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BETWEEN WORKPLACE FRIENDSHIPS AND
ORGANISATIONAL OUTCOMES**

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GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORKPLACE FRIENDSHIPS AND ORGANISATIONAL OUTCOMES

ABSTRACT

The current study investigated gender differences in (a) perceived benefits of workplace friendships and (b) the relationship between friendship factors and organisational outcomes. Four hundred and forty-five respondents completed a questionnaire which asked them to describe the benefits they received from workplace friends, and which measured workplace friendship prevalence and opportunities, workgroup cohesion, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and intention to leave. Friendships at work were found to be significantly more strongly correlated with job satisfaction for men. In addition, women were significantly more likely than men to describe the benefits of workplace friendship in terms of social and emotional support, while men were more likely to focus on the benefits friends provided them in their career or in functional aspects of “getting the job done”. Findings are discussed in the context of other organisational and gender research.

INTRODUCTION

The study of friendships in the workplace is still a relatively new one, close friendships frequently evolve from existing formal relationships in work places, and are sustained within organisational settings. Yet, despite the frequency of these relationships, we know relatively little about how dual friendship/work relationships function.

The current study links existing, predominantly American, research with data from a more international context. It is reasonable to assume that people do not initiate and maintain relationships at work simply as a means to assist them in their organisational objectives or work activities. Indeed most people seek to make friends and social connections for the intrinsic rewards that these relations provide (Baron & Pfeffer, 1994; Marks, 1994). An aim of the current research is to explore both the functions and outcomes of workplace relationships and to look at possible gender differences in the ways that people utilise personal relationships at work. Respondents submitted an anonymous, Internet based questionnaire which measured friendship prevalence and opportunities, along with organisational outcome measures including job satisfaction, organisational commitment, workgroup cohesion and intention to leave. Respondents were also given the opportunity to outline in their own words how friendships had benefited them in the workplace.

Further, because there have been consistent findings (described in more detail below) that men and women differ in the way that they function in relationships, it is of interest to discover how these differences might be manifest within the work context. The idea that women are more socially supportive in their relationships is not a new one and the current study seeks to explain the gender differences examined in the context of the different ways, or the extent to which, men and women seek and provide social and emotional support from their colleagues, particularly in times of stress or anxiety. It is worth noting that although gender is not necessarily synonymous with sex, for the purposes of the current study gender was operationalised by whether the respondent identified themselves as male or female in the data collection process.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN FRIENDSHIPS

While friendship relationships for men and women are similar in many respects (Wright, 1988) and there are large variations *within* the genders in terms of their behaviour in same-sex friendships (Walker, 1994), there have been consistent findings in both the social psychology and organisational psychology literature of gender differences in friendships. Women's friendships have been described as communal, and tend to involve more self-disclosure, supportiveness and complexity than do friendships between men (Markiewicz, Devine, & Kausilas, 2000; Winstead, 1986; Wright, 1988, 1991). Men's friendships may be described as instrumental; they tend to be organised around shared interests and activities and be action-oriented rather than person-oriented (Markiewicz *et al.*, 2000; Messner, 1992; Winstead, 1986; Wright, 1988, 1991).

Men's relationships with other men are often competitive (Bird, 2003; Messner, 1992) and are somewhat less likely to involve the sharing of personal feelings (Odden & Sias, 1997; Wood & Inman, 1993). On the other hand, both men and women have been found to derive emotional support and therapeutic value from their relationships with women (Sapadin, 1988; Veniegas & Peplau, 1997), possibly as a result of women's greater comfort with intimacy and their emphasis on successful relationships as part of their self-concept (Markiewicz *et al.*, 2000). Thus, findings generally indicate that friendships with women are rated (by both women and men) as more enjoyable, nurturing and of an overall higher quality (Sapadin, 1988).

With respect to the function of friendships, literature with a focus on interpersonal relationships indicates that while men achieve and define closeness through the sharing of *activities*, women define and achieve closeness through the sharing of *feelings and emotions* (Odden & Sias, 1997; Wood & Inman, 1993). Similarly, Ashton and Fuerhrer (1993) found that males are generally less likely than females to seek emotional support when stressed or anxious. Flaherty and Richman (1989) also state that the provision of social and emotional support was more likely to be a function of women's relationships, with women both receiving and providing more emotional social support than men in time of distress.

Established findings of gender differences in the level of emotional support sought and provided in times of stress or anxiety can be placed within a fresh conceptual framework; that of *tend and befriend* (Taylor *et al.*, 2000; Turton & Campbell, 2005). The dominant paradigm for much of the current stress research is the *fight or flight* model proposed by Cannon (1932). The fight or flight response is well supported by research (most of it using males as subjects) and basically holds that the physiological response to imminent threat such as increased cardiovascular activity (Bartlett, 1998), heightened cognition (McEwen & Sapolsky, 1995), and an increased pain threshold (Amit & Galina, 1986) means that an individual perceiving themselves to be under threat is in an ideal state to either fight or to flee. The universality of this stress response is now under scrutiny with an alternate, more precise and gender specific, explanation of stress response behaviour having been put forward by Taylor *et al.* (2000) and, more recently, supported by Turton and Campbell (2005). Taylor *et al.* term their alternate stress response *tend and befriend*.

