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Power and Empowerment in a Non-profit Organization

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore the roles of power and empowerment within an organization. This paper is the first in a series exploring the efficacy and impact of five-year consultative intervention with an early education center. This first paper examines the quantitative data to assess the impact of power and empowerment on mental health and stress variables. We expected to find that greater feelings of empowerment and power would increase mental health and decrease stress. While power and empowerment alone were not sufficient to impact health variables, significance emerged when combined with other factors. When variables that suggested an empowered environment or perceived control were combined with power and empowerment, we did indeed see a significant effect on mental health, sense of coherence (sense of self) and morale. We suggest that these findings are useful in showing us that power and empowerment do play a role in organizations. Such results highlight the need to further examine the data from a qualitative perspective, which we will do in future studies.

Key Words: power, empowerment, consultation, community organizations

INTRODUCTION

"Power is my mistress. I have worked too hard at her conquest to allow anyone to take her away from me."
Napoleon Bonaparte

"I am not interested in power for power's sake, but I'm interested in power that is moral, that is right and that is good."
Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Being powerful is like being a lady. If you have to tell people you are, you aren't."
Margaret Thatcher

Three different positions, three different people, all talking about something that is part of everyday life: power. It is, as Foucault (1983) indicated, an inescapable presence in our everyday lives. Yet, for something that constantly shapes our lives, a simple definition eludes us. The theoretical approaches to understanding power are varied. It seems that the major point of argument revolves around the way in which individuals use their power. While there are many divergent perspectives, there are two major distinctions: power-over and power-to.

Power

Power-over

Traditional conceptions of power include the definition of power as simply the ability to get another person to do something even in the face of resistance. For examples, refer to Weber (1978), Dahl (1957) and Lukes (2005), who define power as something that one holds over another. Similarly, the French philosopher Foucault (1983) is believed to have at the core of his definition a similar view of power as domination.

More recent readings (e.g., Gore, 1990; Sawicki, 1991) of Foucault suggest that he was not talking about power in the traditional sense. Instead, like Gore and Sawicki, Foucault is understood as claiming that power is not something one owns or possesses, rather power is

something that is exercised: "Power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategic situation in a particular society" (Foucault, 1983). This suggests that the notion of power is more of a process than an outcome. Power understood as a process would, in essence, always be a type of power-over insomuch as it does not matter if you are acting in concert with another, inspiring or influencing—according to a process definition, all power is an act of exercising your will.

Power-to

In contrast to traditional views, feminist definitions have viewed power as having capacity, potential, or ability. Such orientations view it in relational terms. In this view, power is not an act of domination but the act of nurturing another, transforming or creating growth. For example, Miller (1987) rejects the notion of power as an act that forces another to do something but rather sees it as acting *with* the other person to assist in his or her development. Similarly, Held (1993) speaks of power as empowering another, transforming such as a mother might do.

Reaching a Definition

Wartenberg (1990) has made an extensive study of power arguing that we need not view power-over as negative, but rather as a move from domination views to transformative views. Wartenberg (1990) has argued that all power is power-over. This is a worthwhile argument considering that as soon as you make the choice to exercise your power, whether it is to influence as a mother might do or to cause another to act even in the face of resistance, it is still something that has an impact over another person.

We would argue that power is best understood as the influence and ability to get another to do something. Therefore, the distinctions between power-over and power-to should refer to the process and not the act of exercising power. We agree with Wartenberg (1990) that all power

is likely power-over, in that it is being exercised. We also recognize the need to distinguish among such factors as those that favor a dominant use of power versus those that prefer a collaborative model. For the purposes of this paper, power was explored through measures that captured the individual experience of influence in the workplace, as well as workers' relative feelings of control over their environment.

Power and Perceived Control

It could be that having some degree of perceived control in one's life might contribute to feelings of power. Grote, et al. (2007) discussed the mediating effects of perceived control in relation to stressors experienced by disadvantaged women. They found that perceived control acted as a buffer against the development of depression, indicating that feelings of control mediate against the effects of stress. Weinstein, Healey and Ender (2002) also found that those who have more perceived control over their work and career transitions experience less overall anxiety. In a work environment, clear expectations about work through transparency of roles, relatively few role conflicts, and predictable assignments might not be a direct experience of power. Yet such clarity in expectations may give an individual a sense of control and power in his or her own life. Thus, we find it helpful to think about power not only strictly in terms of how influence is exerted but also about what might enhance its experience, in addition to internalized feelings of power.

