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The Lived Experiences of Employees Identifying as Belonging Outside of Workplace Cliques

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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Cliques

by

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DBA, University of Phoenix, 2009

MBA, Drexel University, 2001

BA, Rutgers University, 1991

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Cliques are a naturally occurring phenomenon and have been demonstrated to have adverse outcomes. Workplace cliques can lead to negative behaviors that affect organizational effectiveness. Although the effects of cliques have been studied extensively, a deeper understanding is needed by managers of the experiences of employees identifying as belonging outside of workplace cliques. The research question of this transcendental phenomenological study focused on the lived experiences of employees identifying as belonging outside of workplace cliques formed within their organization's culture. Using convenience sampling, 15 people who identified as having worked in a situation where there was a clique agreed to participate. The conceptual framework was comprised of the concepts of motivation, creativity, knowledge sharing, and organizational commitment. Data were collected via face-to-face video interviews and then analyzed using Moustakas's modified van Kaam method for key themes. Findings showed that participating employees who were not in the clique felt excluded and not valued. The participants felt they were given fewer opportunities and less access to information, and many felt it affected their creativity and motivation. An unanticipated finding was that human resources was generally viewed negatively by the participants and could not be trusted to help manage the clique. The findings have implications for positive social change by helping organizational leaders to understand consequences of workplace cliques, including the negative effects on employee creativity and motivation. Improving human resources' role in employee satisfaction and engagement may increase employee creativity and motivation and lessen employee turnover.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my friends and family, who have supported me through this long journey of study, research, and writing. I also dedicate it to all those who have experienced the feeling of not being part of the clique or the in-crowd and who have felt left out or overlooked, struggled to maintain their motivation, or found it difficult to express their creativity for fear of being mocked or overlooked. It is important to always believe in yourself and do your best; you will always be happier for it, even if it does not always seem that way.

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First, I thank my mother, Ann Foster, for her support and for listening to me talk about "finishing my dissertation" for the many years it took me to complete this study, even if she did not always understand why I was doing it. I thank my father, John Foster, who never got to see me complete college, but whom I know would have been in the front row for every graduation, if he could have. Thanks, Dad, for believing in me and supporting my decisions. I thank my friend Loretta Hoffman, who spent many vacations with me in which I split my time doing schoolwork along with participating in our adventures. And I thank my friends Sandy Styzle and Jill Barton and all my friends at Sandstone Stables, for being cheerleaders along the way.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Within organizations, it is common for individuals who are alike to be attracted to each other and form subgroups (Pillemer & Rothbard, 2018; Kossinets & Watts, 2009). Sometimes these subgroups become very bonded and form cliques (Tichy, 1973). A clique is defined as a subset of a group of at least three or more individuals who are linked to one another and have formed a cohesive unit (Rocha, 2012). The members of this group communicate more within themselves than they do with the members of the larger group (Marion et al., 2016). This dysfunctional communication can lead to employee behaviors that may have a direct consequence on employee job outcomes or may not be of benefit to the individual and organization (Pillemer & Rothbard, 2018).

The effects that cliques have on individuals are well documented, but there is an opportunity to extend theories to further explore employee experiences of working in a group where there is a clique and not belonging to this in-group. Marion et al. (2016) saw a need to understand further how cliques in organizations may impact employee work outcomes. Creating a greater understanding of the employee perspective and mindset when in a situation where a clique exists may help companies better understand how the presence of a clique can influence employee behavior and work outcomes, as well as advance the study of organizational behavior.

In Chapter 1, I outline the research problem and purpose as well as provide an overview of the theoretical foundation that informed the study. The research design and limitations are also included. Finally, the significance of the study to practice and

organizational theory as well as the study's potential contribution to positive social change are provided.

Background of the Study

When brought together as a company, organization, or team, human beings will naturally tend to form friendships and to divide into subgroups, where they will form more intense relationships with the members of that subgroup (Dong et al., 2015; Turhan, 2014). All organizations have different levels of responsibility and power to operate and accomplish the work effectively. The formation of cliques or organizational cronyism occurs when social networking structures confer favored status over specific groups versus others (Turhan, 2014). When that status is based on nonperformance factors or a reciprocal exchange of favors, negative dynamics may develop that can impact the entire organizational culture (Turhan, 2014). Workplace cliques are often seen as silos that can hoard information and power and avoid open communication with those outside of the clique (Marion et al., 2016). For those not belonging to a workplace clique, this lack of belonging to the inner circle can create an emotional response that may affect the employee's job outcomes, attitude, and behavior (Gillet et al., 2016; Popa & Salanta, 2013).

It is human nature to want to be a member of the socially favored or organizational in-group, as individuals derive pleasure and energy from the feelings of solidarity that occur when they are a part of a group (Boyns & Luery, 2015). This desire to be part of the in-group and this unequal bestowing of favors may contribute to institutional weakness and prevent needed change or intuitional advancement (Begley et

al., 2010; Fu, 2015). It does this by creating silos among groups and preventing the exchange of information and ideas between groups and by favoring in-group members with resources and opportunities based on membership and not merit (Begley et al., 2010; Fu, 2015). The gap in the literature that I attempted to help fill is that while the effects of cliques on individuals and between groups has been studied extensively, there is a need to further understand the effect of cliques on employee behavior (Turhan, 2014) and organizational outcomes (Marion et al., 2016).

Problem Statement

The issue of workplace cliques leading to adverse employee outcomes and understanding why, how, when, and for whom cliques at work may be detrimental to organizational functioning remains an under researched area in the extant management literature (Pillemer & Rothbard, 2018). Within organizations, it is common for individuals who are alike to be attracted to each other and form subgroups (Forsyth, 2018; Kossinets & Watts, 2009). Sometimes these subgroups become very bonded and form cliques (Tichy, 1973). A *clique* is a term used to describe a group of individuals who choose to interact with one another more frequently and with higher intensity than they do with others in similar or the same circumstances (Dong et al., 2015). The members of a workplace clique communicate more within themselves than they do with the members of the larger group (Marion et al., 2016). Group behavior of workplace cliques may also relate to distraction from goals, increased inter role conflict, complication of complex decision-making, and inhibition of knowledge sharing (Pillemer & Rothbard, 2018). Group behavior can lead to preferential treatment within a workplace

for individual members and create an "us versus them" mentality among the larger group (Jones & Stout, 2015). The general problem is that a workplace clique can become detrimental to the larger group's job effectiveness causing distraction from goals, increased interrole conflict, and limited knowledge sharing (Ozbek, 2018; Pillemer & Rothbard, 2018).

Workplace cliques are often seen as silos that can hoard information and power and avoid open communication with those outside of the clique (Marion et al., 2016). For those not belonging to a workplace clique, this lack of belonging to the inner circle can create an emotional response that may affect the employee's attitude and behavior (Gillet et al., 2016; Popa & Salanta, 2013). Managers can be especially complicit in supporting the embeddedness of workplace cliques through actual actions that go against endorsing a proper civil climate in the organization (Huang & Lin, 2019). The specific problem is that a deeper understanding is needed by managers on the experiences of employees identifying as belonging outside of workplace cliques formed within their organization's culture (Huang & Lin, 2019; Pellimer & Rothbard, 2018).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of individuals identifying as belonging outside of workplace cliques formed within their organization's culture. I collected data starting with a convenience sample of up to 20 information-rich participants for in-depth study and continued until data saturation was achieved (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Qualitative methodologists support that 15 or fewer participants can provide thematic

saturation for a qualitative study and that lengthy interviews with up to 15-20 people tend to be sufficient for a PhD phenomenological study (Mason, 2010; Moustakas, 1994). To ensure trustworthiness of data and the potential to effect positive social change, I analyzed the data for this empirical phenomenology study's data by distinguishing between the internal horizon, the construction of trustworthiness as it takes place within the research project, and the external horizon, which points to the impact of the study results in the world mediated by trustworthiness (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Question

The primary question that I sought to address in this phenomenological study was, What are the lived experiences of employees identifying as belonging outside of workplace cliques formed within their organization's culture?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this transcendental phenomenological study provided the lens through which to understand the lived experiences of employees identifying as belonging outside of workplace cliques formed within their organization's culture. Cliques are a common and frequent outcome within organizations (Dong et al., 2015; Turhan, 2014). Although individual effects of a clique have been well documented, there remains a need to further understand how the presence of a clique can affect employee behavior (Turhan, 2014) and employee work outcomes (Marion et al., 2016).

The conceptual framework of this study was comprised of four concepts: motivation, creativity, knowledge sharing, and organizational commitment. I derived these concepts from a review of four theories: social exchange theory, leader-member

exchange theory, social identity theory, and self-determination theory. Social exchange theory is based on the idea that two or more individuals will establish a relationship between each other that provides mutual benefit to all parties and that when an employee feels that an organizational situation is working in their best interests, the employee will demonstrate greater motivation and organizational commitment (Hur et al., 2017). Leader-member exchange theory further expands the tenets of social exchange theory by incorporating the concept that the relationship between a leader and each member of their team is a reciprocal relationship that ranges from low quality to high quality (Chughati, 2016; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). This relationship can lead to increased communication and information sharing (Hackney et al., 2018) and greater organizational commitment (Seo et al., 2018) when the relationship between leader and follower is strong.

Social identity theory explains how an individual's version of self can be related to the group that they perceive themselves to be a part of (Billig & Tajfel, 1973). A sense of belonging or not belonging can have an impact on how individuals perceive themselves or their work (Conroy et al., 2017) and may be a source of personal motivation (Ding et al., 2017). Self-determination theory is premised on the notions that all humans have a fundamental need for autonomy and that they will be more motivated (Bhuvanaiah & Ryan, 2015) and exhibit more creativity (Grant & Berry, 2011) when they perceive themselves to have some independence and self-control.

A review of the literature regarding these theories demonstrates that the concepts of motivation (Dong et al., 2015), creativity (Ahmad et al., 2014), knowledge sharing (Gordon & Cheah, 2015; Meier, 2014), and organizational commitment (Potipiroon &

Ford, 2017) are outcomes of employee relationships and alliances. I used these theories and concepts as a conceptual framework to understand how the presence of a clique, involving a leader and members of their team, can affect the behavior and outcomes of employees who do not perceive themselves to be part of that clique, with an emphasis on employee behaviors and organizational outcomes. In Chapter 2, I provide a more in-depth explanation of each of the theories and the concepts of motivation, creativity, knowledge sharing, and organizational commitment.

Nature of the Study

This study was qualitative. I used a transcendental phenomenological approach to understand the lived experiences of employees identifying as belonging outside of workplace cliques formed within their organization's culture. The empirical phenomenology method suggested by Moustakas (1994) offered a natural form of inquiry that facilitated the discovery of participants' meanings of lived experiences. Quantitative analysis was not appropriate for this study. Quantitative methods are best suited for studies whose researchers are wanting to determine causation or to document results related to range and correlation (Harkiolakis, 2017; see also Lampard & Pole, 2015). Numerical measurement was immaterial to this study, as the purpose did not align with numerical analysis of the data to determine causality or correlation of variables for gaining an in-depth understanding of individuals' lived experiences in the workplace.

A phenomenological methodology offers the ability to revisit a past event and to reflect upon the essence of the experience as seen through the eyes of those who lived it (Adams & van Manen, 2017; Moustakas, 1994). In a phenomenological study, the

researcher begins the process with an understanding of the event, which is enhanced

through the interpretation of the participants' input to form new ideas (Moustakas, 1994).

As described by Adams and van Manen (2017) the focus is on the lived meaning of the

experiences themselves. Within phenomenological study, several branches have evolved.

For this study, I used a transcendental phenomenological approach. This approach made

sense as the intent was to understand the lived experiences of individuals within their

workplace.

I recruited 15 individuals for this study using convenience sampling from former

employees of a large telecommunications company. The inclusion criteria for

participation in this study were (a) adults over the age of 18, (b) employed for a minimum

of 2 years in a large organization, and (c) had specific experience on the topic of the

study. Data were collected during face-to-face video conference interviews using open-

ended questions. Evidence collected from interviewing participants provided deep insight

into the lived experiences of the study's sample. Data saturation was achieved after 15

participants, and no additional individuals were recruited to participate in the study. The

sample size was determined with the goal of attaining data saturation (Mason, 2010).

The method of data analysis of interview transcripts for this study incorporated

Moustakas's (1994) modified Van Kaam method, which is recommended for the analysis

of phenomenological data. I used manual and hand coding to analyze the data. The

purpose of this study compelled the process for analyzing the data. Moustakas's method

of phenomenological data analysis is one of rigor and structured processes. First, I

followed the epoché protocol by removing bias and preconceived thoughts and viewing

the events from as objective a viewpoint as possible (Moustakas, 1994). Second, I clustered themes using horizontalization to extract meaningful expressions from interview transcriptions (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, I synthesized the themes into an explanation of the experiences of the individuals (textural and structural descriptions) and then constructed a composite description of the meanings and the essences of employees' workplace experiences with cliques (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Moustakas, 1994).

Definitions

Creativity: The unique and useful ideas, products, or procedures that are the raw material needed for eventual development and implementation (Dunne, 2017; Yoon et al., 2015). Two key criteria of creativity are novelty and value (Dunne, 2017).

Extrinsic motivation: The drive to perform a task not for the sake of the personal satisfaction in accomplishing it but rather for external rewards such as financial or spiritual or the avoidance of negative consequences (Koudelkovà & Milichovský, 2015).

Intrinsic motivation: The internal drive to perform a task for the sense of accomplishment or the attractiveness of it (Koudelkovà & Milichovský, 2015). Intrinsic motivation is seen as a higher quality motivation, in that it produces increased effort, concentration, and persistence to see the task through to accomplishment (Parker et al., 2017).

Knowledge sharing: The act of sharing knowledge or expertise among employees and within the organization (Coun et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2016). It can be shared knowledge across the organization, or it can be individually held knowledge (Henttonen et al., 2016).

Motivation: The drive that directs and maintains a behavior (Hauser, 2014). It helps provide the impetus to accomplish a task or a goal and provides the energy that propels people to do their work well (Hauser, 2014; Mikkelson et al., 2017).

Organizational commitment: The psychological attachment that an employee feels toward their organization; it is the force that binds an individual to an organization (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018; Pentareddy & Suganthi, 2014).

Assumptions

According to Wargo (2015), a research assumption is a statement that is known to be true. Kirkwood and Price (2013) stated that the assumptions made by the researcher shape the study they undertake, possibly leading to inaccurate or overly generalized findings if the assumptions are flawed. I had several assumptions when conducting this study. The first was that research participants correctly perceived that they had worked in an organization where there was the presence of a clique, as identified during the participant selection process. The second assumption was that participants provided open and in-depth accounts of their experiences and that they were willing to share their experiences openly and honestly. The third assumption was that participants recalled the details of their personal feelings and internal processing of how being in an organization with a clique affected them personally and shared that during the interviews. The final assumption was that the sample size selected was sufficient to reach saturation with regard to data collection.

Scope and Delimitations

The focus of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of employees who had worked within a team where there was a clique involving the leader of the team and other coworkers, but the employee was not a part of that clique. I delimited the study to 15 employees who felt they were being or had been led by a leadership team that they identified as having exhibited the traits of a clique. This identification of a clique was based on the traits described by Marion et al. (2016) as individuals having greater communication amongst themselves as well as showing preferential treatment to specific team members and creating an "us versus them" mentality (Jones & Stout, 2015). I chose participants using convenience sampling. Leaders of the team or organization and members who identified as having been part of the clique were not part of this study.

For the conceptual framework for this study, I drew upon concepts from the social exchange theory, leader-member exchange theory, self-identity theory, and self-determination theory. Each of these theories focuses on a different aspect of the role of self and others and on how individuals perceive themselves and on how they interact with others based on those roles and perceptions. The concepts from these theories used in the study include motivation, creativity, knowledge sharing, and organizational commitment. There are many aspects not included in this study that can affect employee behavior and employee work outcomes. For example, leadership styles, organizational environment, workplace behavior, and bullying can all have an impact on employee performance and mindset (Fang, et al., 2019; Javadizadeh & Strevel, 2018; Wu et al, 2020). There are

likely many other organizational theories that can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of employee behavior and organizational outcomes and that could have been used. The four theories and their concepts that were focused on in this study each brought a different perspective on both social and internal drivers of behavior, which help create a sense of self and performance.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the accuracy of the findings of the study was constrained by the ability of the respondents to objectively discuss the presence of a clique, especially if they perceived the current leadership within their organization was part of a clique, and to indicate how that affected them personally. Second, the participants may have been current employees of the company where they were experiencing this phenomenon so this may have caused reservations on the part of respondents to discuss the topic. They may also have felt reticent about talking about the situation for fear of exposing themselves or a belief that the information they shared might not remain confidential. Third, in the limited amount of time for the interview process, it may have been difficult to transcend the natural reticence of individuals to explore their thoughts and feelings about the situation. I ensured confidentiality for all participants, which may have helped to ease participants' fears. Last, I have experienced the phenomenon of workplace cliques personally. To prevent my experiences from affecting the research, I limited the interview questions to the participant's experiences and avoided any possible personal commentary or input.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this phenomenological study is that it provides a more in-depth understanding of the essence of an employee's experience when working within a team where there is a clique involving the leader of the team and other employees, but they are not part of that clique. The presence of a clique within an organizational structure can destroy the cohesion of the group and create an "us versus them" mentality that promotes inequality (Cloete, 2014). Cliques have also been demonstrated to result in a lack of communications among members and a greater focus on individual objectives versus that of the team and can have an adverse effect on advancement opportunities or better assignments (Meier, 2014).

Being part of a clique can have positive effects on the members, such that they have a sense of solidarity and draw positive energy from one another (Boyns & Luery, 2015). These feelings can result in enhanced creativity and confidence for clique members, but for those not part of the inner group, there can be an adverse effect, resulting in a lack of confidence, feelings of isolation, and a lack of commitment to the team or organization. These feelings can result in decreased energy and creativity. When a leader is a part of the clique, the effect on employees can be even more significant. Research has demonstrated that leadership style affects motivation (Buble et al., 2014) and creativity (Yidong & Xinxin, 2013), which in turn can impact organizational commitment and performance (Turhan, 2014). For employees that do not feel a part of the clique that the leader is a member of, there may be a decrease in motivation and creativity for those employees.

This study extends the rich literature on social exchange theory (Khalid & Ali, 2017; Mukherjee & Bahl, 2017; Turhan, 2014) and leader-member exchange theory (Anand et al., 2018; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Khalili, 2017; Yu et al., 2018) by looking at these interactions from the individual and personal perspectives of employees. Each of the participating employees had experienced what they perceived to be unequal treatment of themselves by coworkers and leaders. This study also helps to enhance previous work on social identity theory and how a person perceives themself within an organization due to belonging or not belonging to a group (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008). The emotions that being part of or being excluded from a group evoke are crucial to the employee's sense of self and self-evaluation, and that can also impact the employee's motivation, attitude, and behavior (Popa & Salanta, 2013).

Past research on self-determination theory illuminates how a leader's relationship with their employees can impact the employees' performance (Miniotaitė & Bučiūnienė, 2013). It also provided a deeper insight into how the inclusive nature of a clique can affect employee motivation, which is partly shaped by a person's feelings of belonging or relatedness to the group and the leader. The value of this qualitative study is that it provides insights into, and advances the understanding of, organizational behavior theorists with regard to employee experiences when working in an organization or a team where they perceive there is a clique between the leader and other employees. These findings may have significance to organizations that have experienced the development of cliques within their ranks as an initial means of social identity and belonging, which turns into a means of advancement and privilege.