Taylor *et al.* (2000) propose that physiological, neuroendocrine mechanisms would have evolved in females to facilitate behaviours that increase the survival of their offspring, and that these mechanisms not only facilitate tending and befriending but also “inhibit behavioural tendencies to fight or flee” (Taylor *et al.*, 2000, p. 413). Thus they propose that to tend and befriend is more characteristic of the responses to stress exhibited by females, and that the female response to stress may not be exclusively fight or flight.

Within the context of the current study, the research by Taylor *et al.* (2000) and Turton and Campbell (2005) suggests that women, much more than men, may seek friendships and provide care to others in work environments that are stressful. This conceptualisation of women as being kind, motherly and supportive is not new; women in many professions face the double bind of being, on the one hand, professional, efficient, expert and objective, and on the other to display the womanly qualities of kindness, care and supportiveness (Ramsay & Letherby, 2006). In addition, gender constructionist research indicates that those who resist the gender stereotypes associated with their own sex risk being ostracized (Bird, 2003; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Thus both internal, physiological factors and external social

factors may be at play in the way that women respond to stressful work environments.

FRIENDSHIPS AT WORK RELATED TO ORGANISATIONAL OUTCOME VARIABLES

Previous research linking friendships at work to the organisational variables measured in the current study is outlined below.

Job Satisfaction

Findings generally support the notion that increased social opportunities and friendships at work are related to improved job satisfaction (Morrison, 2004; Nielsen, Jex, & Adams, 2000; Riordan & Griffeth, 1995; Robinson, Roth, & Brown, 1993; Schneider, 1987) and relationships with co-workers have long been acknowledged as an important aspect of an individual's experience of work. In the middle of the last century Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) and Herzberg (1966) developed the well-known two-factor theory of job satisfaction, which was one of the first to propose a link between job satisfaction and relationships at work. Herzberg postulated that interpersonal relations and working conditions were 'hygiene' factors which would, if of high-quality, reduce job dissatisfaction. It is worth noting that, according to Herzberg, relationships with co-workers would not necessarily improve job satisfaction (i.e., they were not 'motivators'). In spite of historical criticisms of Herzberg's two-factor theory (e.g., Hackman & Lawler, 1971; Hulin & Smith, 1967; King, 1970), it is often used to provide a framework within which to interpret job satisfaction research (e.g., Adigun & Stephenson, 1992; Furnham, Forde, & Ferrari, 1999; Knoop, 1994; Yamashita, 1995).

Although it is reasonable to assume (as Herzberg did) that there will be a positive relationship between satisfaction and friendships at work, in an organisational context, it is often in times of adversity (when morale and satisfaction may be low) that strong friendships will form (Aronson & Cope, 1968; Carr, 2003). Sias and Jablin (1995) found that when a supervisor or group leader was perceived to treat group members unfairly, group members became more cohesive; they interacted more and their communication relationships became more intimate,

suggesting that perceptions of low quality supervision and feelings of dissatisfaction may lead co-workers to maintain more close friendships as a form of alliance against the organisation. Sias and Jablin's finding was supported by Odden and Sias (1997), who found that perceptions of inconsiderate supervision were related an increase in special peer relationships.

The studies by Sias and Jablin (1995) and Odden and Sias (1997) suggest that special peers may act as confidantes with whom to discuss bad experiences at work and unpleasant experiences with supervisors. Further, given that women are more likely than men to both seek and provide this type of social support (Ashton & Fuerhrer, 1993; Flaherty & Richman, 1989), it is possible that women's workplace friendships will be more affected by negative or stressful workplaces than men's. In other words, although friendships at work are likely to generally improve people's experience of work, the relationship between satisfaction and friendship may be less straightforward for women because, though having friendships at work is likely to be satisfying for all individuals, women may *also* be more likely to form strong friendships when times are bad.

This idea links with the *tend and befriend* stress response described above. If women are more likely to engage in "befriending" behaviours when stressed (behaviours described by Taylor et al. (2000) as those which would create networks of associations, providing social resources and protection), then it makes sense to expect that women would be more likely than men would be to actively initiate and maintain friendship relationships when they are dissatisfied and/or stressed in the workplace.

Organisational Commitment

In addition to job satisfaction, organisational commitment is a measure outcome variable in the current study. Organisational commitment is distinguished from job satisfaction in that organisational commitment is a response to the whole organisation, while satisfaction is an affective response to specific aspects of the job (Williams & Hazer, 1986). Organisational commitment and job satisfaction are generally found to be positively correlated with one another (Cohen, 1993, 1996;

Fisher, 2002; Hackett & Lapierre, 2001; Kaldenberg, Becker, & Zvonkovic, 1995; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002; Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974; Rentsch & Steel, 1992; Tett & Meyer, 1993). However, although the positive correlations between organisational commitment and job satisfaction are strong, Meyer and Allen (2002) state that the correlations "...are not of sufficient magnitude to suggest construct redundancy" (p.38). In other words, job satisfaction and organisational commitment are conceptually distinct.