Empowerment

Defining Empowerment

Some common ideas about what empowerment is might include: Feeling that one can participate in decisions (Chamberlin, 1997; Rowlands, 1995), restoring an individual's value and strength and belief in his or her own self (Bush & Folger, 1994) and having a range of decision

making options (Chamberlin, 1997). Some feel that a global and universal definition of empowerment may not be useful or practical for a variety of reasons. Empowerment likely means different things to different people (Zimmerman, 1995) and therefore may not be experienced in the same way universally. So how can we know if what we are doing when we intend to empower another person is creating its desired effect?

As an example, feminist advocates working in the field of domestic violence have long stated that empowerment is the desired goal when working with victims. It is assumed that victims of domestic violence desire a sense of power over their lives and would benefit from increased self-efficacy. However, Mills (2003) has suggested that interventions such as mandatory arrest, wherein when police arrive at a domestic violence scene they are required to make an arrest, may actually serve to disempower the victims for whom the goal is empowerment. The belief that removing the abusive party gives power to the victim may in fact be ill conceived given that a *mandatory* arrest takes the decision-making power away from the victim.

The case discussed above is just one example that serves to underscore the difficult nature of ascertaining what is empowering. Pease (2002) offered a reappraisal of empowerment that suggests the concept of power upon which current definitions are built might actually serve an opposite purpose. That is, the power imbalance inherent to any helping relationship may actually serve to disempower individuals and organizations.

Furthermore, there are those who would question whether empowerment is even possible (e.g., Gore, 1990). One aspect of such criticism lies in the fact that power is linguistically embedded in the definition of empowerment. That is, in order to empower we are in essence giving some kind of power to another person. At issue here is the contention that power is some

kind of possession, something we own and can give away. In order for power to be something

that we own, it would have to mean that it is limited (Gore, 1990), which would counter

Foucault's main argument about power that we are all both powerful and powerless at the same

time.

Any view of power—and therefore empowerment—that assumes power is not a

possession necessarily means that it is much harder to empower than we typically imagine. We

can do our best, create a supportive and collaborative environement, do everything we think is

necessary to empower another and still for some it will not take. The main thrust of Gore's

(1990) argument is that we cannot assume it is just a matter of asking "What can we do for you?"

Rather, empowerment is a far more challenging and complex construct, one that may defy simple

definition.

Despite the challenges in defining empowerment and the disagreement about whether it

can even happen, empowerment is a construct worthy of investigation and therefore some basic

definition must be formulated. We would agree that, very generally and for the purpose of this

study, empowerment can be understood as a person feeling that they have the space and ability to

participate in decision making.

Empowered Environments

Many organizations today have faced the need for a redistribution of the power that has

been "couched" in the term empowerment (Alampay & Beehr, 2001). In addition, systems theory

(e.g., Checkland, 1981; Senge, 1991) has suggested that successful learning organizations will be

comprised of self-directed and empowered individuals. Within the organizational world,

empowerment is typically viewed as a means for improving the organization (Alampay & Beehr,

2001). That is, empowerment is seen as increasing participative decision-making and delegation

of power to those in lower levels of the organization. This dynamic can be illustrated below:

High Level View of Empowerment Diagram 1a.

This systems view of the key variables just highlighted indicates an interconnection between empowerment influencing participative decision-making and delegation with the outcome of improved organizational performance. This feeds back into the support and use of empowerment.
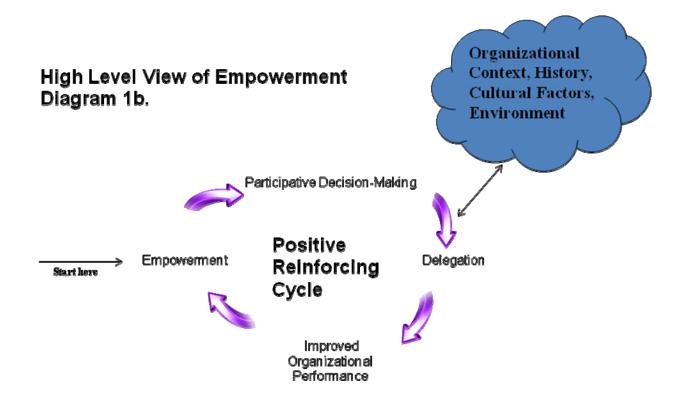
It is thought that when individuals feel they have more of a say in their work, they will in