Understanding the lived experiences of employees who do not perceive themselves to be part of a leadership clique, but have experienced it within their organization, provides insight into the field of organizational behavior. I gained further knowledge regarding the emotions that being excluded from a group evoke and how those emotions influence the employee's feelings of self. This knowledge may ultimately help company leaders to further understand the impact that a clique within the leadership ranks has on employees who do not identify as part of the clique.

Significance to Practice

Understanding the lived experiences of employees who are or have worked in an organization they perceive to be led by a clique may help organizational leaders to better understand how employee feelings of belonging or feeling excluded from the in-group can affect their mindset and actions. Turhan (2014) in his study of organizational cronyism identified the need for further studies that help to understand how cronyism or cliques affect employee behavior. Marion et al. (2016) identified the need for a greater understanding of the effect that collective behaviors such as cliques have on organizational outcomes. I conducted this study to identify and report the lived experiences of employees working in an organization they perceive to be led by a clique. The findings of this study help to further the understanding of employee behavior and organizational outcomes.

Significance to Theory

Four theories informed this study: self-identity theory, leader-member exchange theory, self-determination theory, and social exchange theory. These theories and the

concepts that underpin them provide insight into human behavior. I applied aspects of these theories to an organizational context, with a focus on understanding the lived experiences of individuals working in a situation where they believe a clique exists. These insights were gleaned through the personal, lived experiences of these employees.

Significance to Social Change

Positive social change is defined by Stephan et al. (2016) as the process of transforming behavior and social relationships in such a way that the outcomes benefit individuals, organizations, and society beyond the initial advantages that may be realized by those who instigate the change. The outcome of this study contributes to positive social change by providing insight into the lived experiences of employees who are, or may have been, laboring in a team where they perceived there was the presence of a clique that included the leader of that team. Understanding the essence of how participating employees thought, felt, and behaved when in that situation, and how it affected their organizational contribution, may help organizational leaders to have a clearer understanding of the role cliques have in organizational outcomes. This understanding may have wider reaching societal implications on the relationships that form between individuals in groups that can affect positive social change.

Summary and Transition

In conducting this study, I focused on exploring employee experiences when working within a team where there was a clique that involved the leader of the team and other employees, but they were not part of that clique. Cliques have been shown to limit information sharing and to provide more opportunities for those within the clique

(Gordon & Cheah, 2015; Steffens et al., 2017; Vahtera et al., 2017). This study was intended to help advance the body of knowledge regarding cliques in an organizational setting, by adding to the body of knowledge on how cliques influence employee behavior and organizational outcomes. The individuals in this study did not perceive themselves to have been a part of a clique that was within their work unit. In Chapter 2, I provide additional insights into the theoretical foundation that informed this study, as well as a comprehensive review of the literature on the specific topic of study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The general problem addressed in this study was the potentially detrimental impacts of cliques on the larger group's effectiveness (Hills, 2014; Mazzoni, 2014; Resendes et al., 2015). Although cliques exhibit group cohesion and strong ties among members, and give members benefits such as trust and security, they can also often be viewed as silos that can keep information and power close within the group and avoid open communication with those not part of the clique (Jarman et al., 2014; Marion et al., 2016). A clique offers the ability to share knowledge among members, but it can result in inertia among group members to form new relationships (Dima & Vasilache, 2015; Meier, 2014). It can also lead to feelings of not belonging among those who are not a part of the clique, which can affect employees' attitude toward their work and workplace (Gillet et al., 2016; Popa & Salanta, 2013).

The specific problem was that a deeper understanding is needed by managers on the experiences of employees identifying as belonging outside of workplace cliques formed within their organization's culture (Huang & Lin, 2019; Pellimer & Rothbard, 2018). An engaged workforce leads to improved productivity, effectiveness, customer satisfaction, and lower turnover (Choi et al., 2015). A leader's behavior can directly affect employee satisfaction and organizational commitment (Yidong & Xinxin, 2013).

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to gain a deeper understanding of how employees feel when working in a team where there is the presence of a clique. I examined the lived experiences of these employees. The current literature demonstrates that the presence of a clique within an organization affects the functioning

of the organization and impacts its employees with regard to job productivity, satisfaction, turnover, and commitment (Choi et al., 2015). Marion et al. (2016) identifies the need, however, for greater understanding of how the presence of a clique influences employee behavior and organizational outcomes. This study focused on how employees experience working in a team led by a clique.

In this chapter, I review theories that help explain employee behavior in organizations including social exchange theory, leader-member exchange theory, self-identity theory, and self-determination theory. I also review the current literature on cliques and the key concepts of creativity, motivation, knowledge sharing, and organizational commitment. This literature demonstrates the impact of each of these concepts to organizational behavior and helps to identify the gap that exists with regard to understanding employee behavior and organizational outcomes when faced with a clique (Marion et al., 2016; Turhan, 2014). I also provide overviews of the literature search strategy and conceptual framework.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature review was conducted using the Walden University Library and Google Scholar. The databases accessed included Business Source Complete, ABI/Inform Collection, Academic Search Complete, Emerald Insight, SAGE Journals, and Science Direct, and Google Scholar. The key search terms used included cliques, cronyism, in groups/out groups, creativity, motivation, organizational motivation, organizational creativity, employee motivation, employee creativity, communication sharing, knowledge sharing, organizational commitment, social identity theory, self-

determination theory, social exchange theory, and leader-member exchange theory. I based these terms on the terminology used in peer-reviewed journals. Date ranges of 2014 to present were frequently used as a filter to ensure that more recent research could be discovered and employed for the literature review.

When I began the search for literature for this review, I found little recent research on the areas being studied, particularly regarding cliques and cronyism. Often the more recent studies in these areas were tied to education and behavior by students. Recent searches, however, have provided a robust body of current literature in the areas of motivation, creativity, knowledge sharing, and organizational commitment. Much of this research explores the effect that a leader and their leadership style has on employees (e.g., Gutermann et al., 2017), but there was little research found that directly tied the effect that a clique involving a leader employee behavior and work outcomes, and even less that looked at it from a phenomenological lens, allowing those affected by a clique to share their personal experiences.

Conceptual Framework

Four theories constituted the conceptual framework of this study: social exchange theory, leader-member exchange theory, social identity theory, and self-determination theory. I derived the key concepts for this study – motivation, creativity, knowledge sharing, and organizational commitment – from these theories. These theories and concepts formed a conceptual framework for understanding the experiences of employees identifying as belonging outside of workplace cliques formed within their organization's culture (Huang & Lin, 2019; Pellimer & Rothbard, 2018).

Literature Review

Social Exchange Theory

Researchers first developed social exchange theory to analyze people's behavior with regard to the exchange of resources (Khalid & Ali, 2017). It is the voluntary behavior of people who are motivated by the return they expect to get from that behavior. Trust is at the core of the interpersonal exchange and acts as a bond between the two parties engaged in the transaction. Mukherjee and Bahl (2017) defined social exchange theory as two or more actors facilitating an exchange that mutually benefits both parties. They described it as not antiseptic, but rather emotional, and the emotions felt by both actors in the exchange impact the perceptions of that exchange.

Hur et al. (2017) identified social exchange theory as the belief that when employees feel that the organization is working in the employee's best interest, and when the employee feels that their contributions are valued, they will be motivated to reciprocate with a greater commitment and work effort. The way employees perceive the organization that they are a part of can have a profound effect on how they behave, the level of emotional commitment they have to the organization, and the level of effort they put forth on behalf of the organization. The more an employee believes the organization is caring and supportive, the more significant their affective commitment to the organization.

In social exchange theory, interactions are viewed as a give and a take, which may not always be equal (Turhan, 2014). A person's feelings regarding another person are based on this give and take and what each person derives from the interaction. There is an

expectation of the kind of relationship that should exist, the reality of that relationship, and the future expectations, which all feed into the perception of a positive or negative relationship.

According to Walker and Lynn (2013), social interactions and relationships are a critical element in the formation of self and in the internalization of the role one plays in society. Identification of a group or societal role is further developed by the ties one develops with others and the groups one associates with. These social ties help to form a person's perspective of themself and how they view their role in the broader social network.

The ties that individuals form to groups or social networks can be viewed as investments that individuals make to their group in order to define their self-perception and self-worth (Walker & Lynn, 2013). The ties help shape the individual's vision of themself and belief in their value. The stronger the tie to a single group, the more embedded that identity as a group member becomes and the more influence it will have on the individual's sense of self and their role within that group. People will adjust their behavior to match that of their group role identity to strengthen their ties to the group and strengthen the sense of belonging.

Social exchange theory helps to explain the favoring relations that occur in informal structures within an organization (Walker & Lynn, 2013). If a person is in a superordinate position in an organization and provides a favor to a person in a subordinate position, the person in the subordinate position may feel that they owe the

superordinate a favor. The converse is also true, in that a subordinate granting a favor to someone of superior rank may expect a reward in return.

Leader-Member Exchange Theory

Leader-member exchange theory is a theoretical approach that evolved out of social exchange theory. This theory explores the quality of the relationship between a leader and a subordinate (Berg et al., 2017; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Leader-member exchange theory views the relationships between a leader and a subordinate along a sliding scale from low-quality to high-quality (Berg et al., 2017). High-quality exchanges tend to be of longer duration and are demonstrated by feelings of mutual trust, respect, and loyalty (Berg et al, 2017; Chughtai, 2016). Low quality relationships may be shorter in length and tend to be more transactional and offer fewer qualities of trust and loyalty (Berg et al., 2017). These relationships develop along this continuum because it is more efficient for leaders to develop differentiated relationships with employees to maximize their own time and resources (Yu et al., 2018).

Another view of the exchanges between leaders and followers is social versus economic exchanges (Berg et al, 2017). Social exchanges are marked by long-term relationships that are characterized by trust, an expectation of reciprocal favors, and emotional connections between the parties. The characteristics result in expectations of a give and take where each party is willing to do favors or provide support in the expectation that this support will eventually be returned. Economic exchanges, on the other hand, are shorter, tend to be more formal, and are based more on self-interest and more immediate payoffs.

High-quality leader-member exchanges provide increased support for the followers in that there is a greater quality of information exchanged and greater emotional support between leaders and followers (Hackney et al., 2018). Members in a high-quality relationship also tend to have greater access to their leader's time, resources, and support than do those in a lower quality relationship. Higher quality relationships with leaders have been demonstrated to increase members performance (Hackney et al., 2018), creativity (Berg et al., 2017; Khalili, 2018; Wu et al., 2018), and engagement (Gupta & Sharma, 2018).

Researchers have considered the continuum of low-quality to high-quality exchanges between a leader and the members of their team as being part of an in-group or the out-group depending on the quality of the relationship (Naktiyok & Kula, 2018). However, according to van Knippenberg and Hogg (2004) leader-member exchanges are not solely about an in-group or out-group exchanges. It is more focused on the quality of the individual exchange between the leader and each of their followers (Knippenberg & Hogg, 2004).

The behavior of leaders can also influence the followers' behavior. Along the spectrum of relationship quality that describe leader-member exchange, the engagement overall of leaders has an impact on follower performance (Gutermann et al., 2017). Gutermann et al. found in a quantitative study conducted in a large service organization in Germany that leaders' behavior can have a significant influence regarding follower performance. This study involved a survey of 511 employees, 88 teams and 88 leaders, where leader-member exchange was determined to have a mediating role in a leader's

behavior and an employee's performance. The study showed that the leader's work engagement was demonstrated to be linked to that of their employee's performance. In addition, work engagement was demonstrated to be negatively linked to employee turnover intent.

The differences in the way that leader's treat individual members of their organization are not unnoticed by other employees and can affect how employees interact with one another (Yu et al., 2018). In an effort to understand how the differing relationships between a leader and their followers affects the larger group, Seo et al. (2018) performed a study at a large hospitality organization in China. Using a quantitative survey involving 12 questions with a Likert scale, 96 groups comprised of an average group size of 5.22 members were surveyed to understand the differences that leader-member exchanges had on the larger team. The researchers found that differentiated treatment of team members had a positive effect on the team when the majority of the relationships between the leader and their members was high-quality. A lower sense of organizational commitment was experienced by the group when the relationships with the leader were considered low-quality or only a few members were perceived to have a high-quality relationship with the leader.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory was developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner to explain the "us versus them" behavior often seen in intergroup relationships, where in-group members viewed those not part of their inner circle as outsiders (Ye et al., 2016). Social identity theory explains how an individual's version of self can be related to the group

that they perceive themselves to be a part of (Conroy et al., 2017). The sense of self formed through this association can influence the individual's beliefs, behaviors, and perceived needs (Conroy et al., 2017). The identification that is derived from one's belonging or not belonging to a work group colors the lens through which they view their work (Conroy et al., 2017). It also affects how they experience that work and the meaning they associate with it. That sense of belonging can also provide a source of intrinsic motivation to achieve at a higher level for the overall benefit of the group (Ding et al., 2017).

Social identity theory demonstrates that individuals that identify with an in-group feel they share an identity with others whom they perceive to be a part of that group, and potentially show derision towards those whom they see as being outside of the group (Różycka-Tran, 2017). These individuals seek a distinct social identity that provides them with a positive sense of self (Amiot et al., 2017). The positive feelings developed through this association provides both individuals and the associated group greater self-esteem and contribute to the discriminatory behavior group members will exhibit towards non-members. By being part of the group members feel a stronger sense of identity and that they are better than non-members.

In a natural experiment focused on evaluating in/out group behavior, Różycka-Tran (2017) created two samples that consisted of bystanders where the visual aspects of the target were changed. In the first study, which took place on a tram in Gdansk, Poland, the target simulated being someone with a broken leg who is on crutches, dressed as a nun, then as a Muslim, finally as an atheist. In the second study, which was staged

similarly as the first, but in this case, it was a male who simulates line-jumping, first dressed as a priest, next as a Jewish man, last in non-religious attire. The Christian attire was deemed as the in-group in these studies and the amount of time it took to help the individual or give them a seat was tested in the first study; and the instances of protest and how quickly bystanders protested was measured in the second study.

In both these studies, the findings demonstrated that people would show greater latitude towards those they perceive to be doing something wrong or not following the rules if they identify with that person as being part of their in-group; but they will be much less tolerant of outsiders when they behave similarly or take similar actions (Różycka-Tran, 2017). They will also provide greater assistance and exhibit helping behaviors to those that they believe to be part of their group versus those they perceive as outsiders. Negative behavior towards nonmembers may be found acceptable by in-group members and may even be encouraged (Amiot et al., 2017). In these situations, people may behave in ways they would not normally, and may not believe that the behaviors are reflective of their own values or personality (Amiot et al., 2017).

In particularly negative circumstances or when exhibiting poor behavior, the act of compartmentalizing the behavior and actions of the group from their own identity allows these individuals to believe that the negative behavior does not reflect on them personally (Amiot et al., 2017). Positive group behaviors, however, are more likely to be reflective of the individual's view of self. This identity with a group helps members feel they belong to something bigger than themselves and helps them to make sense of the world (Ye et al., 2016). It provides a sense of purpose, of belonging, of validation for

one's self-interests (if they are in alignment with the group's interests) and potentially provides for enhanced social status within the larger societal arena. Individuals show increased ability to be influenced by members of this social group and to be persuaded to think and act like other members to in order to feel like they belong.

Those feelings of belonging and the derived identity when an individual is part of a group can also bring about a sense of value to an individual (Grandy & Levit, 2015). Though the sense of belonging and community brought about by being part of a clique can bring about feelings of shared responsibility and openness to helping others, this may not extend to those outside of this inner circle. These feelings of belonging and attachment are encouraged among members, strengthening the shared bonds, and creating value for the members.

The need to belong, or to feel that one belongs, has its roots in the need for personal recognition in relation to others. According to Sandberg and Kubiak (2013), a person develops and fine tunes who they are by looking at others and creating a baseline of what is normal. From this, they establish their sense of self against that baseline of normalcy. This process helps individuals form a sense of belonging and connectedness to a community of likeminded individuals.

In a longitudinal quantitative study by Conroy et al. (2017), the researchers sought to more fully understand the relationship that employees have with the company they work for, and how that relationship affects organizational outcomes. In this study 135 pilot instructors at a single company in the transportation industry were asked to report their emotions, work related identification and turnover intentions via multiple surveys

that were administered throughout the year. The responses to these surveys were monitored to evaluate changes in response between individuals and over time.

The results of the study found that there are two associations that shape employee's vision of self: the company they work for and the group within that company that they work with daily (their organization and their occupation) (Conroy et al., 2017). The degree to which they associate with either or both will affect the employee's emotions and behavior at work, as well as work satisfaction and the intent to remain with the organization. The greater one's ties to the organization or the group, the less likely they are to respond negatively to challenging situations at work. Essentially, if one feels tied to the organization, but perhaps not the group they work with, dissatisfaction with work or the work group will be mitigated. The converse is also true. When an employee does not feel connected to either the organization or their work group, they will experience more negative emotions and responses to their situation.

According to self-identity theory, a person's perception of themself is tied to the group they associate with (Vahtera et al., 2017). These perceptions of the group and of themselves may lead to increased favoritism or less favorable treatment towards others depending on a person's feelings of association with that group. To obtain a sense of fulfillment from one's work group, the group to which an employee most identifies with must be held in high esteem within the organization (Conroy et al., 2017). Being part of a highly respected group will positively impact an employee's own self-worth and self-opinion. It also shapes how employees interpret events at work and how they cope with and respond to these events. This sense of a person's belonging within a highly respected

group is one of the most motivating factors in social behavior, according to Dong et al. (2015). Achieving belonging to a certain social group or achieving that higher social status can be a strong motivator for human behavior (Dong et al., 2015).

Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory promulgates that the ability to be autonomous and to exhibit freedom of will is a basic human need, and that the ability to be independent fuels a person's motivation (Thomas et al., 2017). Individuals seek to satisfy three essential needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Luyckx et al., 2009). According to self-determination theory, the human need for autonomy is universal and that the capacity for autonomy is inherent in all human beings (Parker et al., 2017). It also assumes that people are inherently more proactive, energetic, and are naturally persistent; it is when they find themselves in situations that they cannot control that they become passive or feel alienated (Bhuvanaiah & Ryan, 2015).

Self-determination theory distinguishes between autonomous and controlled motivations (Gillet et al., 2016). Autonomous motivation is when a person behaves in a way they perceive to be of their own volition and choice. Controlled motivation is when a person feels that they are behaving in a way that is influenced by internal or external pressures.

Self-determination is when a person feels that they are free to make decisions regarding how they perform their work tasks (Newman et al., 2017). When people can exercise a degree of freedom, they are more motivated to achieve and this, in turn, feeds their independence (Luyckx et al., 2009). Accordingly, when an employee experiences a

degree of freedom, it helps create the internal mechanisms that fuel internal motivation. A sense of autonomy and independence in the workplace with supportive leadership encourages employees to share new ideas and feel comfortable and safe in speaking up with regard to new solutions (Ahmad et al., 2015). It also encourages optimism in attitude and creativity in problem-solving.