Research in Western contexts has indicated that commitment to the company develops from job satisfaction and mediates the effects of satisfaction on turnover and intention to leave (e.g., Porter *et al.*, 1974; Riordan & Griffeth, 1995; Williams & Hazer, 1986). This satisfaction-to-commitment model reflects Porter *et al.*'s (1974) claim that commitment takes longer to develop and is more stable than satisfaction.

With respect to the relationship between friendship and commitment, in his early work in this area, Becker (1960) suggests that workplace associates helped produce commitment to an individual's job, mentioning the "...loss of connections in his present firm..." (p. 38) if the employee was to move. Related to this Cherniss (1991) found a link between occupational commitment and having a supportive organisational climate. Cherniss found that those with high commitment had worked in especially supportive settings during the much of the first decade of their careers, while those with low commitment had worked in negative climates during the same period (occupational commitment is thought to be a correlate of organisational commitment) (Meyer *et al.*, 2002).

A Gallup study, which found that having a best friend at work is related to how engaged and committed an individual is to his or her job, further supports the notion that friendships and socially supportive environments at work are related to commitment (Ellingwood, 2001). In the Gallup study, a random sample of American workers over the age of 18 were given the Q12 workplace evaluations; "*Do I have a best friend at work?*" is one of the 12 questions in this survey. It was found that 51% of respondents who agreed with this statement were engaged in their jobs, compared to only 10% who disagreed. Ellingwood (2001) states that in the thousands of employee interviews and hundreds of focus groups conducted by Gallup, "friendship

trumped such seemingly obvious employee motivators as pay and benefits.” In addition, having a best friend at work was strongly related to intention to leave. Seventy-five percent of respondents who had a best friend at work planned to be with the company for at least another year, as opposed to only 51% who did not have a best friend at work.

Other research investigating the link between commitment, and informal communication with co-workers was carried out by Anderson and Martin (1995). Results of this study suggested that commitment is increased when employees “chat” at work. This provides evidence that some non-task oriented communication (for example, communicating for affection or inclusion) serves a valuable function for individuals in organisations. People spending 40 hours a week in a particular environment need to know that others around them care about them and like them. Work friends may provide understanding that eases frustration and job-related anxiety and stress (Anderson & Martin, 1995). With respect to the current study, the fact that women have been found to be more communicative in their relationships than men (i.e. they “chat” more) suggests that the relationship between friendships at work and organisational commitment may be somewhat different for men and women.

Intention to leave the organisation

Over the last two decades the development of predictive models of voluntary turnover has been an aim of many researchers in this area with job satisfaction and commitment invariably reported to be negatively related to turnover and intention to leave (e.g., Cohen, 1993; Cohen & Hudecek, 1993; Hackett & Lapierre, 2001; Irvine & Evans, 1995; Kaldenberg *et al.*, 1995; Lu, Lin, Wu, Hsieh, & Chang, 2002; Meyer *et al.*, 2002; Riordan & Griffeth, 1995; Steers, 1977; Tett & Meyer, 1993). Because prior research has suggested that both job satisfaction and organisational commitment are strongly related intention to turnover it makes sense to include this variable in the study as, if there are gender differences in job satisfaction and organisational commitment, there may be in leaving intention also.

Cohesion

Cohesion is one of the measured variables in the current study; the cohesiveness of their work group or team is another aspect of an employee's experience of their workplace. Buunk et al. (1993) identify perceived reciprocity (mutual flow of support and help) as an important characteristic of relationships with colleagues. Results from Buunk et al.'s study indicate that when co-workers do *not* reciprocate favours, individuals experience negative emotions such as irritation, depression, and confusion. Further, if an individual perceives their working climate to be low in cohesion, they may believe that their peers will not reciprocate the emotional and instrumental support previously discussed as being a feature primarily of women's friendships, and which will likely hinder the formation of friendships. Alternatively, if someone perceives that their efforts will be reciprocated (e.g., in a climate perceived as high in cohesion) they may be more likely to develop friendships at work. Moreover, the cohesion dimension reflects a general liking of one's co-workers, as well as perceptions that an employee shares a great deal of "common ground" with his/her co-workers (Odden & Sias, 1997). Existing literature regarding friendship development identifies liking and perceived similarity as factors that enhance the formation of friendships. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to expect a positive relationship between perceived cohesion and friendships at work. Another aspect of cohesion is "workload sharing" which taps into how effectively and equitably team members share work. Because of consistent findings that friendships between men tend to be organised around shared activities and be to be action-oriented (as opposed to person-oriented, as they are for women) it is possible that this aspect of cohesion too, may be somewhat differently related for men and women to the presence of friendships at work.

In sum, it is possible that the presence or absence of friendships will impact men and women quite differently. Because of consistent findings that women tend to place more importance and value on their friends, and to devote more time and energy to maintaining their friendships (Andrew & Montague, 1998; Markiewicz *et al.*, 2000; Winstead, 1986; Wright, 1988, 1991), it is not unreasonable to propose that friendships at work will have more salience for women than men and, further, that there will be gender differences in both the *function* friendship relationships have and in the *organisational outcomes* of these relationships.

Thus, the research questions posed in the current study are:

RQ1: Are friendship variables differently correlated with other organisational variables for men and women?