turn feel more committed to the organization in general. This commitment will increase

productivity, intrinsic motivation, and lead to increased risk taking and the pursuit of new

opportunities (Alampay & Beehr, 2001; Hardy & Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998). This dynamic,

iterated on the individual level, is illustrated as follows:

Effect of Empowerment on the Individual Level

High er Level of Commitment
to Organization

Positive Reinforcing Cycle

Productivity, Intrinsic Motivation, Risk Taking

Pursuit of New Opportunities

Use of individual Voice

Start here

This systems view of the key variables just highlighted indicates an interconnection between individuals feeling that they have more say in their work (i.e., voice) leads to higher level of commitment to the organization, which leads to increased productivity, intrinsic motivation and risk taking, which may also lead to the pursuit of new opportunities; which then reinforce the individual's feeling that they have more say in their work.

Zimmerman (1995) describes the difficulty in understanding empowerment within organizations because of underlying biases towards Western individualism and the corresponding tendency to overlook the impact of the environment. Further, Zimmerman (1995) suggests the need to examine empowerment from multiple levels, arguing that the psychological or individual level of empowerment may be different from what occurs at the organizational level. Additionally, Serrano-Garcia and Bond (1994) stress that empowerment requires an understanding of individuals in context, particularly with respect to cultural diversity. That is, differences may exist both within and between groups, and as we try to develop models of empowerment we must consider the cultural factors that may impact an individual's experience. This dynamic can also be illustrated by mapping the influence of the cultural factors, environment, organizational context and history on the organization.

High Level View of Empowerment Diagram 1b.

Similarly, McMillan, et al. (1995) present a model for evaluating empowerment within coalitions. They suggest examining empowerment from two perspectives. First, they discuss psychological empowerment as a means through which the individual and group succeed in developing skills, knowledge, perceived competency, and expectancies for accomplishments within their coalition work. Secondly, McMillan, et al. (1995) conceptualize empowerment at multiple levels. That is, they view it from the individual level at which psychological empowerment occurs, at the intra-organizational level where the empowering organization may make collective empowerment possible, and at the extra-organizational level where the organizationally empowered system is successful in influencing the broader environment.

Changes in empowerment may occur at one level and not necessarily affect another level (McMillan et al., 1995). This is seemingly contrary to the idea of systems theory (e.g., Senge, 1991) where changes at one level (i.e., the leverage point) can create change within the entire organization. McMillan, et al. (1995) provide an example in which individuals within an

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organization achieve the competencies and skills associated with individual empowerment but in doing so neglect the larger community. They argue that while individual empowerment may have occurred, organizational empowerment did not.

In contrast to Senge, Checkland (1981; Checkland & Scholes, 1990) has made a critical contribution to systems thinking by challenging the notion that human systems can be understood in the same way as natural and physical systems. He argues for a soft systems methodology that acknowledges that human systems will vary according to the experiences, roles, and perspectives of the stakeholders.

Further, while we agree with Zimmerman (1995) that empowerment is a dynamic process that may defy clear definition and that organizational empowerment needs to be mindful of context, a standard definition that concentrates on an individual's ability to participate in the decision making process and to have the space to do so was employed in order to investigate whether feelings of empowerment affect the experience of the work environment.

Support and Empowerment

Another important and related area of empowerment is the role of interpersonal support in creating change. For example, Short (1997) describes schools that utilize empowerment models with teachers, creating working groups that solve problems together and work from a bottom-up approach. This study found that principals who provided the most support were the most successful in creating empowered environments. Similarly, London (1993) found a relationship between empowerment and support for growth in career development. That is, employees were more likely to feel empowered if they also felt supported by management. Therefore, models that simply look at empowerment may not be sufficient. We also need to examine the extent to which employees feel supported in organizations as support may be a

strong factor in the creation of empowered environments. We concur with Short (1997) and London (1993) that empowered employees rely on support from leaders and an environment that is conducive to collaboration. Thus we also explored the influence of these work related factors in experienced empowerment.