According to self-determination theory, an individual's motivation to perform the same act as another individual may vary widely from that other individual (Thomas et al., 2017). They may be internally motivated to perform the action because it brings them enjoyment or pleasure, while another may be driven by external demands, rewards, or the potential for punishment. Intrinsically motivated employees are more engaged in their work and are more successful at handling negative consequences or stress at work (Darvishmotevali et al., 2017). As an individual they will take on and achieve a task for the sheer enjoyment of it and are satisfied with the achievement of the task alone; external rewards are not necessary (Potipiroon & Ford, 2017).

Self-determination theory also applies at the group level, with individual groups exhibiting collective self-determination, according to Thomas et al. (2017). The actions taken by the group may be an autonomous expression of the group's values or norms. These actions may lead to a greater sense of group wellbeing, intergroup helping, and pride in the group's efforts.

One tenet of self-determination theory is that when leaders believe in learning and development, they will be more likely to encourage those traits in their employees and to create an environment that is more willing to trial new things and experiment (Ahmad et

al., 2015). This situation in turn provides a safe place for ideation and creative thinking. According to Grant and Berry (2011), self-determination theory proposes that when employees are intrinsically motivated, the subsequent curiosity and inclination to learn that comes with intrinsic motivation will result in risk taking behavior, an openness to new ideas and an ability to embrace complexity. This cognitive flexibility can result in an ability to embrace new challenges and an ability to solve problems innovatively.

Paramitha and Indarti (2014) highlight that self-determination theory promotes that creativity may be enhanced by an employee's level of perseverance and willingness to take on more complex, challenging tasks. These attitudes stem from the employee's internal motivational drive. Also, when one internalizes a feeling of creativity or a sense of identity as a creative individual, they will likely display greater creativity and be more confident in putting forth ideas and thinking as a natural expression of themselves (Vlachopoulos et al., 2011).

Social exchange theory, leader-member exchange theory, social identify theory, and self-determination theory all help to inform the intended study. Social exchange theory explains the give and take that occurs between individuals, and which can lead to an unequal exchange or the granting of favors unequally among individuals (Turhan, 2014; Walker & Lynn, 2013). Leader-member exchange theory extends social exchange theory by focusing on the quality of the relationship between a leader and a subordinate (Berg et al., 2017) which can lead to disparate relationships between teammates and leaders. Social identity theory explains intergroup behavior and the "us versus them" mentality that can emerge when in-group members view those not part of their inner

circle as outsiders (Ye et al., 2016). And last, self-determination theory helps to explain how individuals behave, and the internal or external drivers that contribute to their performance and motivation (Bhuvanaiah & Ryan, 2015). All four of these theories help provide an understanding of clique behavior, the potentially unequal relationships between leaders and subordinates as well as between peers, and how individuals feel and behave when they are confronted with a clique at work that they do not feel they are a part of.

Cliques

A clique is a term used to describe a group of individuals who choose to interact with each other more frequently and with greater intensity than they do with others in similar or the same circumstances (Dong et al., 2015). A clique is defined as a subgroup of a larger group comprised of at least three nodes (or people) that are connected to one another, and where no other nodes (or people) will be connected to all three of the other nodes (people) (Mazzoni, 2014). The presence of a clique within a larger group does not preclude other cliques from forming within that larger group (Mazzoni, 2014).

Cliques exhibit group cohesion and strong ties to members (Jarman et al., 2014). Members form bonds that give them benefits such as trust and security, among others. Conversely, members can also discourage new ideas or ideas that are outside of those accepted by the clique. It can also be a retardant to information sharing outside the clique, giving members an advantage over nonmembers, and slowing down the dissemination of information to the broader team.

When viewed from the outside, the group traits that emerge among members of a clique can be defined as the cultural traits of that group and are developed through transmission from one member to another (Smaldino, 2014). These group level traits create differences among groups and can force that sense of separateness from the members of one group and the members of another. This sense of belonging within members of cliques can also have a detrimental effect on the larger organization, in that those who are part of a clique have demonstrated less altruistic behaviors than nonmembers (Meier, 2014). These behaviors can have an adverse effect on the larger organization regarding communication, information sharing, opportunities presented for advancement, or new assignments. In a case study involving care giving personnel and a cardiac patient, Meier found that lack of communications, singular focus on individual objectives and a lack of leadership resulted in lost time, ineffective treatment, and wasted resources.

According to Cloete (2014), a cohesive society is one that works towards the advancement of all members of that society, fighting exclusion and creating a feeling of trust and belonging with a collective focus on the member development. A clique within society or an organizational structure destroys that sense of cohesion and creates an environment of "us versus them" that promotes inequality in the system. People identify with the organization or group to which they belong (Ding et al., 2017). This identity is typically tied to leadership or shared work outcomes and goals. People will naturally align themselves with their organizational membership or belonging as part of that organization and can simultaneously identify with multiple groups depending on the

situation. Employees that have a strong sense of commitment will have a psychological attachment to the organization and will align their goals and values to it (Potipiroon & Ford, 2017). A sense of commitment is associated with an enhanced willingness to work on behalf of the organization and results in a lower intention to leave.

The workplace is an important aspect of the lives of the people who work there (Gillet et al., 2016). It can significantly affect an employee's health and wellbeing. In a quantitative survey study by Gillet et al., they surveyed 698 respondents in a range of industries the researchers sought to understand the relationship between role ambiguity and autonomous motivation and satisfaction. The research findings demonstrated that autonomous motivation and satisfaction are high when role ambiguity is low, in other words when people understand their role in the organization. Higher satisfaction with the environment and job manifests itself in better work performance, a more positive attitude, and greater commitment to the organization. A lack of satisfaction or a stressful working environment can lead to job related anxiety and the perception that the job is detrimental or threatening to an employee's wellbeing and feeling of safety.

Almost from the moment employees of an organization gather, relationships are established, and informal groups and friendships can occur (Turhan, 2014). These informal groups share similar values and norms and can evolve into cliques. When people interact in a way that reinforces and rewards the values and norms of the group, those individuals are rewarded for their behaviors. When they act in ways that are different or against the group norms, they are excluded or punished. According to Turhan, in climates of poor organizational health, the values and norms of the organization can be replaced

by personal interest. These personal relationships can then be turned into a means of gaining strength in the organization that is not related to performance.

Internal ties form when connections like this occur between individuals within groups (Marin et al., 2015). Resources are derived from each other and within a network of contacts as these relationships evolve. Marin et al. describe the work of George Simmel, which looked at the ties between three or more individuals within a group that afforded these members a sense of being an insider. These ties tended to decrease the individuality of the members and their power to exhibit dissent, so as not to alienate themselves from the larger group. These Simmelian ties bear a strong resemblance to the workings of a clique, and in fact Marin et al. define Simmelian ties as a clique.

The relationships that form within a clique can be used for varying purposes by the members, including material and moral support, and increased access to information (Marin et al., 2015). Being a member of the clique affords individual's social capital that can be used to their advantage within a larger group. According to Cloete (2014), social capital is the current and future resources, such as trust and information exchange, that can emerge from participation in a social network. Vahtera et al. (2017) describes social capital as networks that allow for greater cooperation and understanding within their group or with other groups that share similar norms and values. Social capital is the relationship between individuals that determines how they interact and allows for access to better opportunities and resources for those involved in that relationship (Gordon & Cheah, 2015). Social capital is a valuable asset that is the result of those social relationships or bonds.

The bonds that tie groups can be either bonding ties, exhibiting strong connections within the same group; or bridging ties, where relationships form across different groups or among unconnected people (Vahtera et al, 2017). These ties allow for the flow of resources and information. Ties among members of a social clique are more than likely to be strong, and the information sharing among those members robust; while information sharing outside of the clique is weaker (Gordon & Cheah, 2015).

Individuals derive pleasure from being part of a group (Boyns & Luery, 2015). The members of the group derive positive reinforcement from each other and experience greater levels of energy stemming from these feelings of group solidarity. The positive feelings and increased energy levels reinforce the bonds between members and draws them even tighter. This, in turn, can encourage spontaneity, creativity, and confidence among groups. Conversely, the negative levels of energy that could be generated from not being part of a clique, or feeling outside the group, could result in depression, isolation, and alienation. The complexity of the opportunities derived from interactions among people, in combination with positive or negative energy, can shape the ingroup/outgroup dynamics of social interactions.

People who successfully integrate or form a clique will experience feelings of solidarity and inclusion among the members, resulting in positive energy (Boyns & Luery, 2015). They will seek to reinforce that positive energy with more frequent interaction and even closer ties among members. However, those who seek to join that social group and experience a negative interaction or rejection may experience feelings of

embarrassment or shame which will generate negative energy and increased

disaffiliation.

When groups form, and norms are established, and a sense of bonding occurs

between group members, the adopted standards of the group can then be used to project

those values on out-groups (Steffens et al., 2017). This in-group projection of norms on

the out-group member can result in bias and can create the "us versus them" mentality

seen between groups. The perceived similarities that in-group members recognize among

each other help solidify the negative feelings towards out-group members.

When employees feel that they are not part of the in-group or are not treated

equally as other members of the group, their self-esteem may diminish (Vogel &

Mitchell, 2017). This may cause the employee to start to self-censor their thinking and

opinions to fit in more closely with the group. They may attempt to present themselves as

more similar and likable to others to fit in and improve their standing in the group.

Mazzoni (2014) highlights that research has shown that groups that have the

benefit of at least two different points of view show greater creativity, innovation, and

originality in their work product. Resendes et al. (2015) observed that public discourse

promotes an expansion of knowledge sharing, creation, and idea improvement. Marin et

al. (2015) advise that the ties within a subgroup tend to be less diversified and do not

afford the same positive social outcomes as larger groups with more diversity and are not

as effective at promoting the welfare of vulnerable group members within the larger set.

Another factor that can weigh heavily against the formation of cliques is the idea

of social cohesion, which is one that works towards the betterment of all members, is

inclusive, creates a feeling of belonging among all members, and provides equal opportunities for its members to advance (Cloete, 2014). A similarity of thinking can also arise within smaller, less diverse groups, which has been proven to be detrimental to perspective-taking (Grant & Berry, 2011). Perspective-taking is the ability to see other's points of view, which can result in openness to new ideas or creative problem solving.

The ability of one person or group to get another person or group to do what they do not want to do is an exhibition of power over that group (Baras a et al., 2016). With power comes the ability to control the agenda, to hide critical information or suppress important topics in decision-making settings and to get individuals who follow those in power to act in ways that may not be advantageous to them or in their best interests. Knowledge sharing can also be affected, as it has been demonstrated that most employees will not voluntarily share knowledge with other employees if an organization lacks a culture where sharing is supported (Lyu and Zhang, 2017).

In a qualitative research study by Stevenson and Radin (2014), the researchers employed a comparative case study approach to explore the effect of position and informal networks among board members on influence and decision-making. Using snowball sampling from over 40 companies to identify possible participants, the study was ultimately conducted with four different companies' board of directors, which agreed to participant. Data collection occurred in several ways, including an initial survey among the members of the boards to determine the influence of the respective CEOs and board members. Interviews with the CEO were then performed to better understand key issues

facing each board. Then each individual member of the board was asked to fill in a cognitive map of their individual perception of the steps required in making the decision. Interviews were also conducted where respondents were asked to complete the steps to decision-making on the key issue facing their specific topic, with the beginning and end points given. Bayesian network modeling was used to analyze the results to identify the effects of the intermediate steps on the real-world outcome.

The findings of this research effort show that the relationships that form within a board and among some members of the board, but not all, can have a significant effect on information sharing, cognition, and decision-making (Stevenson & Radin, 2014). The informal networks of ties within these boards effected cognitive agreement during decision-making. This occurs through access to information and perceived levels of influence among board members regardless of rank.

Barasa et al. (2016) indicate that those in power can enforce their dominance by their control over information, resources, and position. Supervisors are a source of communication and knowledge for employees, in that supervisors control the flow information within the organization (Mikkelson et al., 2017). The degree of exchange between supervisor and employee can determine job satisfaction, performance, and the employee's perception of credibility. By sharing information and conveying intimacy between a supervisor and their subordinates, employees experience greater fulfillment and motivation, and experience less burnout then when supervisors are more selective at the sharing of communication.

Centralizing power within a few individuals (creating a micro social order) and the formation of cliques can all lead to similarities in outlook (Stevenson & Radin, 2014). This similarity in outlook may affect decision-making. Greater knowledge and information sharing among those within the inner circle can also lead to similar decision-making and a weakening of the influence of those outside of the chosen group, as they are less informed and have less access to information.

According to Dima and Vasilache (2012), a drawback to strong relationships is that they may promote the forming of cliques, with the subsequent lack of motivation to share knowledge outside of the group, and a resistance to new relationships. These social relationships are also a primary means of knowledge sharing and diffusion. This can lead to an unequal distribution of knowledge between the groups within the social relationship versus those outside of it. According to Bernini and Klobas (2008) communities of practice and organizational commitment are often in competition with one another, as people tend to align more closely to their community than to the overall organization, potentially putting the community ahead of the organization.

Cronyism is another form of social interaction that can result in the favoring of some individuals over others (Turhan, 2014). Organizational cronyism is the act of a manager or a leader favoring some employees over others, based not on an employee's performance but rather on some reciprocal exchange of favor. According to Turhan, social institutions are based on human beings and human interaction, which is unlikely to exhibit complete objectivity. The subjective nature of these interactions can lead to differential treatment of subordinates such as cronyism.

In a social exchange such as cronyism, the granting of favors by a subordinate or manager create an expectation of reciprocity (Turhan, 2014). These granting of favors and the relationships that develop excludes others in the larger group. This can result in the unequal granting of resources or opportunities among equally or even more deserving members not part of the relationship.

A supervisor's communications skills or level of communication with subordinates can have a positive or negative effect on employees at work (Mikkelson, et al., 2017). Supervisors have a substantial amount of control over employees regarding job assignments, guidance, and feedback, which effect employee job satisfaction and job performance. Concerning coworkers, having poor social relationships at work can impact employees negatively, increasing the risk of psychological distress such as depression and anxiety or physical impacts including cardiovascular disease (Steffgen et al., 2015). Employee self-esteem is particularly vulnerable to supervisor favoritism (Vogel & Mitchell, 2017).

A great deal of tacit knowledge also exists among employees that is typically shared through informal networks and interactions (Muñoz-Pascual & Galende, 2017). When these information networks are truncated or cut off knowledge may be cut off or limited to a few, hurting productivity or innovation. This lack of knowledge or information sharing can be a workplace inhibitor or hindrance manifesting itself in employee stress (Mackey et al., 2017). These employees may perceive that that the lack of communication or information sharing hinders their ability to do their job (Mackey et al., 2017).

The positive energy derived from being part of a clique, especially one that puts individuals in a position of authority (either real or by association) is likely to generate higher levels of creativity and other productive feelings and can inspire intellectual thought, enthusiasm, and innovation (Boyns & Luery, 2015). The converse can be true for those who are not in a position of power or authority (by not being part of the clique), and may result in less enthusiasm, depress intellectual thought, and inhibit innovative thinking. Both positive energy and negative energy are significant sources of motivation. Positive energy can rally individuals around the source of that energy, while negative energy can rally individuals against the source of that energy.

Employees who do not believe they are part of the inner circle or feel they do not fit within the organization may see that lack of acceptance as a hindrance to their job or ability to get their work done (Mackey et al., 2017). Feeling like an outsider or experiencing mobbing, or bullying, because of not fitting in at work can cause employees to develop adverse effects such as lack of ability to sleep and anxiety (Steffgen et al., 2015). To deal with the stress of experiencing this at work, employees may develop maladaptive practices such as a dependency on prescription medicine, increased absenteeism, or turning to alcohol or drugs. Conversely, employees who do feel that there is a match between themselves and the organization experience greater job satisfaction, commitment, higher performance, lower turnover intentions, and work-related stress (Mackey et al., 2017).

Creativity

Employee innovation or innovativeness has been shown to be a critical component of organizational competitiveness and sustainability (Alkailani & Kumar, 2016; Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017; Paramitha & Indarti, 2014). According to Ed Catmull, president of Pixar Animation Studios, innovation is borne of creativity and is defined as the development of original, fresh, relevant, and useful ideas (Paramitha & Indarti, 2014). Creativity contributes greatly to innovation and positive organizational outcomes (Ahmad et al., 2015; Tavares, 2016).

Creativity is defined as unique and useful ideas, products, or procedures that are the raw material needed for eventual development and implementation (Dunne, 2017; Yoon et al., 2015). Creativity is the taking of apparently unrelated ideas and knowledge and finding novel and unexpected connections between them that result in new and useful outputs (Dunne, 2017). Therefore, a team of individuals with diverse ideas and a broad range on knowledge becomes extremely important for creative processes and idea generation.

Creative behavior maximizes organizational efficiencies, helping to create a competitive edge (Tavares, 2016). Diverse thinking, intercultural experiences, exposure to new and novel ways of thinking can all help to provide an environment that is open to alternative approaches, different value systems, and perspectives that can help in the creative process (Dunne, 2017). Creativity is so critical to sustainable competitive performance that it has been given the status of the holy grail for employees and team according to Sung et al. (2017). Dunne (2017) states that the future is closely tied to the

ability of humans to be creative and that understanding how creativity is developed is of critical importance.

Creativity provides many benefits to a corporation, including a source of competitive advantage and a means of growth and economic survival in a highly competitive post-industrial economy (Chang & Teng, 2017; Hennekeam, 2015). The fundament source of creativity and innovation in organizations are its employees (Khalili, 2016). Employee creativity is critical to improving organizational productivity and to create a competitive edge with the competition (Auger & Woodman, 2016; Liu et al., 2016). Creative people have four basic characteristics: fluency, flexibility, elaboration, and originality (Muñoz-Pascual & Galente, 2017). Creative employees yield novel ideas about products, processes, and practices (Khalili, 2016).

Management of employee creativity is considered an essential skill in today's knowledge-based economy (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017). The support for creativity and innovation is the responsibility of leadership and management, as the perceived level of support for employees has an impact on the level of innovativeness and creativity that will be exhibited within the organization (Kahlili, 2016). Leaders that demonstrate support for creativity and innovation within organizations allow employees to think creatively, to have independent ideas, and to think of new and novel solutions to problems. They encourage them to take risks and they demonstrate their support and ownership of the outcomes of those risks to their employees, whether successful or not.

Amabile (as cited by Fujii, 2015) believed that there are three elements to employee creativity: intrinsic motivation to perform a task, having the skills necessary to

perform that task, and having creative thinking skills. Grant and Berry (2011) believe that intrinsic motivation is an enabler of creativity. With intrinsic motivation, employees perform because they find the tasks to be personally fun, exciting, and rewarding. Those that are intrinsically motivated seek information, are open to new experiences, are more intellectually curious, and tend to take more risks (Auger & Woodman, 2016; Paramitha & Indarti, 2014). Intrinsic motivation is considered especially important to individual creativity (Muñoz-Pascual & Galente, 2017).

Liu et al. (2016) believe that even highly creative employees can find themselves creatively challenged when faced with an environment that is detrimental to their motivation. People are most effective when they feel psychologically safe (Han et al., 2017). People feel psychologically safe when they are free to share their ideas and thoughts without fear of embarrassment, ridicule, or retribution. A leadership style that is inclusive may help to make employees feel psychologically safe, which in turn helps to create an atmosphere where creative thinking can flourish. Situations where employees do not feel safe can lead to feelings of anxiety or helplessness, which can inhibit creative thinking.