There are 5 hypotheses related to this research question they are as follows:

H1: The prevalence and opportunities of friendships at work will be differently correlated with job satisfaction for men and women

H2: The prevalence and opportunities of friendships at work will be differently correlated with organisational commitment for men and women

H3: The prevalence and opportunities of friendships at work will be differently correlated with intention to leave for men and women

H4: The prevalence and opportunities of friendships at work will be differently correlated with the workload sharing aspect of cohesion for men and women

H5: The prevalence and opportunities of friendships at work will be differently correlated with the social support aspect of cohesion for men and women

RQ2: Are there gender differences in the benefits men and women describe receiving from their friendships at work?

There are two hypotheses related to this research question:

H6: Women are more likely than men to focus on the social and emotional benefits their workplace friends can provide.

H7: Men are more likely than women to focus on the task or job related benefits that their workplace friends can provide.

METHOD

Participants

Using an internet based questionnaire, data were collected from 445 individuals; there was a wide range of ages and industries and 31.1% were male. Most respondents were from New Zealand (66.8%) with 14.8% being from the United States. Respondents ranged in age from 19 years to 64 years, with a mean age of 35, refer to Table 1. As the only inclusion criteria was that the respondents be currently employed, there was a great deal of variety in the industries/sectors respondents reported working in (though it is worth noting that most are from traditionally “middle class” profession with fewer from the blue collar professions or trades). The largest reported sector was tertiary education (universities and polytechnics, $n = 92$) followed by health care (including psychology, psychiatry and physiotherapy $n = 53$). Respondents were from almost every type of profession, from medical doctors, to secretaries, to academics, to police.

Variable	Frequency (n)	Valid percent
Sex (5 missing)		
Males	137	31.1
Females	303	68.9
Age (9 missing)		
>20 years	10	2.3
20-29 years	168	38.2
30-39 years	121	27.5
40-49 years	75	17.0
50-59 years	57	13.0
Over 60 years	5	1.1
Country of origin (5 missing)		
New Zealand	294	66.8
U.S.A.	65	14.8
United Kingdom	36	8.2
Australia	22	5.0
Canada	5	1.1
Other	18	4.1

Table 1: Demographic Data for respondents in the current study

Note: Values are presented in percentages excluding respondents who declined to answer

Materials

The scales used to measure the variables in the current study and address Research Question 1 included: the Workplace Friendship Scale (WFS) (Nielsen *et al.*, 2000), the Workgroup Cohesion Scale (Campion, Medsker, & Higgs, 1993), the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979; 1979), the Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS) (Warr *et al.*, 1979) and a measure of intention to turnover (Mobley, 1977; Mowday *et al.*, 1979; Warr *et al.*, 1979). Each is described below.

1. Workplace Friendship Scale. Used to test Hypotheses 1-5, this scale measures two aspects of workplace friendship: (a) the opportunity for friendship (e.g., *I have the opportunity to get to know my co-workers*), and (b) the presence of friendship (e.g., *I have formed strong friendships at work*). There are twelve items, rated on a 5-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

4. Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS). Used to test Hypothesis 1, the JSS used was one part of a larger battery of eight scales devised by Warr, Cook and Wall (1979). Only the 15-item scale relating to job satisfaction was used for this study. Respondents indicate how satisfied or dissatisfied they feel with each of 15 aspects of their job (e.g., *The recognition you get for good work*). Items are rated on a 7-point scale from very dissatisfied to very satisfied. The JSS has been found to be reliable, Warr, Cook and Wall (1979) reported that the test re-test correlation co-efficient of the JSS was .63. Warr *et al.* found, using cluster analysis, that items clustered together into intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction subscales.

3. Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ). Used to test Hypothesis 2, this is a commonly used measure of employees' affective attachment to an organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The OCQ is a 15-item scale, designed to assess acceptance of organisational values, desire to remain with the organisation and willingness to exert effort (e.g., *I am proud to tell others I am part of this organisation*). Items are rated on a 7-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) have provided strong evidence for the test-re-test reliability, convergent validity, internal consistency, and predictive validity of the OCQ, finding the overall measure of organisational commitment to be relatively stable over time.

5. Measure of intention to turnover. Used to test Hypothesis 3, intention to turnover was measured with three items theorised to be important precursors to turnover; thinking of quitting, intention to search for alternative employment, and intention to quit (Chang, 1999; Mobley, 1977; Mobley, Horner, & Hollingsworth, 1978) (e.g., *I will probably quit my job in the next year*). Answers to each item were recorded on a seven-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

2. Workgroup cohesion scale. Used to test Hypotheses 4 and 5, cohesion was measured using a nine-item workgroup cohesion scale rated on a 5-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree (e.g., *Members of my team are very willing to share information with other team members about our work*). Items measuring cohesion were selected from a 54 item Work Group Characteristics Measure developed by Campion et al. (1993). Only those items from the Work Group Characteristics Measure relating to cohesion were used in the current study. The items used are termed process characteristics by Campion et al. and are those relating to (1) Social Support, (2) Workload Sharing and (3) Communication/Co-operation within the work group.