This study attempted to investigate the impact of a consultation intervention in the creation of a more empowered work environment with employees feeling more power and less behavioral, cognitive, and somatic stress, increased feelings of self-coherence and improved mental health.

Organizations and Effective Consultation Models

Every group or organization, ranging from a family to a large corporation, will at one point in time experience growing pains. Working together towards a common goal is not an easy task. For families, problems may involve the health of one person, difficulty communicating or general dysfunction within the group. Similarly, organizations can face widespread communication issues, low morale, leadership problems or power struggles. Families may seek the assistance of a therapist; organizations will typically employ the aid of a consultant.

Broadly defined, consultation is a process of transferring expertise, knowledge or skill from one party to another (Jacobson, Butterill, & Goering, 2005). Consultants have been described as playing various roles including the expert, the advocate, the teacher, the fact finder, the technician, the adviser, the bridge builder, the storyteller, the applied theoretician and even "the witch doctor" (Jacobson, Butterill, & Goering, 2005). Given the range of roles that consultants can play, there are a number of ways in which they can employ their skills. Lippitt and Lippitt (1978) have suggested that the relative directness of approach can vary from advisory to prescriptive. In contrast, Schein (1988) as well as Czarniawska and Mazza (2003) suggest a

collaborative or process approach with consultants in general, moving away from the "expert" role.

Today, as academics seek to come down from the ivory tower and expand their roles in the community at large, many may find themselves involved in consultation to organizations outside the university. That these academics have expertise garnered from years of education in one area or another is not in question; however, how they endeavor to impart that knowledge is. Academics may also serve two masters. The aim of helping in the community may be joined with a desire to do action-based research, and this requires further refinement of one's role and an even greater need to be mindful of the power they bring with their credentials.

We know that we need to be in the community, but it would serve us well to question what the best approach to offering assistance might be. It is all too tempting to want to solve or "fix" the problem that an organization brings to us. Traditional models of consultation do, in fact, suggest a top-down or "expert" based approach. The problem with such a model is that it does not often truly address the needs of the organization and therefore results in frustration on both ends. If the problem is defined through the consultant's lens only, the organization may not feel that its needs are being met or that its voice is being heard. The consultants in a top-down model may only bring their perspective and provide solutions that do not truly meet the needs of the organization. Therefore, a collaborative consultation relationship results in giving the organization the requisite space to be actively involved in problem solving.

Schein (1998) describes three possible consultation approaches, two with a focus on content and the third with a focus on how problems are solved, the latter of which he calls process consultation. The two content oriented models can be understood with the terms "purchase-of-expertise" and "doctor-patient". The purchase-of-expertise model assumes that an

organization lacks a specific expertise that can only be solved by the consultant. In the purchase-of-expertise model it is assumed that the organization has correctly defined the problem because the consultant is not involved in diagnosing it.

The doctor-patient model invites the consultant to do a "check-up" of the organization (Schein, 1988). This model also assumes that the consultant has specific knowledge that only he or she can bring to the consulting situation. The consultant is hired to identify, diagnose and solve the problem, and to do so expediently and with minimal disruption to the organization. As with the purchase-of-expertise model, the consultant is understood to have the expertise the client lacks (Cash & Mintner, 1979; Schein, 1988). The problem with both of these models, when used exclusively, is that they do not support the idea that the organization or client "owns" the problem (e.g., Senge, 1991; Schein, 1993; 1998).

In contrast, process consultation assumes that the client is the best source of information and knows best how to solve a problem within his or her organization. Schein (1998) suggests that a consultant is ignorant of the issues within the organization when he/she is asked to consult and must acknowledge his or her ignorance in order to be helpful. Consultants can't make assumptions about an organization based on previous consulting experience and must work with the organization to determine the issues it is facing. Therefore, process consultation assumes the following: a) that the client and consultant jointly diagnose the problem; b) that the consultant's job is to train the client to diagnose and solve problems; c) that clients have the major responsibility to develop their own action plans and solutions; d) that problem solving is more effective when the client identifies what processes need to be improved; and e) that the client has more insight about what will work in the organization and is more committed to implementing the action plan if he or she is involved in the entire process (Cash & Mintner, 1979; Schein,

1998). Schein (1988) has suggested that at various times in the consulting process each of the three models may be appropriate, but it is important to know when to use each model and that one should always begin in process mode.