In a case study involving a direct marketing firm in Japan, Fujii (2015) sought to challenge findings from other studies that indicated that constraints imposed by the organization reduce an employee's intrinsic motivation and inhibit their creativity. In his study, Fujii observed that constraints can actually promote creativity. In this particular example, the constraints imposed by the firm regarding the creative process of producing marketing materials helped the employees focus on their well-defined tasks and allowed

for the generation of new ideas. They also found that their resources were used more effectively.

Creativity requires strenuous mental energy, such that an individual's motivation and resources are factors in allowing creativity to flourish (Kim et al., 2017). Creativity requires an internal engine or force to push the individual to engage in risky and challenging tasks. As such, it is important for individuals to perceive that they are in an environment that allows for that risk taking and individuality when exploring or expressing new ideas.

The organizational climate is defined as a set of measurable properties of the work environment that are perceived or understood by the employees, and which influences their behavior and contributes to, or undermines, feelings of safety and security (Khalili, 2016). Employees need to feel safe and secure for creativity to flourish. The organizational climate is at its heart defined by the interactions of the individuals within the organization. An effective working environment for creativity and innovation is one where employees feel supported and secure, which will directly contibute to the level of creativity and innovativeness that will be exhibited by those employees.

An environment that exhibits justice and equality for employees also creates an environment that allows them to feel safe and supported when expressing ideas or thoughts that may be perceived to be out of the norm (Kim et al., 2016). Studies have shown that perceived justice and fairness within organizations have directly or indirectly affected the levels of creativity within the organization and at the individual level.

Organizations that are considered to be just have employees that report higher levels of trust, respect, dignity, and propriety.

The role of the leader in an organization is an important and significant one with regard to the level of innovation and creativity that employees are willing to and will exhibit (Khalili, 2016). Leaders need to create a supportive and encouraging work environment that creates the safe space employees need to deliver innovative work. Chang and Teng (2017) state that a supervisor's leadership style may play a critical role in nurturing employee creativity. Ahmad et al. (2015) believe that there is a need to create an encouraging work environment to promote employee creativity. A positive work environment has been shown to have a positive impact on people's health, outlook, creative output, and work performance (Khalili, 2016; Tavares, 2016).

In a quantitative study involving 132 employees, Paramitha and Indarti (2014) sought to understand the impact that an employee's environment has on their creativity. The study was conducted at six print media companies in Pekanbaru, Indonesia and looked at four factors that could potentially impact employee creativity: supervisor support, coworkers support, family support, and intrinsic motivation. The findings from this study indicated that coworker support contributed to employee enthusiasm and creativity at work, while family and supervisor had little impact. It also found that the employees own internal motivation mediated that impact, in that the more intrinsically motivated an employee was, the greater the impact that coworker support had on the employee's creativity. Internal factors originate from the self and are attributed to the person's core personality and internal motivation, while external factors include the work

environment, perceived support, and the nonwork environment. At work, coworker interaction, information sharing, and collaboration contribute to employee creativity. Coworker support can come in the form of knowledge sharing and shared experiences both within and outside of the organization. The distinction between whether an employee is internally or externally motivated can have a profound impact on their performance and morale (Sung et al., 2017).

The organizational context that an employee operates within, including regulation, culture, and atmosphere can all work to engender or depress employee creativity (Cheng & Teng, 2017). In a quantitative study Cheng and Teng focused on demonstrating the effects of creative personality on creative output; the effect that transformational leadership has on employee creativity; and the role that an organization's inherent attitude of risk-taking or being risk adverse can have on employee creativity. The study was conducted using a survey among 339 employees and 72 supervisors employed at international tourist hotels in Taiwan. The findings indicated that transformational leadership positively affected employee creativity, and that employees that naturally have more creative personalities will demonstrate greater creativity at work. They also found that companies with a promotion focus (risk-taking) had little effect on employee creativity, but that companies with a prevention focus (risk adverse) demonstrated a negative effect on employee creativity even in the presence of transformational leadership.

Firms that support creative thinking and innovative exploration provide the resources and the environment where creative innovation can thrive (Khalili, 2016). The

way that employees recognize that their environment is supportive of creativity and innovation affects their demonstration of those traits. Environments that are diverse and provide opportunities to expose employees to divergent ways of thinking can create psychological discontinuity resulting from exposure to novel and different ideas, which helps to simulate cognitive activity, or creative thinking, and to make sense of these new and novel situations (Dunne, 2017). The ability to acknowledge divergent perspectives on the same issue and to create links between these competing data sets helps to frame problems from alternative views, leading to a robust and creative ideation in seeking problem resolution.

Creativity is naturally change- and progress-oriented and is the result of focused goal making (Tavares, 2016). Change is dedicated to a future improved state. Therefore, contributing creatively at work helps the employee feel more engaged and motivated and helps find further meaning in the work that they do.

The nature of a person's work, and how motivating or engaging the work is, can also influence employee creativity (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017). Employee creativity is high when organizational commitment is high and when employees feel supported at work both by supervisors as well as coworkers. Creative behavior at work allows employees to feel a greater sense of control and self-efficacy, and boots self-esteem in ways that employees feel that they are making a difference (Tavares, 2016). Conversely, when employees feel stress at work, whether from complex work tasks or the environment, they can still display creative behavior, but it may be in a more passive manner and not spontaneously generated (Sung et al., 2017).

Team dynamics play a vital role in creativity (Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2017).

Team integration, cooperation, and cohesion, as well as other team social factors, have

been demonstrated to have an impact on creative and innovative activities by the team. A

supportive team structure creates an environment where team members feel empowered

and are more likely to add to the team's goals and creative success, through sharing and

building on each other ideas. Han et al., (2017) defined team creativity as the collective

efforts of members that allows for the generation of unique and useful products and

processes. A supporting and nonthreatening environment makes it safe for the origination

and sharing of ideas among teammates, potentially leading to a greater number of

creative and innovative outputs (Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2017).

Horng et al. (2016) look to the interactivist model, which states that creative

behavior is a combination of internal aspects (cognitive style, personality, motivation,

and knowledge) combined with social context and situation. They surveyed 283

employees in the tourism and hospitality industries in Taiwan. Their results indicated that

while employees with higher internal motivation will exhibit higher levels of creativity,

the interaction between an individual and their environment affects the level of creativity

exhibited. A work environment that provides mental and social stimulation will

contribute more meaningfully to the birth of new ideas because it creates an environment

conducive to ideation and motivation. A work environment that is stressful or not

motivating to employees will have a detrimental effect on creativity. This study also

demonstrated that employees with higher internal motivation will be less affected than

employees with lower internal motivation, but a detrimental work environment was shown to impact creativity overall,

Auger and Woodman (2016) found that individuals who are more strongly motivated by internal factors are less likely to be impacted by external influences, versus an individual who exhibits weak internal motivation and is more motivated by external factors. The level of creativity that an employee displays in the workplace gives them a sense of authenticity and confidence in their ability to solve difficult problems and deal with challenges (Tavares, 2016). An employee's creativity and creative self-expression are an expression of themselves, and the more authentic an employee can be at work, the more likely they are to display creative behaviors and be more innovative in problem solving. This alignment with creative self-expression allows employees to have congruence between their work lives and their personal values and expressions, making them more confident and willing to display creative thinking and behaviors.

In three studies, Grant and Berry (2011) looked at the relationship between pro-social motivation, intrinsic motivation, and creativity. In their first study the researchers looked at motivational data from 90 security force officers, first surveying the officers on their self-identified motivation and then nine months later surveying their supervisors on creativity displayed. This first survey indicated a positive relationship between higher levels of intrinsic motivation and the level of creativity displayed; and that prosocial motivation strengthened that relationship. To increase their confidence and reliability in their findings, the researchers created a second study using a different sample and measures.

This second study was conducted among 111 employees and their supervisors at a water treatment plan in the southeastern U.S. (Grant & Berry, 2011). The employees rated themselves on intrinsic motivation, prosocial motivations, and levels of perspective-taking. Supervisors rated the employees on creativity displayed at work. The authors again concluded that prosocial motivation improves the relationship between creativity and intrinsic motivation and that perspective-taking offsets the moderating effect prosocial motivation can have on both.

Last, the researchers sought to further strengthen these findings in a laboratory experiment where 100 participants generated creative ideas to solve a business problem via computer (Grant & Berry, 2011). Through manipulation of language and description, the researchers created situations that generated different levels of prosocial motivation. They also asked participants to answer a series of questions to help determine perspective-taking. This third laboratory study again supported the findings in their first two studies, in that prosocial motivation enhances the effects of intrinsic motivation on creativity, and that perspective-taking has a mediating effect on influence of prosocial behavior. Their collective findings from this research indicates that intrinsic motivation is more likely to be an indicator of increased creativity, particularly when employees are prosocially motivated to take the perspective of others.

According to Mazzoni (2014), creativity scholars believe that divergent thinking promotes creativity and the willingness of groups to consider alternative thoughts and a variety of ideas before making a decision. The introduction of different points of view tends to result in greater originality and innovation versus groups that exhibit similar

thought patterns or ideation. Information and idea sharing among employees can enhance creativity and the ability for employees to learn from one another (Han et al., 2017).

The more information available to a larger number of people can result in improved stimulation of dialogue and thinking (Mazzoni, 2014). This improvement, in turn, can evolve existing ideas and lead to the development of new ideas. According to Paulus and Dzindolet's group creativity model (as cited in Han et al., 2017), creativity can seem risky because it introduces original ideas that may seem foreign or feel uncomfortable in their divergence from the norm. These ideas may be rejected by the team because of their novelty (Han et al., 2017). Creativity thrives in environments where members feel psychologically safe and where team members are allowed to think differently and to express their ideas and opinions freely.

Understanding others, and being able to take their perspective, also is conducive to new idea generation and the development of ideas that are useful to others (Grant & Berry, 2011). Groups where individuals possess differing talents, strengths, and abilities have demonstrated stronger problem-solving behaviors (Smaldino, 2014). Homogeneity in background, training, or style of thinking can lead to less effective teams and problem-solving skills. When team members are in an environment where they feel safe and able to express their opinion, they are more open to sharing opinions and accepting feedback, and to use task conflict in the generation new ideas without taking that conflict personally (Han et al., 2017).

An employee's susceptibility to interpersonal influences within an organization can affect their behavior, thinking, and ideation and can negatively affect their ability or

readiness to accept innovative ideas or initiatives (Alkailani & Kumar, 2016). When employees are working in an environment where they feel constrained by process or relationships, or are working under a situation of avoidance motivation, this will adversely affect their creativity (Fujii, 2015). Conversely, with supervisor approval, support, and encouragement employees tend to be more creative. Individual characteristics in combination with contextual factors can all impact an employee's ability to be creative (Liu et al., 2016). Employees who trust and get along with their coworkers are more effective in knowledge sharing and in giving and receiving feedback as they do not feel constrained by fear (Han et al., 2017).

In a quantitative study, McMahon and Ford (2013) found that a leader's behavior can either positively or negatively affect an employee's creativity. The study involved 289 employees, supervisors and coworkers using a triad electronic survey process, where feedback was sought from employees from an array of industries, who in turn forwarded the surveys to their coworkers and supervisors, to establish three perspectives. The findings from this research indicated that leaders could stimulate creativity through knowledge sharing and transfer, although the degree of stimulation is mediated by the employee's intrinsic motivation.

In a meta-analysis of creativity literature focused on individual creativity using 191 independent samples, Liu et al. (2016) found that intrinsic motivation, creative self-efficacy, and prosocial motivation are all positively related to creativity; job complexity and conscientiousness were associated with creative self-efficacy; and that job autonomy and openness to experience were associated with intrinsic self-motivation. This

demonstrated that employees are more creative in job situations that are conducive to creativity and when they are supervised in a supportive and noncontrolling manner.

Leaders can positively impact employee creativity by establishing goals, regulatory beliefs, engagement, and autonomy, all of which can positively or negatively influence an employee's intrinsic motivation (Lui et al., 2016). Lui et al. found that creativity and the generation of new and novel ideas can be triggered by one's motivation. When intrinsically motivated, employees will spend more time, delve deeper into their work, and put forth an increased effort to find novel information. Potipiroon and Ford (2017) state that a job can be made more motivating through enhanced skill level, work diversity, stronger task identity and significance, autonomy, and feedback.

Leaders can prompt employee creativity by creating diverse teams or groups and to exposing employees to new opportunities and experiences which allows for knowledge transfer and developing new skills (McMahon & Ford, 2013). When managers create positions that encourage autonomy and ambitious goals, employees will be more motivated and show greater creativity (Auger & Woodman, 2016). When given empowerment over decision-making, employees will demonstrate improved cognitive flexibility and persistence toward even complex tasks; and that empowerment will allow them to meet those tasks with a better psychological state and positive attitude (Sung et al., 2017). Leaders can have a significant influence on employee innovation by establishing and maintaining a cooperative relationship with their employees (Koudelková & Milichovský, 2015).

Human resource practices designed to allow creative freedom help to build a workforce that is supportive of creative behavior and promotes high work performance (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017). Organizations benefit when their workflow and design are set up to encourage employee creativity. Jaiswal and Dhar propose that human resources policies and practices must be set up to inspire employee creativity and innovation. When employees feel that their needs are met, that they have some autonomy in their work, and are committed to organizational goals, they are in a better place to drive innovation within the organization.

Research has shown the importance of autonomy at work and of creating clear work outcomes to encourage employee creativity and subsequent job satisfaction. Sung et al. (2017) demonstrated that psychological empowerment and autonomy created a greater sense of significance among employees, which prompted them to be more proactive in solution finding and more innovative in problem solving. Strong social support within teams enhances the feeling of team solidarity and creates an atmosphere where team and individual creativity can thrive (Han et al., 2017). Conversely, when employees feel they are not treated well or that they are not of value to the social group, their sense of self worth diminishes (Vogel & Mitchell, 2017).

A study by Jaiswal and Dhar (2017) found that there is a strong correlation between employees who feel a higher level of commitment to their organization and the generation of creative ideas. This relationship was strengthened when employees felt a high level of autonomy in their job situation. Their research demonstrated that a greater sense of independence led to increased organizational commitment and subsequently to a

healthier work environment. This allowed employees to feel empowered and motivated to think creatively and generate ideas and to innovate. Yoon et al. (2015) agreed, stating that employees who are given the freedom to develop new and useful ideas are more likely to do so.

Employee involvement in the organization leads to organizational commitment (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017). It also leads to an environment where employees feel motivated to advance the organization through creative thinking and ideation. It is cyclical, in that the more employees see their ideas being implemented and absorbed into the organization, the more motivated they are to continue to generate new ideas.

Equitable rewarding and compensation between employees for creative thinking will also create organizational trust and an environment where creative thinking is supported and embraced (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017). Rewarding can be in the form of tangible and intangible rewards (Yoon et al., 2015). Tangible rewards are relatively straightforward and include increased pay, bonuses, and awards. Intangible rewards include praise, recognition, and support and come from both peers and supervisors or leaders within the organization. These intangible rewards can provide the supportive environment needed for increased employee creativity. Yoon et al. demonstrated that intangible rewards increase an employee's intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Plus, the good will generated among employees through intangible rewards can lead to increased prosocial work activities and higher task performance.

Motivation

Motivation is defined as that which directs and maintains a behavior (Hauser, 2014). Employee motivation is the extent to which an employee is tied to an organization, either emotionally or psychologically (Fiaz et al., 2017). It is an internal force that helps provide the impetus to employees to accomplish organizational goals (Mikkelson et al., 2017). Motivation helps determine the decisions and actions necessary to contribute to the organization's overall functionality and performance, based on its interests and objectives (Hauser, 2014).

Motivation at work is the willingness of employees to participate in their work and to strive to achieve professional goals; it is the result of the interdependence between the individual and organization to achieve a goal (Gîlmeanu, 2015). Motivation is the driver that convinces an employee that achieving a certain goal or accomplishing an activity also satisfies their own needs. It is the energy that propels people to accomplish objectives and provides them with the drive to perform their work well (Hauser, 2014). Higher work performance and productivity have been positively correlated with job satisfaction (Mikkelson et al., 2017). Good motivation creates opportunities for fulfillment, accountability, reward, and recognition (Gîlmeanu, 2015). Work motivation plays a central role in work satisfaction as well as work anxiety (Gillet et al., 2016). The study of motivation and engagement has been a critical part of academic study and human resources organizations because of the tangible benefits it affords organizations regarding productivity (Latta & Fait, 2016).

The degree to which an employee perceives the company they work for to be caring or invested in them determines the degree to which an employee will be committed in turn to the organizational goals and vision (Hur et al., 2017). Employees try and understand the organization they work for and how it relates to them, which can drive increased motivation to help the organization, and in turn, themselves if they believe in the perceived organizational goals. Motivating employees is more about managerial philosophy than any particular technique; a manager's attitude toward the employees they manage and their reaction to that attitude helps determine the overall affect that employees will exhibit when it comes to their work (Gîlmeanu, 2015). To successfully motivate employees, a manager needs to understand the overall expectations and goals of the employees they manage.

When employees feel valued and believe in the organization, it helps them redefine their role in terms of job crafting (Hur et al., 2017). It allows them to bring their perspective to the job in such a way that it increases their motivation and drive for success for both themselves and the company. The extent to which the employee perceives the company as being virtuous, or exhibiting prosocial behaviors, the greater the employee behaviors of commitment, satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior. Job satisfaction has been positively linked to motivation and individual performance and the lack of satisfaction to personnel turnover and absenteeism (Gîlmeanu, 2015).

Leaders can have a significant impact on, and be an important determinant of, employee motivation (Fiaz et al., 2017; McMahon & Ford, 2013). Leadership is a way by

which an individual inspires or influences another to attain the goals of the organization (Fiaz et al., 2017). It is the responsibility of management and leaders to motivate employees to achieve the objectives set by the organization and to provide guidance and opportunity for employees to achieve their personal goals (Hauser, 2014). It is through the process of building up employee self-belief and the encouragement of self-esteem by leaders that motivate employees to achieve organizational goals and tasks (Fiaz et al., 2017).

Leaders that take an interest in their employee's wellbeing and work development, through guidance and feedback, can positively affect that employee's intrinsic motivation to produce great work and to succeed (Hauser, 2014). Fulfilling an employee's basic need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness can, according to self-determination theory, help an employee become intrinsically motivated (Kroon et al., 2017). High quality work, according to Steffgen et al. (2015), provides employees with the training and skills as well as the opportunity to do great work. Perceived organizational virtuousness, with leaders exhibiting traits of approval, esteem, and caring will motivate employees to reward the organization with positive behavior and increased motivation (Hur et al., 2017). Organizational intimacy can help to create a culture of liking, respect, and care that all contribute to a positive work environment (Mikkelson et al., 2017).

According to Mikkelson et al. (2017) leaders that exhibit positive communications including expressions of liking, respect, and comfort were the primary predictors of positive employee outcomes. Effective communication and organizational

leadership should increase employee overall motivation, productivity, and performance (Fiaz et al., 2017). It also contributes to employee self-esteem and work attitude and can be the source of inspiration of disenchantment with an organization or with the work, leading to increases or decreases in productivity and engagement. Leaders that put their employees first, and set aside their own personal ambitions, create employees that are more committed, satisfied, perform better, and are more engaged (Newman et al., 2017). An engaged employee is someone who is passionate about their work, feels involved and empowered within in the organization, and demonstrates those feelings through their work (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2015).