6. Open ended question. To address Research Question 2 (hypotheses 6 and 7) respondents had the opportunity to answer the question: *“Please briefly outline ways in which a friendship with one or more people with whom you work(ed) have benefited you in the workplace.”*

PROCEDURE

Data were gathered using a self-administered, Internet based questionnaire and were collected using two recruitment avenues: (1) convenience sampling and ‘snowballing’ (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981) among individuals known to the researchers (68 questionnaires distributed), and (2) via two email networks, EmoNet (a list of academics and practitioners in the field of emotions in organisations) and IOnet (a list of Industrial Organisational psychologists in New Zealand). The emails contained a link to the questionnaire that could be downloaded and anonymously returned to the researchers. The initial respondents were selected for their interest in

this research and for their opportunities to forward information about the research to other professionals and employees. As with most online data collection there is no way of knowing the total number of people to whom the survey links was sent, so it is not possible to calculate a response rate. Once at least 400 people had submitted their responses to a database through the Internet data-collection site, the data were downloaded and used.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Measurement Models of the scales

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was carried out in order to confirm the factor structure of the measurement models used (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). The computer programme AMOS (Arbuckle, 1999) was used to create measurement models of the scales. Both the cohesion scale and the satisfaction scale were found to have two distinct factors. The two satisfaction factors relate closely to the 'extrinsic satisfaction' and 'intrinsic satisfaction' clusters of items, identified by Warr et al. (1979). The two cohesion factors were, (1) social support and cooperation and (2) workload sharing. The cohesion factors relate closely to those identified by Campion (1993), although in the original study Campion found social support and cooperation to be two distinct factors. Assessment of model fit was based on multiple criteria, reflecting statistical, theoretical and practical considerations (Byrne, 2001). The indices used in the current study were (a) the χ^2 likelihood ratio statistic, (b) the Comparative Fit Index (CFI: Bentler, 1990), (c) the Parsimonious Comparative Fit Index (PCFI: Mulaik *et al.*, 1989), and (d) the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA: Browne & Cudeck, 1993).

The χ^2 value divided by the degrees of freedom should be below 5 to indicate good fit (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). The CFI is a revised version of the Bentler-Bonnet (Bentler & Bonett, 1980) normed fit index that adjusts for degrees of freedom. It ranges from zero to 1.00 and provides a measure of complete covariation in the data; a value $>.90$ indicates a good fit to the data (Byrne, 1994, 2001). The PCFI is calibrated from the CFI; it weighs the parsimony of the model against its use of the data in achieving goodness of fit. Mulaik et al. state that PCFI values are often

lower than what is generally considered acceptable on the basis of normed indices of fit; goodness of fit indices in the .90s accompanied by PCFI indices in the .50s are considered adequate. Byrne (2001) maintains that the RMSEA is one of the most informative indices in SEM. The RMSEA is sensitive to the complexity of the model; values less than .05 indicate excellent fit, and values less than .08 represent a good fit. The fit indices for each of the measurement models are presented in Table 2, all indices meet the criteria for good fit (Byrne, 2001).

<i>Scale</i>	<i># Factors</i>	<i>α</i>	<i>χ²/df</i>	<i>CFI</i>	<i>PCFI</i>	<i>RMSEA A</i>	
WFS	2	.82	.71	3.03	.97	.60	.07
JSS	2	.80	.73	2.53	.97	.66	.06
Cohesion Scale	2	.83	.81	3.15	.97	.66	.07
OCQ	1	.91		2.53	.96	.79	.06
Intention to Turnover		.87					

Table 2: Fit Indices for the measurement models (n=412)

Note: The measurement model for Intention to Turnover was not tested here as it has only three items and therefore 0 df

Gender comparisons

Once each scale was adequately factor analysed and showed good fit, Pearson's correlations were calculated between the various subscales, first for the whole sample and then for males and females separately. When the correlations between variables were calculated for the whole sample *all* subscales were significantly correlated with *all* other sub-scales in the expected direction ($p < .05$). When the correlations between variables were calculated for male and female respondents separately, however, some interesting variations emerge. Table 3 shows only those correlations where the measured variables were differentially correlated for men and women.

<i>Correlation</i>	<i>Whole Sample</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>
	Pearson correlation	Pearson correlation	Pearson correlation
Friendship prevalence with Intention to leave	-.101 (<i>p</i> < .05)	-.141 (<i>p</i> < .05)	-.008 (ns)
Friendship opportunities with Intention to leave	-.217 (<i>p</i> < .01)	-.247 (<i>p</i> < .01)	-.138 (ns)
Cohesion (social support/cooperation) with Intention to leave	-.184 (<i>p</i> < .01)	-.182 (<i>p</i> < .01)	-.172 (ns)
Friendship prevalence with Satisfaction with actual job	.161 (<i>p</i> < .01)	.077 (ns)	.341 (<i>p</i> < .01)
Cohesion (workload sharing) with Friendship opportunities	.153 (<i>p</i> < .01)	.116 (ns)	.213 (<i>p</i> < .01)
Cohesion (workload sharing) with Friendship prevalence	.097 (<i>p</i> < .05)	.064 (ns)	.179 (<i>p</i> < .01)

Table 3: Correlations between subscales, showing those where measured variables are differently correlated for men and women

In addition, on testing for the significance of the difference between these correlations¹, the correlation between friendship prevalence and job satisfaction was significantly different for men and women, $z = 2.57$, $p < 0.01$ (shaded in grey in Table 2). On comparing the correlation matrices for the two groups, the following differences are apparent:

1. Related to hypothesis 1, job satisfaction is significantly correlated with friendship prevalence ($p < .01$) for men but not for women.
2. There was no support for hypothesis 2 with organisational commitment being significantly negatively correlated with both friendship variables for both men and women.
3. Related to hypothesis 3, women's, intent to leave their job is significantly negatively correlated with cohesion (social support and cooperation) ($p < .01$), friendship opportunities ($p < .01$) and friendship prevalence ($p < .05$); but for men intention to leave is not significantly correlated with cohesion or either friendship variable.