The Current Study

This paper is based on a five-year, action based research/consultation intervention between a university and a non-profit early education center in New England (Austin & Harkins, 2006; Austin & Harkins, 2007; Doppler & Harkins, 2005). The executive director sought to improve the organizational environment and solicited work with this group of university consultants. The consultation began with the objective to provide conflict resolution skills to the teachers. However, the success of any consultation or desire to bring about organizational change rests with discovering the leverage point to improve the health of the system (Senge, 1991). During the course of working with the teachers it became apparent that the leadership team was the appropriate leverage point. The consultants began meeting regularly with the director team comprised of the executive director and the directors of each program. Work continued with the entire organization, including surveying the organization at two points in time on a variety of measures (Austin & Harkins, 2007).

As with many organizations, this group had communication problems, morale issues, and staff turnover. Members felt a distinct inability to participate in decision-making. Additionally, since early childhood education is marginalized in society generally, the work is often socially devalued. These circumstances, coupled with a weak relationship with their parent organization, made those at the center feel that "They just keep marginalizing and minimizing us." Extensive interviews with teachers and administrators in the early phases of the intervention confirmed that these themes were shared across departments and levels throughout the center

(Doppler & Harkins, 2006; Austin & Harkins, 2007). Given local and social context of early education, it was evident why many people at the center felt disempowered. It became clear that a consultation model that favored collaboration over top-down approaches was necessary.

Non-profit organizations facing scarce resources and constantly dwindling budgets are particularly vulnerable to power and empowerment issues. The maintained of positive morale may pose a particular challenge. Yet non-profit organizations are often unique in their collaborative nature. Most non-profits, particularly those smaller in size, have close ties to the community in which they provide human services that could not be obtained without their presence. Such organizations are value and mission driven. The collaborative nature of non-profit organizations may make process consultation a good fit (Chapman, 1998).

However, it may be that different skills are necessary when working using process consultation with a non-profit organization. Chapman suggests that non-profits require more transformational change rather than the incremental shifts typically witnessed in the for-profit world. Furthermore, consultants may be more involved in providing expertise about general management, as this knowledge may be deficient in the non-profit world. One reason for this deficit could be that there are a variety of stakeholders and a tendency toward many parties being involved in decision-making (Chapman, 1998). Therefore, consultants may have to work more intensely with the group on interpersonal relationships and skills in order to facilitate change. The process consultant working with a non-profit would need to work with larger, intra-organizational groups to build the consensus that is necessary for the organization to function. Given that non-profit organizations may place a relatively large emphasis on consensus-building, issues of power and empowerment are often highly at stake in these organizations.

Although non-profits may function relatively more collaboratively than for-profit industry, power is inherent in all organizations. While a wide variety of attempts at consensus building may occur, ultimately someone is the boss. Therefore, the question remains: How much do members of an organizational community feel they have a say? Based on a needs assessment conducted prior to the research it was clear that the directors and teachers involved in the consulting project did not feel they had an equal voice in decision-making (Austin & Harkins, 2007; Doppler & Harkins, 2005). It could be argued that there existed an imbalance of power within the organization. The successful process consultant aims to deconstruct power imbalances through facilitating empowerment at both group and individual levels. Thus, it was one of the major aims of the consultants to facilitate such growth. The goals of process consultation, such as those of shared power, serve to restructure and upend power imbalances.

While it may be clear that this work needs to be done, the question of how does one measure these changes remains. Can empirical methods elucidate such broad and complex constructs as power and empowerment? Will there be any relationship among variables from a paper and pencil measure? How does one measure something that is not clearly defined? The present study represents the first step in trying to understand, from an empirical perspective, the changes that occurred in relation to power and empowerment as measured through a variety of standard organizational measures.

Given the importance of power and empowerment to myriad other variables (e.g., morale, mental health, behavior, cognitive and somatic stress, role expectations, conflicts within the organization and overall sense of self), we expected to find that those who experienced greater degrees of power, empowerment, perceived control over work environment, and support

from leaders and the general work climate at time one would have higher morale, less

behavioral, cognitive and somatic stress, and a greater sense of self, after the intervention.

