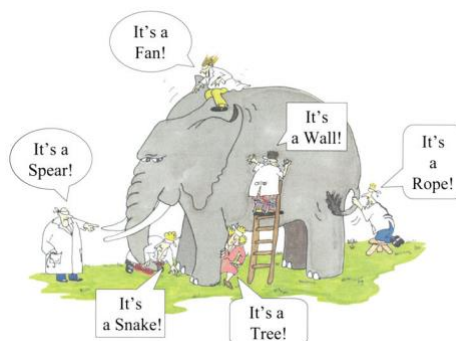
- Participation in voluntary one-on-one interview that will last approximately one hour
- The questions are already formulated for the study and approved by the Pepperdine University Institutional Review Board (IRB)
- The meeting will take place at a neutral location and at the time of your choosing, preferably outside the company's facilities
- The study does not require any protected personally identifiable information (PII's), therefore none will be recorded
- Your responses to the questions will be kept anonymous and confidential
- All recordings, transcripts, and notes will always be protected by remaining in the possession of the researcher

YOUR INVOLVEMENT

- All interview recordings and transcripts, researcher's notes, data spreadsheets, and analyses, will be secured in the investigator's Pepperdine's G Suite (password protected as well)
- All equipment is protected with passwords and FileVault disk encryption
- You can withdraw at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason
- Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator, or with WorldNet Telecommunications, Inc
- You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled



BLIND MEN AND THE ELEPHANT





INVITATION


- Be part of an emerging movement in leadership development
 - Contribute to the growing literature regarding the impact love has in organizations
 - Be part of the conversation and bring your whole self to the workplace
 - Intentionally choose love, always
 - Please, give me the benefit of the doubt, and trust that my intentions regarding the research are honest
 - They come from a deep passion to transform our world in the place that we all deserve
 - Trust that I will protect your anonymity
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INFORMATION

Vangie's contact information:

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“Power without love is reckless and abusive, or worse, and love without power is sentimental and anemic, or worse. We can see both of these degenerative forms in ourselves. Choosing either power or love is always a mistake. How then can we exercise power and love together?”

Martin Luther King