¹ The significance of the difference between the correlations was tested using the Fisher r-to-z transformation $z_r = (1/2)[\log_e(1+r) - \log_e(1-r)]$. This is automatically calculated, along with p on a statistics website administered by Vassar University (<http://faculty.vassar.edu/lowry/rdiff>)

4. Related to hypothesis 4, for men, the workload sharing aspect of cohesion is significantly correlated to friendship opportunities ($p < .05$) and friendship prevalence ($p < .05$); but for women the workload sharing aspect of cohesion is not significantly correlated with either friendship variable.

Thus, there is partial support for the notion that friendship variables will be differently correlated with other variables for men and women, with cohesion and friendships at work being correlated with intention to leave only for women. Friendship prevalence, on the other hand, was significantly more strongly correlated with job satisfaction for men. The notion that organisational antecedents to friendship may be differently correlated to workplace friendships for men and women is partially supported by the data with the workload sharing aspect of cohesion significantly correlated to friendship opportunities and friendship prevalence only for men, though the *difference* in the size of the correlation between genders is not significant.

Open ended questions

Sixty percent ($n = 269$) of respondents answered the open ended question. Any responses which had more than one “idea” were separated into their component responses; for example, one respondent answered the question by saying “*makes working environment more fun and enables me to do a better job*” (#125). This response was separated into (i) “makes working environment more fun” and (ii) “enables me to do a better job”. Once this process was completed there were 419 separate responses. The responses to the question asking respondents to outline ways friendships with benefited them in the workplace were then coded into (A) benefits related to social and emotional support and (B) benefits related to getting the job done or career progression. Almost all responses were very clearly in either one category or the other but, where there was some ambiguity, the response was discussed between the three coders and a consensus was reached.

Within these two main categories of responding there were several subcategories. For example, within category A (benefits related to social and emotional support) there were responses relating to social support in a negative or toxic environment e.g., “*Having friendships at work provide an outlet for venting*”

frustrations over the current work environment" (# 21), versus general enjoyment of work, e.g., *"It gives me enjoyment to interact with others and makes work more pleasant"* (#277). Sub-categories within category B (benefits related to getting the job done or career progression) included, for example benefits related to networking for career advancement e.g., *"Opened up work opportunities through networking with other colleagues and endorsement to others."*(#346) and benefits related to doing their job or getting work done e.g., *"good when you need emergency help - more likely to help if you are stuck"* (#409). While these sub-categories exist within the two main categories, for the purposes of the current research only the gender differences that might exist in terms of category A versus category B (i.e., functional help with work / career assistance versus social/emotional support) were of interest; linking with previous findings that women are more likely to seek and provide social and emotional support than men (Ashton & Fuerhrer, 1993; Flaherty & Richman, 1989; Odden & Sias, 1997; Wood & Inman, 1993).

In order to assess whether there was a gender difference in the ways that males and females reported gaining benefit from their workplace friendships, the Chi square test was applied and differences were considered significant at levels of $p < .01$. There were 419 separate responses; 220 (47.5%) relating to job and career benefits and 199 (52.5%) relating to social and emotional benefits. The proportion of responses from female respondents which focused on the social and emotional benefits of friendship was .53 whereas the proportion of responses from males with this focus was only .35. Similarly the proportion of responses from males with a focus on functional career-based benefits was .65 compared to .47 for female respondents. The difference in proportions is strongly significant $\chi^2 (1, N = 419) = 11.08, p < 0.001$. This suggests that women are significantly more likely than men to perceive the benefits of friendship to be those involving social and or emotional support, or perhaps to be more likely to utilise their workplace friendships in this way. Figure 1 compares male and female respondents in terms of the number of responses relating to functional help with work and career assistance versus benefits associated with social or emotional support.