METHOD

Participants

This study included 42 participants consisting of teachers and directors involved in a

collaborative and consultative intervention between consultants and an early childhood

development center in southern New England. Approximately 75% of all center employees

participated in the intervention. This center is located in an area that is both multicultural and

economically challenged, representing a diverse community.

Measures

Participants were given several quantitative measures. The School Organizational Health

Questionnaire (SOHQ) (Hart, et al., 2000) is a measure of teacher morale and school

organizational climate, which consists of 12 scales measuring facets of organizational climate,

with a total of 57 items. Items are rated by using a 5-point response scale (1 = strongly disagree,

5 = strongly agree). Alpha coefficients for all 12 scales of the SOHQ range between 0.71 and

0.90, making it one of the strongest measures of organizational climate in the field. This scale

was given as a pre- and post-measure.

Additionally, participants were given the Copenhagen Psychological Questionnaire

(COPSOQ; Kristensen & Borg, 2003), which is designed to measure on the broadest possible

level the psychological work conditions, health and well-being of people in organizations, both

pre- and post-intervention. Most of the items on this questionnaire are rated using a 5-point scale

with the criteria for rating varying by item as appropriate (e.g., 1 = never/hardly ever; very

unsatisfied; 5 = always; very satisfied). Additionally, some item ratings employ other approaches (e.g. open-ended responses, binary yes/no responses, etc.). The COPSOQ was developed based on a number of psychological questionnaires gathered from North America and Northern Europe and has a norm base of over 5,000, which comprises over 30 job types (including elementary school teacher). Empirical research has reported that the COPSOQ has sound psychometric properties (Kristensen & Borg, 2003).

The Team Climate Index (Anderson & West, 1998) is based on West's (1990) model, a survey instrument indicating the team climate factors for innovation, and was developed by surveying the senior management teams of 27 hospitals in the United Kingdom. This earlier instrument, called the Team Climate Inventory (TCI; Anderson & West, 1994), is comprised of 38 items within four subscales, or one for each factor. Different versions of the TCI have been widely used in the UK (e.g., West & Anderson, 1992; West & Wallace, 1991). These measures were given at two different points in time. The leverage point for the organization with which this study intervened was the director team. The results from the measures were examined twice, at time one (prior to intensive consultation work with the director team) and time two (subsequent to intensive work with the director team). For this study only the following subscales from these three instruments were used to explore the variables of interest:

Table 1

Measures and Sub-Scales

COPSOQ subscales	SOHQ subscales	Team Climate Index subscales
Influence at work	Participative Decision Making	Participative Safety
Role Clarity	Supportive Leadership	
Predictability of work environment	Morale	
Sense of Community		

Quality of Leadership		
Mental Health		
Behavioral Stress Cognitive Stress Somatic Stress		

Power and empowerment. The COPSOQ sub-scale, Influence at Work (IW), was used to

examine power in this study (10 items, Cronbach's alpha = .83; Kristensen, Borg & Hannerz,

2002). The SOHQ subscale, Participative Decision Making (PDM, four items, α = .75) was used

to measure the degree to which participants felt empowered within the organization.

Perceived control. The COPSOQ subscales of role clarity (four items, α = .77), role

conflict (four items, α = .72) and predictability of work environment (two items, α = .78) were

used to examine center employees' perceived control.

Empowered environment. For this study, the COPSOQ subscale sense of community

(three items, α = .80) and the Team Climate Index subscale of participative safety (12 items, α =

.92) were used to measure the extent to which the general work environment was supportive and

collaborative.

Supportive leaders. In addition to measuring empowerment and perceived control, this

study also examined the support variables of supportive leadership (SOHQ, five items, α = .84)

and quality of leadership (COPSOQ, eight items, α = .93).

Mental health and stress. The COPSOQ (Kristensen & Borg, 2003) includes subscales

related to behavioral stress, somatic stress, cognitive stress, sense of coherence and mental

health. These were, again, given pre- and post-intervention. Each of these subscales has been

reviewed for validity: behavioral stress (eight items, alpha = .79), somatic stress (seven items, α

= .76), cognitive stress (four items, alpha = .85), sense of coherence (need reliability) and mental health (five items, α = .80) (Kristensen, Bjorner, Christensen, & Borg, 2004).