Motivation is a combination of an individual's traits and the environment they find themselves in (Horng et al., 2016). While places of employment and organizational characteristics effect employees' motivation, personal traits determine how much that climate will impact employee performance. Individuals with a strong internal motivation will see less of an effect on performance than employees with weaker internal drives within the same organization. Highly motivated employees have been demonstrated to produce better results (Koudelkovà & Milichovský, 2015).

Motivation consists of both internal and external drivers and is based on the attractiveness of the work (intrinsic); financial rewards (extrinsic); personal reputation; and social mission work (Koudelkovà & Milichovský, 2015). The quality of motivation has an impact; internalized motivation is a higher quality motivation in that it can manifest itself in better concentration and higher persistence to achieving tasks (Parker et al., 2017). External motivation is perceived as lower quality, in that people have a harder

time getting started with a task and maintaining persistence and focus in completing the tasks.

Managers have a variety of tools available to them to help encourage and develop employee motivation (Koudelkovà & Milichovský, 2015). According to Koudelkovà and Milichovský, there is a direct relationship between employee motivation and innovation, and it is incumbent upon leaders to find what motivates employees to unlock that potential. Leaders can help employees to become intrinsically motivated when they provide meaning to the work that employees do, helping them to adopt the goals of the organization and to become more focused on delivering high-quality work (Kroon et al., 2017). Intrinsically motivated employees tend to be more focused on the quality of their work and the role they play in the larger organizational schema than extrinsically motivated employees. Intrinsic motivation is linked to increased work engagement, task identification, positive affect, and productivity (Kuvaas et al., 2017). Extrinsic motivation is the intention to perform a task or activity in the hopes of either receiving an incentive or reward or avoiding a negative experience or punishment.

The feelings and behaviors that an employee feels toward an organization is coined organizational citizenship behavior and is defined as behavior that goes above and beyond the job description or what is formally rewarded (Lemmon & Wayne, 2015). Organizational citizenship behavior and the employee's desire to perform well for the company has been positively linked to employee productivity and organizational performance. Employee proactive behavior has been shown to positively contribute to creativity, task performance, and initiative (Beltrán-Martín et al., 2017). The sense of

membership that employees experience for the organization they work for can provide them with feelings of attachment and value. That sense of membership can also influence their affect, behavior, and cognitions as well as their satisfaction with being a member of that organization (Hur et al., 2017).

Proactive behavior is not necessarily a given in employees, it requires additional effort on the part of employees to take the initiative and to be motivated enough to persist with it (Beltrán-Martín et al., 2017). Even highly motivated employees, however, will not achieve their true creative potential without an organization that supports their ideas (Horng et al., 2016). Employees will feel a sense of identification with an organization that promotes optimism, trust, compassion, and integrity, and this sense of identification will strengthen the employee's commitment to the organization (Hur et al., 2017). When employees feel a lack of integrity within an organization, it will decrease their sense of commitment and motivation to help contribute to the organization's success.

It is incumbent upon leaders to set the tone by being supportive of new ideas and creative thinking (Horng et al., 2016). Leaders who evidence empathy, provide emotional support, and trust for their employees create a relationship of mutual respect and obligation (Newman et al., 2017). Employees that have a positive attitude at work and evidence increased work engagement exhibit greater initiative at work (Newman et al., 2017). Highly engaged and motivated employees have been shown to have increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, and generate increased profitability and customer loyalty (Bhuvanaiha & Raya, 2015).

A strong sense of bonding with an organization, spurred by employee perceived traits of virtuousness and caring, reinforces the employee's motivation to internalize the organization's goals and values, and in turn increases motivation to engage in actions that deliver on those goals (Hur et al., 2017). Hur et al. found in their research that the moral or desirable traits exhibited by organizations were instrumental in determining the degree of motivation felt by employees to go above and beyond their defined work tasks and to contribute to the company's success. Gîlmeanu (2015) identifies three factors that contribute to employee motivation: self-esteem, internal perceptions of legitimacy and identification (individual or group recognition). All three must be present to achieve optimal motivation for both the individual and group.

Nicolescu and Verboncu (2008) identify four types of motivation: positive or negative; intrinsic or extrinsic; cognitive or affective; and economic or moral spirited. Positive motivation aims to increase the contributions of employees by providing positive rewarding or incentives including pay, development, a positive atmosphere, and economic and organizational opportunities. Negative motivation encourages employee achievement through fear of loss of income, status, job opportunities, or future advancement.

Intrinsic motivation is that which is internal to the individual and is a cognitive activity within the individual that allows them to act based on ambition, pleasure, and a desire for power or for achievement (Hauser, 2014). Intrinsic motivation is when an act is a reward in itself; no external factor is needed to generate the desire to act (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2015; Kroon et al., 2017; Kuvaas et al., 2017). It is the desire to expend effort

because the work itself is absorbing and enjoyable (Potipiroon & Ford, 2017). People who are intrinsically motivated are more enthusiastic and engaged (Gillet et al., 2017). Employees view work as congruent with their own beliefs and interests and are therefore more willing and enthusiastic, leading to greater energy and engagement as well as lower turnover.

Extrinsic motivation is that which is external to the employee and is based on the potential of increased pay, status, prestige, opportunity, or recognition (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2015; Hauser, 2014). Extrinsically motivated employees work to avoid negative outcomes, which may reduce their satisfaction and may cause them to feel coerced into achieving the goal (Kuvaas et al., 2017). Extrinsic motivation is a contributor to work stress, burnout, and higher turnover intentions. This comes from employees feeling that they have to think, feel, or behave in ways that are not aligned with their own personal interests, but that is required to achieve the expected rewards (Gillet et al., 2016).

Cognitive motivation focuses on providing for the intellectual needs of employees such as knowledge, learning, and innovation (Hauser, 2014). It provides employees with the means to advance, satisfy internal drives, and increase their knowledge. Affective motivation is more about the sentimental needs of the individual within the organization and offers a sense of belonging or commitment that satisfies the more human, emotional needs of employees.

Economic motivation is about meeting the economic expectations of employees regarding pay, remuneration, bonuses, etc. (Hauser, 2014). It satisfies the economic ambitions and aspirations of employees. Moral-spiritual motivation is aimed at providing

an environment that is in alignment with the value of employees and where they feel their beliefs are accepted, and which satisfies their own altruistic goals. Another view of the moral-spiritual motivation is mission valence, or the perception of the level of attractiveness of an organization's purpose or social contribution, which within the public and non-profit sectors is seen as an essential driver of employee motivation (Kim et al., 2017).

Leonard, Beauvais, and Scholl (as cited by Latta & Fait, 2016) had a similar view of motivation with a slight variation. They identified five self-based sources of work-related motivation, namely intrinsic process motivation; extrinsic/instrumental motivation; external self-concept motivation; internal self-concept motivation; and goal internalization motivation (Latta & Fait, 2016). In this approach, intrinsic process and extrinsic motivation are similar with how other scholars have defined them. External self-concept motivation is when individuals are motivated by affirmative social feedback from others; while there is positive feedback, they will continue to be motivated. When that feedback ends, so too will the effort put forth for the task. Internal self-concept motivation is when individuals engage in activities that provide them with affirmative task feedback; when that task feedback ends, so too will the drive to complete the task. Goal internalization motivation is when an individual engages in a task because it provides the possibility of achieving the team or organization's goal and will continue as long as they are working towards that goal.

Voigt and Hirst (2015) describe the regulatory theory of motivation, in which individuals are motivated through either a promotion or prevention focus. A promotion

focus is one in which individuals strive to achieve a goal and is based on the presence or absence of rewards. These individuals are more motivated when they receive positive feedback, and their performance will increase when they are given feedback on successes rather than failures. Focused on success, they will respond most favorably to the feedback that reinforces their personal positive view and that is conducive to achieving their goals.

A prevention focus is one in which individuals strive to achieve a goal to avoid a negative consequence (Voigt & Hirst, 2015). Both systems act to regulate an individual's behavior, and the system that is more motivating to the individual is based on their mindset and interaction with the environment. It is important to recognize that each employee is going to have a different motivational factor that drives and motivates him or her (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2015). Proactive work behavior is a process through which individual employees recognize problems or opportunities and self-initiate change (Vough et al., 2017). They achieve this through personally initiated actions including taking charge of a situation, expressing their ideas or opinions, or seeking to revise tasks or jobs to enhance outcomes. Organizations and leaders can encourage these self-directed behaviors and motivation by understanding the internal drivers of each employee and being cognizant of their motivations. Employers can promote this kind of behavior through job selection, rewarding and increased knowledge and responsibility (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2015; Vough et al., 2017).

According to Vough et al. (2017) an organizational climate that encourages proactivity by employees will naturally increase that behavior. This type of climate will also lead to increased employee commitment, better relationships with managers and

coworkers, and increased job performance. Another point of view offers two major factors that drive an employee's organizational commitment: egotistic motivation and altruistic motivation (Lemmon & Wayne, 2015). Egoistic motivation is the felt obligation and the need to be rewarded for one's efforts or conversely, to avoid a sense of indebtedness or to be at a disadvantage to another. A person experiencing this type of motivation is driven by a desire to avoid the unpleasant experience of perceiving another in need; or by the belief that providing assistance will result in some kind of reward. Altruistic motivation is when one performs a task or offers assistance because of a feeling of identification with that person or because one wants to help.

Intrinsic motivation may be similar to egotistical motivation, in that internally motivated individuals may be acting out of a self-serving goal; they are seeking to reduce the guilt that may arise by witnessing someone in need (Lemmon & Wayne, 2015). It is almost an anthropomorphic view the employee takes to the organization, where they view the organization as nearly a living thing, and that they need to provide help to the organization for it to thrive. This sense of connectedness to the organization is present when employees feel that the organization is concerned and committed to the employee's well-being, needs, and values.

According to social exchange theory, an employee will be committed to an organization when they perceive they owe that organization for some benefit the organization has provided them (Lemmon & Wayne, 2015). An employer, in turn, understands this and gives a reward or benefit back to the employee for that effort. This mutual exchange of service, commitment, and reward build a level of trust and future

expectation that engenders motivation for continued prosocial behavior on the part of the employee. Leaders play a critical role in encouraging employees to become involved in decision-making and proactive behavior through the relationship they develop with them, through soliciting and respecting their ideas, and encouraging them to become involved (Newman et al., 2017).

The degree to which leaders exhibit a commitment to a goal or mission also affects employees (Kim et al., 2017). The more able a leader is to connect to their employees and the more they show employees the value and contribution of their role in the organization, the more an employee will feel a sense of responsibility and commitment toward the organization, increasing their motivation to help the organization succeed. Through connecting an employee's goals to the organization's goals, a leader helps employees absorb the organization's goals into their own sense of identity. This is especially salient with regard to nonprofits or charitable organizations.

Team members that feel engaged and have a strong sense of team cohesion increase the likelihood that they will be curious and adaptive and be more willing to take risks and to think differently (Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2017). Proactive behavior on the part of employees increases the relationships that employees have with their coworkers and with their managers and encourages increased commitment to the organization (Vough et al., 2017). It also increases their willingness to put forth the effort to try new things, and to be persistent in finding a solution to problems and barriers, which could result in creative solutions (Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2017).

Proactive behaviors among employees are beneficial to organizational innovation and success in that they encourage individuals and teams to understand their environments and to have a sense of the broader picture that allows for anticipating potential problems (Beltrán-Martín et al., 2017). Proactive behaviors by employees help prepare them to make changes through greater information exchanges with others, which builds the trust among coworkers and management that is needed to try potentially risky or more creative ideas (Vough et al., 2017). With greater control of a situation, employees tend to behave more proactively versus if they do not feel empowered to act on their ideas or motivations (Beltrán-Martín et al., 2017).

Psychological empowerment has been identified as a form of intrinsic motivation (Newman et al., 2017). Leaders influence employees' work outcomes by infusing meaning in the employees' work, creating a sense of confidence in their skills and knowledge and by giving them freedom to make decisions. All these actions help to give an employee a sense of meaning and ownership about the work they perform.

A sense of solidarity within a team can lead to greater enthusiasm, task engagement, and inspiration (Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2017). Cohesive teams are also more likely to be more efficient in their tasks, given their closeness to teammates and ways of thinking that can lead to better and more creative solutions and generate more ideas as they can be more efficient with their time. Mutual respect between employees and between leaders and employees create a deeper sense of meaning for employees in their jobs and the work they do (Newman et al., 2017).

Ding et al. (2017) demonstrated that an employee's identification with a project or an organization that they are a member of has an impact on their work engagement. It is their dedication and absorption with the work that give employees the energy to achieve a positive outcome from their work. The level of engagement and drive can impact the success or lack thereof in a project or impact the cohesiveness of an organization.

An employee needs to feel that they can be successful at work in order to exhibit behaviors such as proactivity, as taking chances and trying new things comes with a measure of psychological risk to the individual (Beltrán-Martín et al., 2017). By encouraging employees to participate in decision-making, leaders provide them with the opportunity to understand the impact they are having in their job and with the organization (Newman et al., 2017). This increases employee commitment and job satisfaction. When leaders empower employees to make decisions and to shape their own destinies within their organization or with their work, they are rewarded with employees that are more engaged and who are more likely to take a more active role in the organization and towards their work, even more than is necessarily in their job description.

Work engagement has also been found to be associated with leadership and employee perceptions of leadership (Ding et al., 2017). Transformational leaders can motivate employees and spur a more positive attitude by the employee and greater involvement in their jobs. When employees feel a shared sense of purpose and similarity with their leaders, they may translate this into altruistic feelings for that leader that can

result in increased organizational commitment and a source of employee motivation (Lemmon & Wayne, 2016). The closer the relationship between leader and employee the more the employee may exhibit organizational commitment and proactive behavior. Also, when employees feel that employers treat them fairly, they may be more willing to exhibit proactive behavior and to more adaptable to changes in the work environment or industry (Beltrán-Martín et al., 2017).

When employees find that their work is meaningful, it becomes a more critical part of their lives (Tavares, 2016). It becomes important to the individual and gives them a sense of self and contributes to their personal growth. This sense of meaning in work can provide internal motivation to excel and to give the employee purpose. When a person feels that their work is meaningful, they will engage in that work for its sake alone and view the product of that work outcome as important and relevant to their self and life.

Beltrán-Martín et al. (2017) found that there is a significant relationship between an employee's intrinsic motivation and the level of proactive behavior they will exhibit. When work is engaging and personally fulfilling, an employee is more likely to willingly partake in the work because it fulfills more than just the job requirements, it provides a sense of personal satisfaction (Beltrán-Martín, 2017; Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2015). Engaged employees are more satisfied with their work situation, have a more positive outlook at work and about their work, are more committed to the outcome, are more innovative, and exhibit greater physical and mental health (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2015). Research has also shown that job performance has a direct impact on an employee's intention to leave (Voigt & Hirst, 2015).

Conroy et al. (2017) recognize that organizational life is rife with human feelings, and that every individual's emotions are going to be different and unique to them, and that they have an impact on behavior as well. Steffgen et al. (2015) found that burnout at work can be predicted by employee's feelings of satisfaction and being respected, being part of the "in" group (or not) and the level of mental strain experienced. Role ambiguity, workload, and pressure can all combine to lead to physical and mental strain which can have a detrimental effect on employee engagement (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2015; Gillet et al., 2016). Role ambiguity is a barrier that constrains or hinders employee progress toward goal attainment (Gillet et al., 2016). Greater role ambiguity has an impact on supervisor and work satisfaction and creates higher levels of anxiety with both. Managerial and peer feedback, support, and the degree of autonomy that an employee experiences all help to mitigate the cumulative effects of work stress (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2015).

Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing is when employees share knowledge or expertise among themselves and within the organization (Wang et al., 2016). It is the act of sending and receiving knowledge among employees (Coun et al., 2019; Hameed et al., 2019). Knowledge can be shared knowledge across the organization, or it can be individually held knowledge (Alsharo et al., 2016). Knowledge sharing helps to improve organizational productivity and innovativeness, resulting in increased competitive advantage (Wang et al., 2016). Knowledge sharing allows for the evolution of ideas and is instrumental in the development of new products and services as well as new ways of

doing things (Hameed et al., 2019). The greater the level of knowledge sharing that occurs in an organization, the greater the level of organizational effectiveness (Alsharo et al., 2016; Hameed et al., 2019). The process of transferring knowledge from one employee to another helps to both increase individual understanding but also to create an archive of knowledge that can be used by others (Hameed et al., 2019).

Often times, however, individuals will hoard their knowledge as they feel that having that knowledge is a personal advantage for them, and therefore are unwilling to share that knowledge with others (Hameed et al., 2019). Employees may view knowledge and information as an asset that enhances their own standing within the company and their own power and status among their coworkers, which deters them from sharing that knowledge (Zhu, 2016). Employees may see knowledge sharing as an advantage and will share knowledge only when there is a benefit in it for them, such as economic rewards, personal or promotional gains to be had, or where sharing enhances their standing among their peers or within the company. They may also view knowledge sharing as a loss of knowledge ownership and power (Alsharo et al., 2016). Companies that exhibit poor knowledge sharing behavior may experience higher costs as employees use additional time and resources to acquire knowledge or learning that already exists within the organization and may make inaccurate assessments or poor decisions due to a lack of complete knowledge (Israilidis et al., 2015).

The organizational climate that an employee finds themselves in also plays a role in knowledge sharing (Hameed et al., 2016). Employees are more likely to share their knowledge when they are driven by intrinsic motivation or when they feel that they can

benefit from sharing that knowledge such as through reciprocal relationship, an enhanced reputation, or association with the person they are sharing the knowledge with (Israilidis et al., 2015). When employees feel that an organization is supportive of them and their role, they are more likely to be willing to share their knowledge among coworkers and more broadly across the organization (Hameed et al., 2019). Trust is an important factor among employees, as employees are more willing to share knowledge among their peers and across organizations when they feel they can trust them (Alsharo et al., 2016). Organizations that create a positive work atmosphere that demonstrates support and rewards enhanced performance, as well as builds trust among coworkers and organizationally, encourages knowledge sharing behavior (Alsharo, 2016; Hameed et al., 2019).

Knowledge sharing across teams is an important part of organizational success (Zhu, 2016). Teams develop different sets of knowledge that can be shared across teams that allow for greater organizational and technical know-how, competitive and market knowledge, and reduces duplication of effort as well as the repetition of past mistakes. It also provides for mutual learning and helps to develop relationships that can lead to greater internal cooperation, which in turn can stimulate the creation of new knowledge and innovation. Collaboration is essential for team effectiveness, and successful collaboration is built upon the knowledge that is shared among team members (Alsharo, 2016). Creativity and innovation are highly dependent upon knowledge sharing in an organization (Kremer et al., 2019). Being part of a work group that promotes employee

sharing, the voicing of opinions and work concerns leads to an environment that encourages knowledge sharing among employees and across teams.