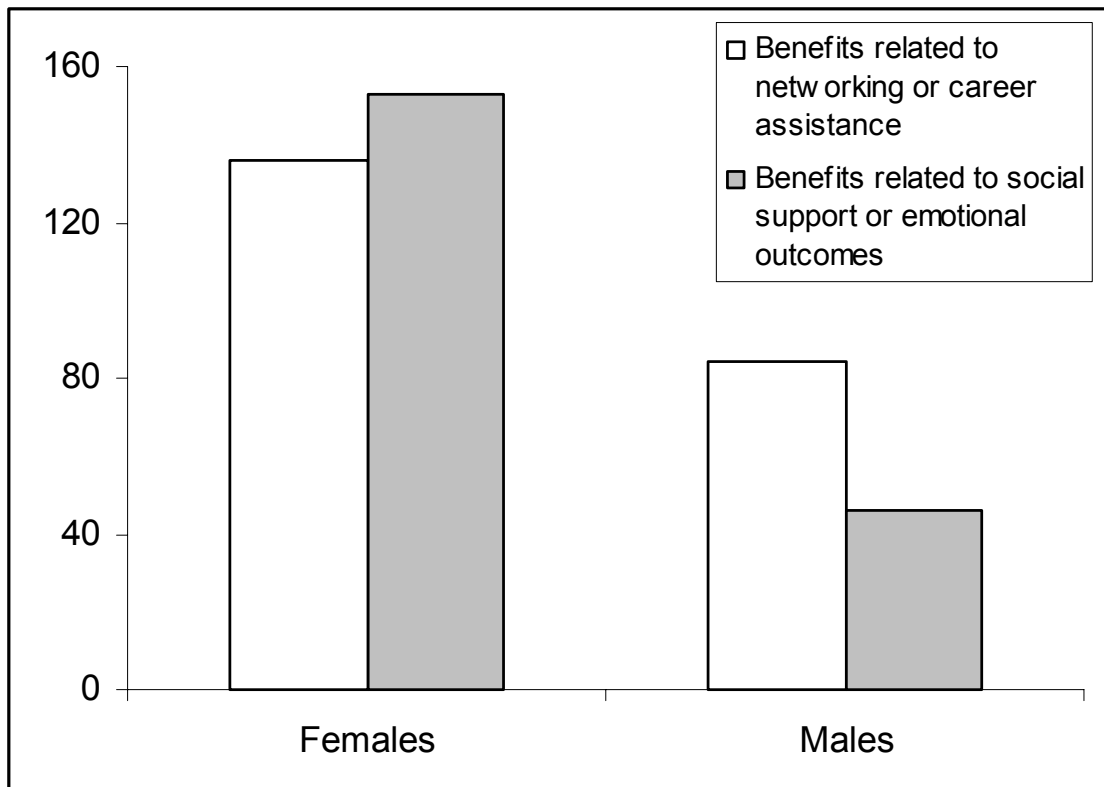


Figure 1: Males compared to females in terms of the number of responses relating to the benefits of friendships in the workplace associated with networking or career assistance (un-shaded) versus benefits associated with social support or emotional outcomes (shaded grey).

Examples of responses from female respondents with a focus on social /emotional support include the following:

- *Support through personal difficulties - grief after losing my mum (#310)*
- *Maintaining a friendship with a co-worker gets me in a better mood in the workplace! (#326)*
- *support and validation of feelings about negative aspects of working with a particular staff member (#80)*

Examples of responses from female respondents with a focus on functional help with work / career assistance include the following:

- *Sharing of information is vital to do the job properly. Most of my office co-workers realise this and are cooperative in sharing leads and opportunities (#113)*
- *I was offered my position because of my previous work relationship with the boss (#180)*

Examples of responses from male respondents with a focus on social /emotional support include the following:

- *Good for the morale, put work under a different perspective (#428)*
- *Understand their problems and where they are coming from (#336)*

Examples of responses from male respondents with a focus on functional help with work / career assistance include the following:

- *Opened up work opportunities through networking with other colleagues and endorsement to others (#346)*
- *Knowing that if things start to fall apart, there is someone there to help me get through it and sort it out (#349)*
- *My friendship with our company's customer services person, has taught me so much about the company's products, their uses and benefits, and has built on an area of interest of mine. I have made the effort to be friendly with other staff in order to ease work communications and sharing of information (#390)*

DISCUSSION

The findings that for women (but not men) intention to leave is significantly negatively correlated with the friendship variables, and that for men (but not women), the workload sharing aspect of cohesion is significantly correlated to friendship opportunities and friendship prevalence, should be viewed with some caution as the *difference* in the size of the correlations between genders was not statistically significant. In spite of this, they are in line with other findings in this area and warrant brief discussion. The first finding suggests that women may be directly affected by

the presence or absence of close friends at work; women may make a leaving decision based, at least in part, on the social opportunities their work offers. The second finding was that the 'workload sharing' aspect of cohesion is significantly correlated with 'friendship opportunities' and 'friendship prevalence' for men but not significantly correlated with either friendship variable for women. The significant relationship between cohesion and the friendship variables for men relates to previous studies indicating men achieve and define closeness through sharing activities (Carr, 2003; Markiewicz *et al.*, 2000; Odden & Sias, 1997; Winstead, 1986; Wood & Inman, 1993; Wright, 1988, 1991). It appears likely that sharing work (i.e., performing side by side on a task) assists men in forming friendships at work. Thus the finding that, for men, the workload sharing aspect of cohesion is significantly related to friendships at work, suggests that men are more likely to make friends if they are in a job involving shared activities with their colleagues than if they are in a job that does not offer opportunities to share work.

There was a statistically significant gender difference in the correlation between job satisfaction and friendship prevalence. Job satisfaction is *not* significantly correlated with friendship prevalence for women, but is for men. One possible explanation for the finding that women's friendships at work are not consistently associated with an increase in satisfaction, is that when women are *dissatisfied* with their jobs they may make more friends; leaning on their colleagues for social, emotional and instrumental support (Odden & Sias, 1997; Wood & Inman, 1993). If women's friendships strengthen in situations where they are dissatisfied with their jobs or unhappy with their boss, a significant positive relationship between satisfaction and friendship prevalence will not be found, even if having more friends at work improves job satisfaction in other situations, i.e., the two processes may cancel each other out.