Morale. The SOHQ (Hart et al., 2000) includes a sub-scale measure of morale (5 items, α = .92), which was employed in this study. This is a 5-item Likert scale that asks about enthusiasm and spirit within the organization.

RESULTS

We employed several regression analyses to determine the predictive value of power and empowerment measures at time one on participants' levels of stress, morale and mental health at time two.

Power and Empowerment

Surprisingly, regression analysis of power and empowerment variables on mental health, cognitive, somatic, behavioral stress and morale variables revealed no significant findings. These measures only yielded significance when combined with environmental and support variables.

Perceived Control

When examining variables that pull for power but which are not necessarily considered direct measures of power, some significance was found. Variables such as participants' role clarity, few role conflicts and predictable work environment predicted their mental health one year later ($F = 3.42$, $p < .05$). Not surprisingly, this finding suggests that the greater the degree of perceived control, the better an individual's overall mental health.

Table 2

Multiple Regression Analyses

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	F value	df	Significance
Power and Empowerment	Mental health	.318	2	.730
	Behavioral Stress	2.23	2	.128
	Somatic Stress	2.01	2	.155
	Cognitive Stress	.127	2	.881
	Sense of Coherence	2.78	2	.081
	Morale	2.65	2	.09
Perceived Control	Mental Health	3.42	3	**.036***
	Behavioral Stress	1.27	3	.307
	Somatic Stress	.416	3	.743
	Cognitive Stress	.465	3	.710
	Sense of Coherence	.322	3	.809
	Morale	1.12	3	.361
Empowered Environment and Power/Empowerment	Mental Health	1.48	4	.241
	Behavioral Stress	1.07	4	.395
	Somatic Stress	1.13	4	.366
	Cognitive Stress	.251	4	.906
	Sense of Coherence	3.21	4	**.031***
	Morale	3.15	4	**.033***
Supportive Leadership and Power/Empowerment	Mental Health	.744	4	.573
	Behavioral Stress	1.36	4	.273
	Somatic Stress	1.13	4	.368
	Cognitive Stress	.215	4	.927
	Sense of Coherence Morale	5.24	4	**.004***
Supportive Leadership	Influence at Work	3.2	2	**.051***
	Participative Decision Making	.522	2	.600

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Empowered Environment

When the measures considered indicative of an empowered environment (i.e., participative safety and sense of community) were combined with measures of power and empowerment (i.e., participative decision making and influence at work) there was again a significant prediction with Sense of Coherence ($F = 3.21$, $p < .05$). Additionally, when the environmental variables were added to power and empowerment this led to a significant prediction with Morale ($F = 3.15$, $p < .05$) one year later. While the measures of power and empowerment were not alone sufficient to predict a relationship, the addition of variables that reflect an empowered environment increased the strength of the relationship with morale. This could indicate that individual experiences of power and empowerment alone are not sufficient to increase morale, yet an empowered environment and an organization that empowers does increase positive feelings therein.

Supportive Leaders

As expected, while support variables alone did not predict for mental health, stress or morale, they were predictive when combined with power and empowerment variables for Sense of Coherence ($F = 5.24$, $p < .01$) at time two.

Additionally, in an attempt to understand the role of support in shaping power and empowerment, we did measure for the effect of supportive leadership on those two variables at time two. The two support variables (quality of leadership and supportive leadership) predicted a greater sense of power (IW) one year later ($F = 3.20$; $p < .05$), but did not predict for empowerment (PDM). These findings suggest that leadership support may be an important factor in the development and maintenance of the perception of power.

DISCUSSION

The findings in this study suggest that some significant changes took place between time one and time two of the consultation. Such results would indicate that power and empowerment as well as factors associated with it (i.e., perceived control, supportive leadership and empowered environment), do indeed have an impact on the organization and the psychological health of its members. It is interesting that, for the most part, when taken alone the variables do not provide significance. Rather, it is when the perception of an empowered environment exists in addition to feelings of power and empowerment that an impact is predicted. This would seem to indicate there is a multiplicity of factors that work in concert to create a healthy work environment.