Zhu (2016) conducted an online quantitative study in Taiwan that involved a survey among a nationwide panel of individuals that were interested in participating in research. This research focused on understanding the role that team identification, organization identification and in-group bias plays in knowledge sharing. The study involved 283 respondents across a wide range of industries who were currently working in organizations that had knowledge management systems in place and who were part of a work team rather than working independently. A variety of measurement tools were used to measure organizational and team identification, as well as in-group bias and knowledge sharing and work attitudes. Zhu, in this study, found that team identification contributes to knowledge sharing disparity while organization identification positively contributes to knowledge sharing. In addition, Zhu found that in-group bias had a negative effect on knowledge sharing outside the group, due to in-group favoritism rather than out-group negativity.

Employee's relationship with their supervisor also contributes to employee knowledge sharing and communication (Jia et al., 2017). Employees who perceived their supervisors in a positive light were more willing to communicate with their supervisor and to build a positive relationship. In the absence of supervisor support, or in the presence of negative, unsupportive, or abusive supervision, employees may not be willing to give the time or effort that is needed to share their knowledge among their coworkers or with their supervisors (Lee et al., 2018). Sharing specialized knowledge, expertise, or

skills requires effort and motivation, and employees must be encouraged and motivated to expend the effort to transfer critical knowledge and skills. According to Omilion-Hodges and Ackerman (2018) leaders need to understand how their interactions with employees across the organization can influence relationships among coworkers, which in turn can affect knowledge sharing and encourage brainstorming, creativity, and team cohesion. Leadership plays a crucial role in creating the self-determination and willingness among employees to engage in knowledge sharing behavior (Coun et al., 2019).

Organizational Commitment

The psychological attachment that an employee feels toward their organization, and how strongly they identify with that organization, is defined as organizational commitment (Pentareddy & Suganthi, 2015). Lapointe and Vandenberghe (2018) defined organizational commitment as a force that binds an individual to an organization. It is a reciprocal relationship where the employee is willing to give of themselves to the organization in order for it to succeed (Thompson et al., 2017). This commitment can manifest itself in two ways: normative commitment, which is defined as an employee's feelings of obligation to the organization; and affective commitment, which is the emotional attachment an employee may feel toward the organization (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018). Employees who feel affective commitment feel highly involved with the organization, feel they share its values and identify with the organization and are more motivated to perform (Gaudet & Tremblay, 2017; Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018).

Companies that provide opportunities for employees to advance their professional skills, offer challenging assignments, and opportunities for initiative may see higher organizational commitment from their employees (Pentareddy & Suganthi, 2015). Committed employees take more initiative, seek more challenging roles, and exhibit greater tenure than non-committed employees. When organizational commitment is lacking or waning, employees show decreased passion and engagement in their roles (Chen & Wu, 2017). It has also been demonstrated to be a key predictor of voluntary turnover (Thompson et al., 2017). Committed employees also exhibit a greater willingness to offer suggestions and recommendations that improve the performance of the organization than noncommitted employees (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018). When employees perceive that an organization is taking strides to provide a satisfactory work environment, these employees are more likely to develop stronger ties with, and an emotional attachment to, the organization (Gaudet & Tremblay, 2017).

Leadership has also been demonstrated to have a positive influence on employee organizational commitment through empowering employees, providing challenging assignments, and providing a source of motivation through supportive leadership (Pentrareddy & Suganthi, 2015). When a leader provides vision and support to their employees or group members, organizational commitment is likely to increase (Chen & Wu, 2017). Providing a positive and satisfying work experience through leadership results in employees feeling a sense of attachment and obligation towards the organization, and creates a barrier to leaving, which is now perceived to come at a significant cost to the employee (Dappa et al., 2019; Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018).

Leaders that allow employees to participate in decision-making enhance employee motivation and the employee's willingness to invest in the organization and strengthen their commitment to the organization and willingness to remain (de Jong & Curseu, 2016; Thompson et al., 2017). Leaders demonstrating ethical values and providing an environment that is considered ethical has also been demonstrated to strengthen organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Çelik et al., 2015).

Positive relationships with leaders and friendships between coworkers has also been demonstrated to be negatively associated with job insecurity, which leads to greater organizational commitment as well as job involvement, satisfaction, and trust (Ozbek, 2018). Affirmative relationships between leaders and employees have also resulted in role modeling, greater social identification, and a positive influence on employee behavior overall (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018). When employees perceive that their organization and their leaders are committed to them, provide a stable and welcoming environment, and through their relationships help the employee to develop a positive self-identity and a sense of belonging, they feel emotionally supported and better able to handle stressful situations (Kim et al., 2016).

Summary and Conclusions

The literature demonstrates how complex and intertwined employee behavior is in organizations, teams, or groups. It is human nature for people to be attracted to and from tighter bonds with people they perceive themselves to be similar to, or that offer opportunities for an exchange of favors. When these bonds among subgroups become stronger and group members begin to exhibit an us versus them mentality, cliques can

form. Cliques offer both positive benefits to members and potentially negative effects to those not part of the clique.

While the theories and the concepts derived from those theories covered in the literature help to explain why cliques form, and the interactions between individuals when they do form, there was a need to further explore employee behavior when cliques are present. Specifically, there was a need to develop a greater understanding with regard to the effect a clique has on individual and organizational outcomes. A qualitative phenomenological approach was used to explore the lived experiences of employees who had been or are currently working in a team led by a clique in order to help shed light on employee behavior and outcomes.

Chapter 3 provides an in depth look at the methodology that was used to help provide a better understanding of the lived experiences of individuals working in an organization with a clique at the leadership level. Chapter 4 provides the findings of that research. Chapter 5 offers a summary of the research and implications for future research.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of employees who perceived a workplace clique in their department or company but did not feel themselves to be a part of that clique. The clique consisted of a group of individuals where one or more of the members were in a leadership position. The members were bonded, not by job title or role, but rather through a mutual regard or purpose. This clique did not include all members of the team of similar rank or reporting structure.

The emphasis of this study was on the personal experiences of employees working in a team that had the presence of a clique among its members. The participants of this study did not perceive themselves to have been part of that clique. The focus was on how participating employees felt the presence of this clique affected their workplace outcomes. I chose the phenomenological methodology because of its ability to revisit a past event and, through reflective structural analysis, portray the essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). In a phenomenological study, the researcher begins the process with an understanding of the phenomenon within the event being studied; this understanding is built upon during the research and the interpretation of the participants' input to form new ideas (Moustakas, 1994). This methodology was appropriate for the research study as it was specific to the lived experiences of individuals who are or have worked within a team where a clique was present but did not perceive themselves to be part of that clique.

In this chapter, I provide greater detail of the chosen methodology and research design and rationale for the research design choice. The chapter contains a description of the participant selection and data analysis. Trustworthiness is also addressed including credibility, transferability, dependability, and ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

The primary question that I sought to address in this phenomenological study was, What are the lived experiences of employees identifying as belonging outside of workplace cliques formed within their organization's culture? This study was qualitative using a transcendental phenomenological design. Phenomenology is a research approach that is used to study an experience from the perspective of those who have lived it, from a first-person point of view (Ellis, 2016; Johnston et al., 2016; Paul, 2017). Researchers using this design seek to understand the meaning or essence of that lived experience, as seen through the eyes of those who have experienced it, to reveal that which is hidden (Johnston et al., 2016; Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). The beginning and end point of the phenomenological study is the lived experience, the being-in-the-world (Miles rt al., 2015). It is an approach that combines philosophy and practical applications as it seeks to understand objects and meaning as they appear themselves, to make sense of their own experiences (Croston, 2014; Strandmark, 2015). Phenomenology offers the promise of insight into the meaningfulness of everyday life (Adams & van Manen, 2017).

Phenomenology as a method of inquiry began with Edmund Husserl (1859–1938). Researchers use it to understand the structure of a lived experience, the thing itself to provide meaning (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl believed in distilling a phenomenon to its

essential essence and in keeping at a distance any interpretation of the phenomenon, to engage in the pure description of a person's experience (Aagaard, 2017; Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). The overarching objective is to discover and describe what is essential, without interpretation or going beyond the empirical data, to achieve an unprejudiced description of the essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

The objective of hermeneutic phenomenology, which evolved out of the teachings of Husserl through his student Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), is to go beyond the understanding of the essence of the thing itself to understand the experience of others, and their interpretations of that lived experience (Miles et al., 2015). Heidegger described this inability to separate oneself from the situation as dasein, which translates to being there or being-in-the-world, in that he believed that people are located always amid a meaningful context (Amos, 2016; McCoy, 2017). Hermeneutic phenomenologists believe that it is impossible to be totally separate and objective in viewing the research, but rather that there will always be an aspect of interpretation (Aagaard, 2017). The goal of hermeneutic phenomenology is to tap into a shared realm of experience rather than to provide a view of reality cleansed of any human interest or subjective bias.

Often in phenomenological research, the researcher has experienced the phenomenon, which has led to accusations of bias when considering phenomenology as a research methodology (Johnston et al., 2016). These detractors believe that phenomenological research is not valid as it is impossible for researchers to put aside their personal experience to be objective if they have personally experienced the phenomenon. In the view of phenomenological researchers, however, all research is

inherently biased as there is no such thing as uninterpreted data. They believe that by the very act of analyzing the data the researcher is introducing interpretation, and therefore bias.

To address the perception of inherent bias, phenomenological research requires that the researcher engage in a process of rigorous reflection to ensure that they are setting aside all predispositions of the event being studied, by a process known as epoché (Ellis, 2016; Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015; Moustakas, 1994). This process allows the researcher to conduct the study free of prejudice and prior understanding (Moustakas, 1994). Epoché is the exercise of freeing oneself from the constraints and prior presumptions of the experience that may affect the process of reduction (van Manen, 2014).

Reduction is a combination of clearing away (or bracketing) past experiences and associated feelings or prejudices and returning to the source of the experience (Heinonen, 2016; van Manen, 2014). It involves confronting traditions, assumptions, and cognitions that may exist to understand the most fundamental aspects of an experience (Moustakas, 1994). The process of reduction and epoché are the tools used to set aside and disregard one's conceptions, theories, and attitudes toward the world (Strandmark, 2015). Phenomenological research is described as including the life world, which is created in the human consciousness by affecting a naïve, open attitude towards the everyday world (Strandmark, 2015). Van Manen (2014) described it as gazing at the world in wonder.

The act of bracketing is critical for researchers drawing on their own experience, as they are particularly susceptible to accusations of bias due to their experience

(Johnston et al., 2016). To avoid accusations of bias, researchers need to ensure the rigor of the phenomenological process to achieve findings that are considered credible and transferable. The researcher must remain completely open to the experiences of the participant when describing their experiences with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

I chose transcendental phenomenology for this research because it offered a way to see the essence of things, to see them as they appear in an individual's consciousness (Moustakas, 1994). It is not concerned with the natural sciences or matters of fact, but rather seeks to determine the meaning of things. According to Moustakas, the very appearance of something makes it a phenomenon, and as a phenomenon it is suitable for phenomenological reflection. Through the use of epoché, or bracketing, the researcher is able to set aside any personal feelings or presuppositions and to see the essence of the phenomenon in its purity (McConnell-Henry et al., 2009; Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology emphasizes an inside perspective from the point of view of the person experiencing the phenomenon (Strandmark, 2015). When the research intent is to study an emotional and existential research problem, phenomenological research is considered appropriate (Aagaard, 2017). In the case of this study, the focus was on the personal experiences of individuals working in situations where they perceived there to have been a clique at the leadership level, with insights sought from those personal experiences.

I considered case study as an alternative methodology for this study. Case study methodology is similar to phenomenological research in that it focuses on a real-life phenomenon (Larrinaga, 2017). A case study researcher examines a phenomenon in its real-life context (Yin, 1981) and to answer the how and why of the phenomenon

(Larrinaga, 2017). Because the objective is to explain causal relationships, case study research is particularly suited to a holist rather than a reductionist view of the phenomenon and to investigations that require many elements to be considered. It is often used for long-term studies and to achieve an insider's perspective (Larrinaga, 2017). The case study methodology might have been useful if the focus of this study had been on the long-term effects of a group where a clique at the leadership level was present, but that was not the intent of this research.

Phenomenology allows for the understanding of the lived experiences of individuals and takes a reductionist approach, as it focuses on a precise experience as experienced by people in the situation at the time (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014). In this study, I sought to fully understand the experience of individuals who had worked or were working in a situation where they perceived there to have been a clique at the leadership level. I wanted to grasp how they experienced this phenomenon personally and in a deeply reflective manner. For this reason, I selected an phenomenological design.

Last, I considered grounded theory methodology. Grounded theory is a qualitative method that is used by researchers to understand a subject in their environment and to try and interpret the person's interactions with that environment (Loonam, 2014). Grounded theory is premised on the belief that interactions between people create new insights and knowledge and is considered more suited for investigative processes versus the more experiential and interpretive nature of phenomenological research (Strandmark, 2017). It is focused less on describing events and more on explaining the phenomenon (Loonam, 2014). A researcher using this design employs a wide range of data input vehicles,

including interviews and observations during those interviews, statistical data, memo-taking, diary keeping, and literature (Loonam, 2014).

Although grounded theory is also used to understand a phenomenon, this methodology seemed to go beyond the intent of this research. Grounded theory builds a theory from the ground up, rather than understanding the experience of individuals who have experienced a phenomenon and describing that experience in depth (Loonam, 2014). For this reason, I rejected grounded theory as an alternative to phenomenological research. The intent of my study was to immerse myself into the lived experiences of individuals and to view that experience through their eyes. For this reason, phenomenology was appropriate.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in a transcendental phenomenological study is to approach the research as something fresh, to begin anew with the phenomenon, to see it as if for the first time (Moustakas, 1994). In phenomenological research, the researcher is part of the research itself (Henriques, 2014). The researcher is a participant, through initial contact with the subjects, the subsequent interviews, and the resulting data analysis. The researcher is immersed in the entire process, not just during the data analysis phase as with other methodologies (Bevan, 2014). The researcher also has experience with, and intense interest in, the phenomenon (Johnston et al., 2016). It is through the mindfulness of everyday involvement in the world that individuals come to a deeper understanding of it (Paul, 2017).

According to Johnston et al. (2016), it is important to acknowledge what the researcher knows about the phenomenon to be researched to prevent their thoughts on the phenomenon from affecting the reflections of the participants. To address this, a researcher can use bracketing (or epoché), which is a reflective process that requires the researcher to reflect on their past experiences and to acknowledge thoughts, feelings, and possible assumptions that could affect the collection and interpretation of data (Heinonen, 2015; Johnston et al., 2016; Moustakas, 1994). Henriques (2017) described the process of epoché as putting in parenthesis all existing knowledge and just describing in detail what is meant and how it is experienced, without prejudice. Epoché requires that the phenomenologist question their stance regarding the phenomenon and engage in critical self-questioning (Bevan, 2014). The process of epoché can be accomplished through reflective writing, journaling, or a bracketing interview, where the researcher is interviewed using a third party to unearth any existing assumptions or bias (Johnston et al., 2016).

A phenomenological narrative is a self-reflective narrative (Paul, 2017). The researcher has a limited role in the process, as the process of information gathering is through open-ended and unstructured questions that allow the participant to elaborate on their experiences with the phenomenon. The researcher guides the participants in their reflections but does not become an active participant in the telling of the story.

In the case of this study, I had personal experience of working in an organization where a clique existed that involved a leader and members of my organizational group. Through this knowledge, I sought out former members of that team as the starting point

of my research through convenience sampling. These participants were mostly former employees of that company. Through these contacts snowball sampling would have used to expand the participants of the study to reach data saturation if it had been necessary. However, data saturation was reached through convenience sampling. Many of the participants worked in the same reporting structure in the past as I did, but it was not a requirement for participant selection.

Potential researcher biases were addressed by employing the process of epoché, as required by transcendental phenomenology. It is through the process of epoché that pre-suppositions, biases, and preconceived ideas are set aside (Moustakas, 1994). Through deep reflection and journaling, I recognized my pre-understanding of the phenomenon and set aside that pre-understanding so that I could experience the essence of the phenomenon. Moustakas viewed the process of epoché in two ways. First, he saw it as a process for preparing to derive new knowledge. Second, Moustakas viewed epoché as a way to set aside prejudice and presupposition in order to allow for the ability to see things anew, as if for the first time.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

In a phenomenological study, a study must have enough participants to gain credibility but not so many that it weakens the phenomenon (Ellis, 2016). Paul (2017) suggests that participation should be limited to 5 – 25 individuals who have directly experienced the phenomenon; while Ellis (2016) believes that 6 – 20 is an appropriate amount. The number can vary widely as data collection needs to occur until saturation is

reached (Paul, 2017). Saturation in phenomenological research is considered achieved when new narratives are unable to provide any further insights into the phenomenon and therefore would be redundant.

Convenience sampling can be used in phenomenological research, as it is with many qualitative studies (Ellis, 2016). Because qualitative research does not strive to be generalizable, it is not necessary to seek a representative sample of all those who may have experienced the phenomenon. The participants should represent a perspective rather than a population and will offer insights into the phenomenon, while not claiming generalizability (Croston, 2014).

The source of information for this study was face-to-face video conference interviews with individuals who identified as having worked within a group they perceived to have been run by a leadership clique. Participants were not required to be currently in an organization run by a leadership clique, merely that they perceived they were in that situation now or had been in the past. If they identified that they had, they were asked if they would be willing to participate.

The intent was to begin with former employees from a large telecommunications firm where I am currently employed. The former employees were solicited through a combination of contact information that the former employees provided when they left the company, and social media. They were contacted via email, phone call or direct message in social media, with a formal email invitation letter (see Appendix A) following the initial confirmation that the former employee was interested in participating in the research. Through convenience sampling 15 interviews were conducted for this study.

Participants were either former employees of the company or had never worked for the company. They were either individual contributors or managers themselves. Through an initial screening via telephone or email, they were confirmed to be in or to have been in a team structure that they perceived to be led by a clique.

The intent of this research was to interview 20 individuals. This sample was toward the high end of recommended sample sizes for a phenomenological study (Ellis, 2016; Paul, 2017). Twenty interviews would help ensure that data saturation can be reached (Ellis, 2016). As the interviews progress, if at any point no new information was gleaned then saturation would be deemed achieved, and fewer than 20 interviews could be conducted (Paul, 2017). For this research study, 12 interviews were conducted when it was deemed that no new information was being gathered. In order to ensure data saturation, 15 interviews were completed. The remaining five interviews were not conducted as data saturation was determined to have been reached.

Instrumentation

The researcher was the instrument for gathering data through in-depth semi structured interviews (Ellis, 2016) and was used in this study. The interviews consisted of what Moustakas (1994) calls a long interview, with open-ended questions that guided the interview rather than defined it. In the case of this study, the interviews were conducted using semi structured questions that allowed for free-ranging input and dialogue (see Appendix B). These interviews were to be conducted using face-to face interviews, and when a face-to-face interview could not be accommodated, the interview was to be

conducted over the phone. However, due to travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all the interviews were conducted via video conference.

The interviews began with relaxing social conversation to make the participant feel comfortable (see Moustakas, 1994). I began by asking the participant to describe the situation in which they had been part of a team or in an organization where they perceived there to have been a clique involving peers and a leader. The interviews were recorded, after securing the participants' consent. In addition to recording the interview, notes were taken regarding the participants mood, facial expressions, and tone of voice. If the participant agreed to participate in the interview, but declined to be recorded, then I would have taken detailed notes on the participant's answers. However, all participants agreed to be recorded. It was incumbent upon me to be open and aware of moods or behavior changes that occurred at any time during the interview process (Wilson, 2017). These changes helped provide additional insights to the participant's verbal narrative. These types of cues, including body language and changes in demeanor, tone or focus were included in the eventual transcription and coded in the analysis to provide additional insight.