Women define and achieve closeness through the sharing of feelings and emotions (Odden & Sias, 1997), perhaps using their friends at work as an outlet for venting work-related frustrations and emotional expression. Men on the other hand, may use their friends more for discussion of other (possibly less negative and/or emotional) topics (Ashton & Fuerhrer, 1993). A positive relationship between friendships at work and job satisfaction will be more apparent for men because they

are, perhaps, less likely than women to seek emotional support from their colleagues when times are bad. This explanation is supported by the types of answers respondents gave to the question asking how friends benefit them in the workplace. Women were, indeed, significantly more likely than men to focus on the social and emotional support provided by their colleagues. This category of responding included 37 responses which specifically described this function of workplace friendships. For example: *“helped alleviate stress (#66), Being able to let off hot air in a trusted conversation (#85), “...made each other laugh during hard times (#108)”*.

This explanation also relates to the *tend and befriend* stress response proposed by Taylor et al. (2000). There has been very little direct testing of the tend and befriend stress response at the behavioural level in humans (Turton & Campbell, 2005) but the fact that women in the current study seem to utilise their friends in times of stress and to lean on them for emotional support fits well within this framework, with Taylor et al. (2000) describing befriending as “the creation of networks of associations that provide resources and protection for the female ... under conditions of stress” (p. 412). Findings in the current study are also in line with the results described in Turton and Campbell (2005), where 89% of individuals reporting using befriending (relying on the support of others) as a stress response were women. Although Taylor et al. (2000) proposed that females are more likely to befriend other women in times of stress, Turton and Campbell (2005) found that, when in a relationship, women would be likely to turn to their male partners and, in addition, indicated that a general tendency to seek male company when stressed. The current study gathered information about the sex of respondents but not the sex of the friend to whom they referred in their answers; however it is reasonable to assume that the respondents had both same and opposite sex friends.

An alternative explanation for the gender difference found in this study is that, while friendship at work will improve job satisfaction for men, women may simply *expect* to have friendships at work. Thus, in the absence of friends, women will be dissatisfied, but the presence of friendships will not have positive outcomes any more than other expected outcomes of working will (for example, their wages). In other words, women may perceive friendship as a necessary aspect of work, whereas men

may see their organisational friendships as an added bonus. This final point relates to Herzberg's (1966) two-factor theory of satisfaction.

Herzberg postulated that factors intrinsic to the nature and experience of doing work were job satisfiers or 'motivators' while extrinsic factors, including interpersonal relationships, were job 'dissatisfiers' or 'hygiene' factors. It is possible that, for people in certain roles, interpersonal relationships *are* intrinsic to the experience of doing work, and therefore interpersonal relationships cease to be hygiene factors (as Herzberg et al. propose) and are instead motivators. In terms of the gender findings, it seems that the gender of employees may be related to whether or not interpersonal relationships are motivators or hygiene factors. It was found that, for men, there was a significant positive correlation between satisfaction and friendship prevalence, implying that friendships at work operate as a 'satisfier' or 'motivator' for men, improving job satisfaction. For women, on the other hand, not only was there no significant relationship between satisfaction and friendship prevalence, but there was a significant negative correlation between intention to leave and all the relationship measures (cohesion, friendship opportunities, friendship prevalence). This implies that, for women, friendship acts as a 'dissatisfier' or a 'hygiene' factor, inasmuch as women will be more likely to be intending to leave their job if they report having few or no friends at work, and will be more likely to be intending to stay if they report having more friends at work. It is possible that having, or not having, friends at work may be enough to influence female employees' leaving decisions. In other words, friendships in the workplace are motivators for men; they will improve satisfaction if they are present; while for women, the absence of friends at work will cause dissatisfaction; acting as a hygiene factor as Herzberg proposed.

CONCLUSION

Given the methodology of the current study, identifying why the friendship prevalence → job satisfaction relationship is significant for men but not women can only be speculative. It might be that for women, friendships are viewed as an essential part of work so although they may increase dissatisfaction by their absence, they will not necessarily improve satisfaction by their presence. Alternatively, previous research on relationships suggests that men derive satisfaction and identity from being part of

a team; so perhaps when men have friends at work, compared to when they do not, they will work better and more successfully within the team, achieve goals and thereby derive satisfaction from their job. Most likely, however, workplace friendships have a different function for men and women as women have been shown to derive more social and emotional support from their friends. Women tend to seek emotional support when they are unhappy in a way that men will not, and thus, may make more friends than men when they experience dissatisfaction.

Given that friendships are likely to have different forms and functions for individuals in organisations, a worthwhile direction for future research is to examine the validity of measuring friendship prevalence with a single scale. To accurately measure the organisational antecedents and consequences of friendship, the various types of organisational friendships first need to be theoretically conceptualised, and measures of these relationships need to be empirically validated. In addition, more qualitative research examining the question of how employees utilise their friendships would be valuable in this area, and would perhaps go some way towards answering the question of how the different types of friends might be related to organisational outcomes.

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