It is clear that some of the measures that pull for power and empowerment do have an impact on a better sense of self and that variables that look at perceived control over one's work environment can also lead to greater mental health. Yet the results would seem to almost underscore the relative importance of power and empowerment in terms of development of the health of the organization of interest. That is, we would expect there to be a stronger relationship between the experiences of power and empowerment and mental health variables. It is clear from earlier work (Austin & Harkins, 2007; Doppler & Harkins, 2005) that employees within this

organization felt marginalized, lacked power and felt generally disempowered, and that those sentiments changed over time. One would expect that such feelings would lead to improved morale and that those who felt more empowered and powerful at time one would have even higher morale at time two. However, it could be that members of the organization felt so disempowered at the outset of the intervention that it was difficult to predict later experiences of stress, mental health and morale. Additionally, it is the nature of change; it can take time for an intervention to have an impact (e.g., Prochaska & Diclemente, 1982). Perhaps if investigated again, the expected results would emerge. Such study is actually currently underway and we expect that it will be a better indicator of the impact, if any, of the intervention.

Furthermore, it is possible that support variables and measures of perceived control are better at predicting feelings of power later in the course of an intervention such as this one. Perhaps what is more important than feeling empowered is the space and leadership to provide for the experience. Zimmerman (1995) has indicated that organizational empowerment and the factors that support an empowered organization may be different than those experienced by the individual. Perhaps the measures employed failed to capture empowerment from an organizational perspective.

An important limitation to this study is contained in the use of paper and pencil measures to capture the experience of power and empowerment. These two constructs are both broad and complex and likely have different meanings to different people. Furthermore, empowerment is a dynamic process. It is multidimensional and some factors may be crucial to one person's growth and inconsequential to another's.

It might behoove us to attempt to define both empowerment and power in relational terms and to understand that it is possible that these concepts cannot be measured at the individual

level. That is, for power and empowerment to exist there must be at least two people involved in the process. Can we really examine empowerment in the absence of a context that provides information about all of the people within a system? We would argue that one of the key problems in defining both power and empowerment may lie in the tendency of theorists and researchers within the field of psychology to view behavior in individualistic terms.

Power, by its very nature, needs another person in order for it to matter. Does it mean anything if you have power and there is no one there to be affected by it? When we begin to conceive of power in relational terms we understand that its exercise is a process and the theoretical distinction is rendered moot. Power is influence that we exert over another and therefore it would seem that, as Wartenberg (1990) suggests, all power is power-over. The construct of power itself does not require a distinction between power-over and power-to. Instead, what must be examined is how one uses his or her power in relation to another.

Relatedly, context may change the manner in which one uses his or her power. For instance, it could be that the difficult manager at work uses power in a dominating way in the office but at home tries to use it to nurture his or her partner or children. Yet despite the changing context they are still using their power while the relative importance of the situation or relationship may change the process. Furthermore, we may change the manner in which we use our power based on the reactions received—the process is a dynamic and relational one that is poorly understood at the individual level.

The same argument can be made for empowerment. Typically, we view empowerment as something we do to another, an action we take to improve another's experience of the world, a definition that clearly implies a relationship. So why then do we define it in individualistic terms? Whether or not empowerment occurs depends on a multitude of factors. For instance, two

people doing the same 'empowering' things may not have the same end result. A college student may have a teacher who attempts to be empowering, yet the context may not foster empowerment if the instructor creates an oppressive environment. Yet five years later the same techniques whose intent is to empower may have very different results. This does not mean that operations of empowerment were entirely not happening the first time. What it does mean is that there is a danger in looking only to the individual to measure empowerment and ignoring the contextual and systemic issues. Again, this is a dynamic process best understood through a relational lens.

Research is currently underway to examine the data presented here from a more qualitative perspective. We will investigate any changes between time one and two both structurally and linguistically in terms of power and empowerment. Part of the intervention included regular meetings of the leadership team along with the consultants, which yielded a wealth of qualitative data. This information will likely provide better insight into the nature of change in terms of power and empowerment within the organization. Additionally, plans are in place to conduct follow up interviews, in addition to another round of data collection, to determine the lasting impact, if any, of this intervention.

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