The interview format consisted of the primary research question, which was an open-ended question that probed the lived experience of the participant of working in a situation where there existed a clique but not being part of that clique. In addition to the primary research question, probing, semi structured interview questions (see Appendix B) were developed based on the key theories that informed the research, as well as gaps identified in literature as needing further exploration. These supporting questions were

needed to encourage further elaboration on participant's responses or for clarification. Interview protocols were followed that allowed for full transparency of purpose, addressed any confidentiality or ethical concerns, and ensured clarity of the interview process. A field test was conducted with four volunteers who were identified using convenience sampling to ensure the questions were meaningful and yielded fruitful responses.

Interview questions were guided by the methodology and their purpose was grounded in the theoretical concepts and literature.

1. Identify a situation where you were in a position where you were working in an organization or team where you perceived there to have been a clique, defined as a group of three or more individuals who have become linked to one another in such a way that it feels like they are their own unit (Mazzoni, 2014). Please describe this situation to me in detail. This question is meant to set the stage for the interview and to allow the participants a moment of reflection and to place themselves back into that situation (Moustakas, 1994).

2. Did you perceive yourself to be a part of that clique? Why? And how did that make you feel? With this question, the participant is exploring their own perceptions of the situation and their place in or outside of the clique (Moustakas, 1994).

3. With regard to team interaction, describe how the team interacted and communicated among its members, particularly among those who were a part of the clique and those who were not. This question is aimed at exploring the

known effects of cliques, such as communications, information sharing, and advancement opportunities among clique and non-clique members, from the lived experiences of the participants (Meier, 2014).

4. Now, thinking about your own personal experience with working in a team with a clique, which includes a leader of the team, how do you think it affected your personal work behavior or feelings about work? Or your actual work product? Can you describe this? This question is addressing Turhan's (2014) identified gap in the literature that calls for further research to start to identify the effects that cliques, or cronyism, has on employee behavior and work.

5. Expanding that further, do you feel that the presence of a clique had any influence on your ability to be motivated or creative? Why or why not? And if yes, can you describe this to me in general terms or describe a specific instance? This question will attempt to get a personal perspective of the known impact that a clique can have on motivation, both good and bad depending on the participant's status with regard to the clique (Boyns & Luery, 2015). It will also attempt to identify if the employee felt it has any influence on their creativity.

6. Now, reflecting back again on that situation and our discussion today, is there anything else that you would like to share regarding your personal experience of working in an organization or team where you perceived there to be a clique, involving a leader of that team? This open-ended question will give the

respondent an opportunity to revisit the events and the discussion once again

and to provide any additional feelings, thoughts, or memories not yet shared

(Moustakas, 1994).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Participants were to be interviewed in person. The location of the interviews was

in the city where the participant resided, at a location of choice of the participant. I was to

have conducted the interviews in person, unless it was deemed impossible due to

participant scheduling or preference. If it was not possible to meet in person, the

interviews were to be conducted over the phone. However, due to the pandemic and the

travel restrictions and social distancing requirements, each interview was conducted

using video conference rather than in person.

During each interview, I read an opening statement that advised what the

interview was about, approximately how long it would take, how the data would be

handled to ensure confidentiality, and the process for verifying the data (see the interview

protocol in Appendix C). Prior to the research beginning I asked participants to sign an

informed consent agreement and they were given a confidentiality agreement (see

Appendix D) assuring the participant that their participation would remain anonymous

and confidential.

The interviews were to be approximately 45 minutes to an hour long, depending

on the participant's quantity and depth of recollection or input. The data was recorded

using a small recording device, the presence of which I disclosed to the participant. A

second recording device was available should the first one fail, but that did not occur.

Notes were taken during the interview and immediately afterwards, noting the demeanor of the interviewee including body language, gestures, and tone of voice.

The interview was a single event, and no clarification was required during the transcription or data analysis period. If a follow up had been required, a telephone call would have been conducted for clarification, however this was not needed. Once transcriptions were complete, I shared them back with participants to review and confirm that the words and thoughts transcribed accurately reflected the interview.

At the end of the interview, I advised the participants how the data would be used, the potential need for follow up and clarification during the data analysis phase, and that they would be given the ability to review and correct or clarify any of their recorded statements when they received the transcript for review. The process of confidentiality was again reiterated, and the participants were given the opportunity to ask any questions or provide any feedback on the process. I advised the participants that I was available and open to answering any follow-up question the participant may have had, and that they would receive a final copy of the study upon completion. I thanked each of the participants, and the interviews were concluded.

The primary requirement for participant selection in a phenomenological research study is that the participants have experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2014). To achieve this, convenience sampling was used. All the participants were known by me to have been part of a team that was led by a clique (but are no longer employed by the company) or to have experienced the phenomenon in their career. Should it have been needed, I would have asked these individuals if they also knew others who may

have worked in a situation reflective of the phenomenon being studied. The additional individuals would have been solicited to participate if I had been unable to secure 20 individuals that were known to the me. However, this was not needed as data saturation was achieved with 15 individuals known to me.

During the interviews, data saturation was reached in advance of the planned 20 interviews, and only 15 were conducted. Saturation is the point in qualitative research where no new information is being gathered, and each subsequent interview yields similar input (Kerr et al., 2010; Paul, 2017). There was no pre-determined number of interviews where that is expected to happen, rather I determined that no new information was being gleaned from each subsequent interview. For the purposes of this research study, a minimum of 12 interviews was conducted, and after three additional consecutive interviews yielded no new insights, the remaining five interviews were not conducted.

When contacting the potential participants, I first explained the reason for the contact and the person was asked if they had in the past or were currently in a team where they perceived that there was a clique at the leadership level. If they indicated they had experienced the phenomenon, I asked them if they were willing to participate in the research study. If they agreed, they received a letter of invitation that explained the study and the process of confidentiality and included a request for their signature (see Appendix A). Once this agreement had been returned to me, the interviews were scheduled.

The interviews were conducted via video conference. The cities that participants were recruited from included New York City, New York; Syracuse, New York; Basking

Ridge, New Jersey. Reston, Virginia; Boston, Massachusetts; Irving, Texas; and Washington, DC. I interviewed each participant one time, and later gave each participant the opportunity to read their transcript and to provide any feedback or revisions. No revisions were received to the transcripts from any of the participants.

Data Analysis Plan

To facilitate the organization, coding, and synthesizing of the data, NVivo 12 software was employed, for its ability to manage the large amounts of data accumulated during the interviews (Richards, 1999). The transcribed interviews were loaded into the software program, along with any contemporaneous notes taken, which then helped to provide a sense of mood, participant attitude, and body language. This was then followed by the process of analyzing the data.

The role of the previously performed epoché again became important prior to data analysis as I needed to ensure that no previously held expectations or beliefs about the phenomenon emerged to influence the analysis (Henriques, 2014). The researcher must remain an impartial observer and guide through the telling of the subject's narrative (Henriques, 2014). The initial process of epoché was accomplished prior to conducting the interviews, through journaling and personal reflection.

Once this step was complete, the data analysis began. First, a thorough reading of the transcripts was performed, allowing me to gain a sense of the whole (Paul, 2017; Strandmark, 2015). Reading and re-reading the transcripts was critical to achieve a sense of the important messages that emerge (Ellis, 2016; Henriques, 2014). Through this process, I identified themes that emerged consistently across the narratives (Ellis, 2016;

Paul, 2017). Next, each statement was subdivided for analysis through a process called horizonalization (Moustakas, 1994). At this point all non-relevant statements and information were removed, so that the research was rooted in the topic (Moustakas, 1994). It was imperative at this stage that the researcher not to fall prey to being either too literal with the data or of seeing what she wanted to see in the data (Miles et al., 2015). It was also critical for the researcher not to mistake opinions, explanations, or personal views by the participant as the experiential descriptions that is so essential to a phenomenological study (Adams & van Manen, 2017).

At first, the themes may be prolific, but through analysis, the smaller themes should be clustered under three or four broader themes (Paul, 2017). It is through the clustering of participants' accounts that a common meaning and essence of the phenomenon may emerge (Moustakas, 1994). By performing this process, the researcher transforms the narratives of everyday expressions into a psychological language using the researcher's own intuition and reflection, and then synthesizes these meanings into a consistent structure that reflects the phenomenon (Strandmark, 2015). Any outliers in the data or discrepancies were identified, and if it provided additional insight or a counterpoint to the emergent themes I noted it and potentially identified it as a source of future research.

The study's results were compared to the literature review that helped to shape the research. Findings that both support and potentially contradict past research were identified and analyzed. The implications of the study were identified so that they may help inform both current knowledge and provide opportunities for future research.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility refers to demonstrating truth in reporting of the research findings (Johnston et al., 2016). To demonstrate credibility, sufficient interviews were done to achieve saturation. This study proposed to conduct 20 interviews to achieve that saturation, however saturation was accomplished at 15 interviews and no further interviews were conducted. A typical phenomenological study will range in participants from 5 – 25 depending on the topic and the potential diversity in the narrative across participants (Paul, 2017). Each of these participants directly experienced the phenomenon. Once each interview was transcribed, copies of those transcripts were given to each participant to review and to correct or adjust anything they feel misrepresented their experience.

Methodological rigor in a phenomenological study is one that requires moving back and forth between the whole text and individual parts, as neither can be understood without the other (Johnston et al., 2016). As key themes and ideas emerged from the research process, it was vital that those themes and ideas remain grounded in the overall text and meaning of the participant's input. It was also important that the themes and ideas accurately reflected the content and spirit of the original narrative.

Transferability

External validity, or transferability, is the possibility that the research findings from one sample or setting can be applied, or replicated, to another setting (Burchett et al., 2011; Morse, 2015). Transferability provides credibility to a research study, in that

the findings are useful in a broader sense than the specific phenomenon being studied in the original research (Burchett, et al 2015). It allows the findings to be of use to a wider array of settings and to a larger group of decision makers. Thick description in qualitative research is required for someone to be able to transfer the findings to another context or situation (Morse, 2015).

For this study, the recognition of the transferability of this study by other researchers was achieved through the depth of the interviews, in terms of thick description (Hengst et al., 2015). Hengst et al. describe thick description as requiring researchers to not only describe the action under observation; but to also to include the participant's behavior such as tone of voice, body language and gestures. This in combination with the spoken words provided a more in-depth portrayal of the interview.

From the combination of rich storytelling, data saturation, and thick description in data analysis the outcome of this phenomenological study may allow those findings to be applied by other researchers performing similar research or study specific to employee behavior when in the presence of a leadership clique. These findings may also be applicable to other researchers' studies of leadership and employee behavior. It may also help inform future studies involving understanding the drives or motivation and creativity among employees.

Dependability

Dependability was established through an audit trail in that the participants' interviews were transcribed fully, and participants were given a chance to review and approve their input (see Appendix E). To preserve confidentiality each participant was

matched with a code that was used in the study. The participants' names were redacted, and the participant's code name was used in place of their real name. Participants' names, code names and all approvals were stored separately from the transcripts on a digital storage device and a back-up copy was made to ensure safety. The transcripts were stored on a different digital storage device and a copy was also made. The devices were stored separately in secure locations. The data will be maintained for a minimum of five years per Walden University requirements. After the five years have passed, the electronic data will be destroyed by deleting all the files and disposing of the storage drives through recycling. All physical notes and printed versions of notes will also be destroyed through shredding and recycling.

Auditability helps to demonstrate a lack of bias and can be achieved through the creation of an audit trail. This audit trail will allow others to examine the documentation of the data and the decision process used in analyzing the data (Johnston et al., 2016). An audit trail was established, and all relevant documents and files will be retained by me for a minimum of five years. After the five years have passed, I will destroy the electronic data by deleting all the files and disposing of the storage drives through recycling. All physical notes and printed versions of notes will also be destroyed through shredding and recycling.

Confirmability

Reflexivity is the process of stepping back from the situation or research to reflect on it (Gabriel, 2015). It allows for the questioning of the research, the ramifications and the interests served by it. Through the reflective process the researcher needs to think

about their own thought process, potential prejudices, biases, and assumptions and acknowledge them to proceed with the research and analysis objectively (Cole et al., 2011). It is through reflexivity that a researcher can let the study take its own direction from the analysis of the data, and from which the researcher can draw sensible and useful conclusions from the research. Reflexivity enables the researcher to question accepted practice and their role in the process and to confront their own biases and opinion, which could taint the interpretation of the research data. By bringing to the forefront potential biases or prejudices I may have held, these issues were addressed, before they could become a potential issue of conflict in the findings or interpretation of the research data.

Ethical Procedures

Participants of the research study were either past employees of the company where the I am currently employed, or individuals who were known to me and identified as having worked in a situation where they perceived there to have been a clique between leadership and other members of that team, but they themselves were not part of the clique. Confidentiality of the participants' role in the research was assured and a confidentiality agreement provided (see Appendix D). Approval of the nature of the study and the methodology has been provided by the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) that governs human research. The number is 11-19-19-0238541. This approval acknowledges that all consideration of confidentiality and ethical practices have been cared for in the research design, data collection, and analysis.

A confidentiality agreement was signed by me that provided a commitment that I will not disclose or put at risk of harm or revelation of identity of any of the study

participants (see Appendix D). As part of the interview, each interviewee was assured of confidentiality so that participants did not need to worry that their interview data would be shared or that it would be recognizable. All direct references to individuals were removed, respondents coded, and the names separated from the coding so that only the I had access. During the research, the I gave each interviewee an overview of the purpose and planned use of the study, and the information the respondent would be providing.

In a phenomenological study participants are made aware in the initial contact and the interview the nature of the study, the purpose behind the research, and that they are consenting participants; therefore, few ethical concerns arise. However, the questions may force participants to become more aware of discrepancies between members and nonmembers of the clique, and the impact it has on their place within the organization. Through this interview process, it could have caused participants to feel resentment, anger, loss, or other emotions not previously recognized by the individual. If an interviewee had become uncomfortable and did not want to answer a question I would have moved to another question (Henriques, 2014). In the event the participant did not want to proceed, I would have terminated the interview, and if the participant had wished, no part of it would have appeared in the final study. However, this was not the case for any of the participants in this study, and all qualifying interviews were completed successfully.

It was essential that strict confidentiality of participants was maintained throughout the research process and publishing of the study (Henriques, 2014). Confidentiality was achieved by removing the participant's names from research and

replacing the names with a code. Any names or places referenced in the transcripts were also be redacted. The participants' names and codes have been kept separate from the transcripts and are kept in a secure location. All relevant approval forms that have the participant's names are also stored with the code list and kept separate from the transcripts and do not appear in the final research study.

Participants signed a letter of consent, which was also stored with the list of the participants' names and has been stored separately from the research in a secure location. This letter of consent provided the necessary information to advise a participant of the nature of the study and how the information will be kept secure. All references to the participants in the study, including direct quotes, used the appropriate code name for that participant. All transcriptions that had any names and locations disclosed by the participant had that information redacted to preserve anonymity.

Data was stored on two separate external electronic storage devices. The names and codes of participants have been stored on one storage devices and the interviews with names redacted and codes used instead have been stored on a separate drive. Copies of both have been made and stored separately in secure lock boxes in two different locations. The data will be maintained for a minimum of five years per the requirements of Walden University. Only I have access to the data and to the lock boxes.

Summary

This study was a transcendental phenomenological research study. The research was conducted with former employees of a large telecommunications company who identify as having been part of a team where there is or was a clique at the leadership

level of that team. As is typical of phenomenological research, 20 participants were intended to be recruited using convenience and possibly snowball sampling if additional participants were needed after the convenience sample was exhausted. However, after 12 interviews it was determined that there was no new data that was being uncovered during the interviews, and then three additional interviews were conducted to confirm that nothing new as to be uncovered and the interviews were concluded. The study occurred via video conference with the participants located in several cities in the United States.

Confidentiality was ensured through strict protocols to protect the participants, and all personal data was removed from the study. Data was gathered through face-to-face interviews using open ended questions. All interviews were transcribed. After transcription, the interviews were read and re-read to ensure understanding and clarity. Then, through the process of horizontalizing, all the data was given equal value, and through repetition key themes emerged. These key themes were used for data analysis. At the beginning of this process and throughout the researcher employed epoché, to identify the researcher's own perspectives and biases in the research. A similar reflexive approach was also be used during the data analysis phase to ensure that the portrayal of the themes and subsequent analysis solely reflect the opinions of the participants and not the researcher.

Chapter 4 provides the findings based on the interviews completed and Chapter 5 will provide the analysis, findings, and implications for future research.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of individuals identifying as belonging outside of workplace cliques formed within their organization's culture. My goal in conducting this study was to help advance the body on knowledge regarding cliques in an organizational setting, by adding to the body of knowledge on how cliques influence employee behavior and organizational outcomes. The primary question that I sought to address in this phenomenological study was, What are the lived experiences of employees identifying as belonging outside of workplace cliques formed within their organization's culture? I conducted a pilot study in addition to the main study to evaluate the planned methodology and to ensure that the research recruitment, semistructured questionnaire, and interview approach would yield sufficient results to help answer the research question.

I will begin this chapter by reviewing the results of the pilot study, describing the research setting, and presenting the participants' demographics. I also describe the data collection and analysis methods, provide evidence of trustworthiness, and present the study findings. A summary will be provided at the end of the chapter as a transition to Chapter 5.

Pilot Study

I conducted a pilot study to ensure that the recruiting process yielded appropriate participants who had experienced the phenomenon being studied; that the invitation letter and informed consent were clear and provided participants sufficient information about

the study they would be participating in; and that the semi structured interview yielded meaningful results. Four individuals were recruited to participate in the study. During recruitment, a pilot study invitation letter was sent to each participant (see Appendix F). After agreeing to be a part of the pilot study, they were each sent a pilot study informed consent and asked to formally approve their consent via email. I also provided prospective pilot participants a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix D) and asked them to review and approve their transcript (see Appendix F) via email.

The primary question that I sought to answer was, What are the lived experiences of employees identifying as belonging outside of workplace cliques formed within their organization's culture? From the pilot study, I identified several key themes related to the effects of a clique that includes members of the leadership team can have on employees who are not a part of that identified clique. The effects ranged from a perceived decrease in creativity and motivation to detrimental impacts on the research participants' physical wellbeing and health as well as their psychological wellbeing, resulting in feelings of negative self-worth and depression.

One unexpected finding in the pilot study is the role that human resources played in the participants' perceptions of the situation. I did not expect the theme of human resources to emerge unsolicited. The participants expressed that there was a lack of human resources support, that going to the human resources department was detrimental to their situation, and that the role of human resources was to support the presence of a clique, or at least tolerate it. Participants perceived human resources to be more of a support tool for management than a place for employees who felt they were being treated

unfairly by the clique could go to for help. This unexpected finding resulted in an additional question being added to the semi structured interview questionnaire: Looking back on your situation, what role do you feel that management or human resources played or could play in a situation where there is a clique? The revised interview questions that include this additional question can be found in Appendix G.

By adding this question to the list of semi structured interview questions, I was able to solicit feedback from the participants in the final study regarding their lived experience of cliques in the workplace. I was specifically interested in learning about the role that management or human resources played in an organization where there was a clique that included a leader of the team, department, or organization. This additional question and participant input may add further insights to the body of knowledge with regard to organizational leadership and the field of human resources.

Research Setting

I conducted the research via video conference, using Cisco Webex software. Originally the research was intended to be conducted using face-to-face interviews, but due to the travel restrictions that the pandemic of COVID-19 imposed across the United States and globally, it was deemed appropriate to change the intended methodology to video conference. I conducted all interviews with the video camera turned on, so that I was visible to the participant and the participant was also visible to me. Each of the participants and I were located in our respective homes at the time of the interview. The interviews ranged from 25 to 45 minutes in length.

I used a portable digital recorder to record the interviews, which I transcribed using NVivo Transcription software, the results of which I manually checked and corrected. The research participants were geographically distributed throughout the United States. The localities represented included California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, South Carolina, Texas, Massachusetts, Virginia, and Washington, DC.

Demographics

The participants included men and women, as shown in Table 1. Thirty-three percent of the participants were men, and 67% women. Eleven of the 15 participants were White, two were Hispanic, one was Asian, and one was Black. The participants were living in a variety of states, with most participants residing in Texas and New York.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant No.	Gender	Race	Employment	Location
1	Female	White	Digital security	Texas
2	Female	White	Retired	Texas
3	Female	Hispanic	Telecommunications	Connecticut
4	Female	White	Unemployed	New York
5	Male	Hispanic	Airline software	Texas
6	Female	White	Banking	New York
7	Female	Asian	Retired	Texas
8	Male	White	Retired	California
9	Female	Black	Retired	New Jersey
10	Female	White	Self-employed	New Jersey
11	Male	White	Solar energy	Washington, DC
12	Male	White	Digital security	New York
13	Male	White	Unemployed	Texas
14	Female	White	Telecommunications	New York
15	Female	White	Professor	South Carolina

Fourteen of the participants were previous employees of the same telecommunications company where I am employed, and one was a previous employee of an advertising agency that worked with the same telecommunications firm. At the time of the interview, many of the participants were employed at different companies in a variety of industries including telecommunications ($n = 2$); digital security ($n = 2$), banking ($n = 1$), solar-energy ($n = 1$), and airline software ($n = 1$). The participants also included a college professor ($n = 1$) and individuals who were self-employed ($n = 1$), unemployed ($n = 2$), or retired ($n = 4$). They ranged in age from mid-30s to mid-60s. The participants who were employed included one chief marketing officer, one director, and one college professor; the remaining were midlevel managers. The two unemployed participants were

actively seeking new positions, and the four retired individuals had retired from the telecommunications company where I am currently employed.

Data Collection

Fifteen participants were included in the study. I recruited the participants using convenience sampling. Originally, the intent was to use convenience sampling and then move to snowball sampling if additional participants were needed, but this proved unnecessary. Participants in a phenomenological study can range from 5 to 25, or until data saturation is reached (Paul, 2017). Data saturation is considered achieved when no further insight into the phenomenon is being gleaned from participants and the narratives have become redundant (Paul, 2017). The intention of this study was to interview 20 individuals, but after 12 interviews the information from the participants was becoming redundant. Three additional interviews were conducted to ensure that data saturation had been reached, and then the interviews were concluded. A 16th participant had been recruited, but shortly after starting her interview I determined that she did not have the requisite experience with the phenomenon being studied, and I concluded her interview. Her responses are not included in any of the data or analysis.

I conducted the interviews via video conference using Cisco Webex software. Originally, the interviews were to be conducted face-to-face, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, air travel was significantly curtailed, and it was prudent to shift the data collection from face-to-face to video conference. The participants and I were all located in our respective homes and were on video camera during the interviews. The interviews

consisted of seven semi structured questions, and each interview lasted between 25 and 45 minutes.

In advance of the interviews, I spent time writing down my own personal experience as an individual who has worked in a group where there existed a clique, involving the leader of our team and several of my peers, but where I was not a part of that clique. This process, called journaling, is part of the epoché process (Moustakas, 1994). Though the process of writing down my experience, and reading and rereading entries, I was able to identify personal biases and preconceived notions that would potentially have influenced my openness and ability to listen without prejudice to the lived experiences of the research participants. I was able to bracket and set aside my personal feelings, emotions, beliefs, and experiences and was then able to be open and receptive to the experiences of others as they were presented to me, without allowing my own feelings or experiences to shape the narrative.

At the start of each interview, I provided an oral overview of the study's intent and the time that the interview would likely take. I also communicated that the interview would be confidential and that all personally identifiable information would be redacted from the transcript. Once the participant acknowledged the overview, I asked if it was okay to record the interview. All 15 participants agreed to be recorded and were notified when the recording began. The interviews were recorded individually using a digital recorder that was placed near the speaker of my computer. Each interview followed the semi structured interview protocol, and I remained quiet as each participant described their personal experience, only interjecting if there was a point of clarification needed or

to encourage a more detailed description. Through intense listening and gentle encouragement, this process allowed for rich personal description from the research participant, uninfluenced by any input by myself.

At the conclusion of each interview, I alerted the participants that the interview was concluded, and that the digital recorder was being turned off. I also advised the participants that they would each receive a copy of the interview once it was transcribed for their review and approval. I interviewed each participants one time, and gave each interview a unique identifier, based on the order of the interview (Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.) to protect the anonymity of the participant.

Once all 15 interviews had been concluded, I uploaded the digital recordings using the free demo version of Wavepad software by NCH Software. I then uploaded each file to NVivo Transcription, a pay service that transcribes recorded audio to text. Once all the interviews had been transcribed, I manually reviewed each transcription and corrected the errors that the NVivo software had made. This was a critical step, as the NVivo software was often not accurate, and frequently transposed the meaning of sentences by transcribing a word incorrectly. During this process, I redacted all personally identifiable information, including company names, individual names, or information that would potentially expose the research participant, the company, or the individual the participant was describing in the interview.

After I had transcribed all the interviews, I sent each interview to the respective research participant for member checking, ensuring that each transcription accurately reflected the participant's experiences, and that I had accurately captured each

participant's experience. I asked participants to respond back with approval of their transcript (see Appendix E) within 24 hours. All participants approved their transcript with no revisions.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data, I employed Moustakas' modified Van Kaam method. This method involves seven steps:

1. Listing and preliminary grouping, where every expression relevant to the experience is listed. This is also known as horizonalization.

2. Reduction and elimination: where each expression needs to meet two criteria: a) does it contain a moment of the experience that is necessary for understanding it and b) Is it possible to abstract and label it? If so, then it meets the requirement to be a horizon of the experience. These remaining horizons are considered the invariant constituents of the experience.

3. Clustering and thematizing the invariant constituents: cluster the invariant constituents that are related into a thematic label. These form the key themes of the experience.

4. Final identification of the invariant constituents and themes through validation: are the themes explicitly expressed in the complete transcript? Are they compatible if not explicitly expressed? If they are neither, they are not relevant to the experience and should be deleted.

5. Using the relevant, validated invariant constituents and themes, construct an Individual Textural Description from the transcribed interview.

6. Then construct an Individual Structural Description of the experience based on the Individual Textural Description and Imaginative Variation.

7. Construct for each research participant a Textural- Structural Description of the meanings and essences of the experience, incorporating the invariant constituents and themes. (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 120-121)

After I had transcribed all the interviews, I reviewed each interview for context and meaning several times. Then, using NVivo 12 software, I reviewed each transcript line by line, and listed every expression relevant to the experience. This is the process of horizonalization (Moustakas, 1994). Then, to determine the invariant constituents, I tested each expression against the two requirements that it contain a moment of the experience necessary to understand it, and that it is possible to abstract and label it. I removed repetitive, overlapping or expressions not relevant to the phenomenon from the data. After this process of reduction and elimination, what is left is considered the invariant constituents of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Once I completed this process, I clustered the invariant constituents into like ideas, forming the core themes of the experience. Once this was done, I reviewed the themes against the original transcripts, to ensure that the themes are explicit in the original transcripts. Any themes not expressed explicitly, or compatible with the transcript should be removed (Moustakas, 1994).

After this step, I identified 13 unique themes. Through the process of imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994), the 13 themes were further clustered into three categories, which helped provide structure to the textural descriptions and the 13 themes. These three

overarching categories are psychological factors, performance factors, and organizational factors. Table 2 provides a summary of the themes manifested by each participant.

Table 2

Theme Count by Participant

Themes	Participants														
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Psychological factors															
Feeling excluded	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Not feeling valued		X		X			X		X	X	X				X
Feeling insecure	X		X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X		X	X
Negative emotions	X		X			X	X		X		X				X
Feeling determined	X		X												X
Thoughts of quitting	X		X							X					
Behavioral changes			X					X				X		X	
Performance factors															
Access to information	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Effects on creativity	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X				X
Effects on motivation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X
Ability to succeed	X			X	X	X		X	X	X					X
Organizational factors															
Human relations	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Leader behavior			X			X		X	X		X				X

Textural and Structural Descriptions

Once I had clustered the invariant constituents into themes, I developed individual textural and structural descriptions for each research participant. Textural analysis is the understanding of what is expressed by the participants, while structural is the

interpretation of how it is expressed (Padilla-Díaz, 2015). I created an individual textural analysis for each participant, using the invariant constituents and themes of each research participant, and the actual words from the individual participants (Moustakas, 1994). From there, I developed an individual structural description, using the participant's textural description and imaginative variation. Once I had completed the individual structural description, I developed a textual-structural description for each participant, which incorporated the invariant constituents and themes as can be viewed in the presentation below.

Textural descriptions are descriptions of participants' perceptions of their lived experiences of a phenomenon relative to context; it is about what participants experienced as opposed to the essence of their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Following each participants' textural description, I developed individual structural description using imaginative variation for this step. For each participant, their individual structural description examines the emotional, social, and cultural connections between what participants shared. The process of generating individual textural and structural descriptions is where primary interpretation of the transcendental phenomenological data comes into play. The excerpts from each participant interview capture the essence of the participant's lived experience of working in an organization or team where there is the presence of a clique, involving a leader of that organization or team, but where the participant was not a part of that clique.

Textural Description Participant 1

Participant 1 experienced the phenomenon early in her career, when she took a new role as marketing support in a telecommunication company "I just moved in from sales and marketing, so my experience was pretty limited, and I was trying to get up to speed." Her perceived clique was comprised of "…the director for marketing communications and her team, who had two, so that's the three or more people." These three often left her feeling excluded "So that particular group of people kind of got together and I very much felt frozen out." She also felt insecure in her role, as she perceived the leader judging her harshly "I think she was trying to get me fired…And I was horrified. One thing that would hurt my psyche significantly and to because if somebody thought that I wasn't doing good job, was trying to get me literally fired from a job, potentially, was horrifying." This left Participant 1 feeling "…very sad. It also made me feel stupid… And I just wanted to tell her I'm a very smart person. I have a very high IQ and I'm a very nice person. …[I]t made me doubt my success and my ability to do things, and I felt very much on the outside."

Participant 1 also felt she was being excluded from critical information:

For the most part, there was a lot of times I wasn't included in communication, right. So, it was just a straight up exclusion. And then when there were communications, the responses back seemed to be flippant or short or ignored altogether. So, there wasn't necessarily always communications. And then from written… those specifically written emails and in meetings and those types of things, but also in personal… those communications like face to face, I wasn't

referred to, I wasn't included. And the things that I said, they [the clique] automatically disclosed it.

However, despite the challenges, Participant 1 remained focused on delivering quality work "…I continued to try to do a good job… I tried to work hard or even in some cases to do a good job because I needed them to know that I was successful. That I understood the business. That I knew how to do my job as best as I actually did know how to do my job at that time." Over time, the situation began to take a toll on her emotions. "At some point you just get … you get angry, which I don't normally get." This caused her to occasionally behave in ways that were not typical for her personality. "I remember being very angry … I just walked out… I was very mad and I'm sure that was completely obvious that I was. But yeah, made me feel bad about myself." Ultimately, the situation led her to consider leaving the company. "I thought about quitting. I literally got like… I'm done here. I can't be successful. I can't get things completed… I'm... I'm out of here. I'm going to have to find another job. I'm going to quit.."

Despite Participant 1's work ethic and focus on doing a good job, she did feel the situation prevented her from doing her best work: "Well, you hold yourself back a little bit if you… if you're in a situation with the clique.." She referenced a peer who was a part of the clique who:

[H]ad a tendency to try to make me feel stupid. And when you feel stupid, you don't bring ideas to the table because nobody wants to open your mouth and appear unintelligent. You're going to be quiet and you're going to remove the

opportunity for them to ridicule you or to make you feel bad about yourself. So, from a creative perspective, I'm not bringing new ideas to the table. I try to address the things that I have. I try to do the best job that I can. Why bring forth new ideas when I know it's just going to be scoffed at."

She didn't feel that it affected her ability to be creative, but that she felt "less safe and less heard. So, I did not bring ideas to the table very frequently. I just didn't conform. But that also hampered me…yeah." She also identified that over time her motivation waned. While she had a strong internal motivation to be successful, she also saw a change over time. "I think especially early on when I first started feeling that exclusion… you want to prove your worth and show them. And that wasn't effective, it didn't change the behavior. It didn't change the inclusion thing. You just give up, though." As she saw her efforts be unsuccessful, she felt that if they were not going to appreciate the work she was doing "I'm not going to try to go out of my way to do gangbuster things, to just be ridiculed. It's not gonna work anyway. Why should I bother?"

Regarding seeking help from management or the Human Resources department, Participant 1 didn't see how they could have helped the situation, and felt that it would likely have come back to her, "I could have had a conversation with HR. But how would it affect that, and how would it affect my feelings about it? Oh, you told on me, the bully is gonna be meaner, just smarter about it" and that since it wasn't widely known that the clique members were abusive to her, "it probably would have ultimately come back on me -- from what I felt, it would have been retaliation and I would have had to move on."

To this day, Participant 1 is at a loss for what caused the situation to arise that led to her being part of the out crowd, and not included in the clique. "I don't even know what I did. Like, what did I do to somehow to... to cause this problem…" and she questions if she could have done anything different to change the dynamic "…trying to work with that management director myself, trying to again establish that relationship with her and to try to appear intelligent or appear good at my job or just to have a personal right to try to make that connection. When the perception was already there was… it was almost futile."

Structural Description Participant 1

Participant 1's lived experience was that of a young, inexperienced female employee who was faced with working with a clique comprised of her leader and two of her peers, where she was not a part of that clique. Despite her efforts, Participant 1 felt that she was excluded from their inner circle, that the clique did not communicate with her or share information, and when she was included her comments and input was ridiculed or discounted. Often times the actions of the clique left her feeling insecure or with negative emotions such as anger and sadness. She felt that there was a deliberate effort on the part of the clique members to make her feel stupid, which elicited a strong negative reaction from Participant 1, as she views herself as very intelligent. The actions of the clique also affected her normal patterns of behavior. While typically not an angry person, she felt at times the frustration that came from not being hear or her input acknowledge caused her to act out in anger or withdraw, neither of which fit with her generally happy and outgoing personality.

Participant 1 also views herself as an intrinsically motivated person, but experienced fluctuations in her motivation during her time working with the clique. She initially tried to work harder, to prove her worth and to generate liking and respect from the clique. When that was unsuccessful over time, she began to give up, and to not put herself out there for new assignments or to go the extra mile, as she felt that it would not be appreciated. She felt similarly about creativity, that while she didn't feel the situation affected her creativity, it played a role in how much she was willing to expose herself and to share new ideas as she anticipated the clique would dismiss or mock her ideas.

The situation left her feeling like she needed to quit the company or move on to another group in order to have any chance of success, as she felt there was no future while the clique was in place. Over time, that is what occurred, the clique members found other roles, and Participant 1 moved on to positions that afforded her the opportunity to succeed. She still questions to this day what she could have done differently, and what caused the clique to treat her as an outsider despite her best efforts. She does not feel that management or Human Resources could have helped alleviate the situation for her. She feels that any communication with Human Resources would have come back to her and would have offended the clique.

Textural Description Participant 2

Participant 2's experience with the phenomenon occurred about eight years before the interview and she identified having worked in a team with a clique at that time. Participant 2 was an experienced marketing professional and found herself in a team where her manager and several coworkers had formed a friendship outside of work that

translated into clique behavior at work "…[they] were very much, you know, their own little clique and working on [redacted] I was totally left out of that clique." She identified that they were "…you know were obviously very close friends, but they were even still very close friends in the office. And so, it was like they did everything constantly together… they would go to lunch together, they would do drinks together, they would do everything together." Participant 2 felt that the clique perhaps didn't deliberately leave people out, but that they relied so heavily on each other that they unintentionally left people out: "… it was just they just went straight to [redacted]. And I don't think they even considered me… even though I would be the one sharing the answer…it was like I just sort of got cut out of the group, and really out of the team." She felt that that her contributions weren't recognized because she wasn't part of the clique: "…my input was probably never really valued." She felt excluded or forgotten "…I would be left off the email." These oversights left her feeling "… a little sad about it…" or "…awkward…" as sometimes coworkers would be in town and the members of the clique would go to dinner with those coworkers and there would "… be times when I wouldn't be included in dinner. So, the next day you would basically go into the meeting knowing that everyone else had gone to dinner. So, it didn't make you feel great."

These feelings of exclusion extended into business decisions and communication. She and other members of the team who were not part of the clique were frequently left off emails or left out of meetings and they would be informed of decisions after the fact: "… they wouldn't share that information even within their team. So, it's just like the four of us are gonna go and make these decisions. And then, at some point, we'll tell

everybody else. So, it really sort of made you feel like anything you had to say wasn't gonna be valued." In addition to not feeling valued, she also expressed that it had an effect on her ability to do her job properly "…[i]t affected the work because you're hearing something from someone else. And not firsthand." These experiences also hindered her desire try and participate in decision-making, as "…you know, I think when you start to even try to convey your thought, you would be like, well, why bother?" She felt that the clique was so closed to their own ideas that "…you get to the point where you don't think they're gonna have an interest in what you have to say. It's just easier not to even say anything. It's just easier to take notes and not to say anything, and just go execute."

However, in this situation she felt that it didn't affect her ability to do her own job effectively, because of the strong relationship she had with her boss at the time: "You know, if it had been anyone other than [redacted], maybe. But I think [redacted] and I figured out how to make it work. So, I don't know that it affected the work, necessarily." However, her lack of feeling valued and heard did affect how she contributed to the team "…I will say I probably wasn't a good brainstormer because of it." She tended to withdraw: "…I wouldn't contribute really at all. I would just sort of sit there and take notes, but I would never really contribute to it. I really didn't feel like anything I had to say was really going to matter." However, over time when the leader of the clique left, the dynamic with the remaining members of the clique completely changed "…when [redacted] was gone and it was just [redacted], the dynamic was totally different." And that "…[t]he clique was busted up and it was just [redacted]. She really didn't have

anyone to fall back on anymore except the team… And so, she was not… she never

really acted … she wasn't really like clique-y at all. She was more interested in what

everyone had to say and more inclusive."

Because of the role Participant 2 occupied at the time, she didn't really feel that

the presence of the clique had any influence on the work that she performed: "…when

your job is pretty task oriented, it's still easy to do the task regardless of whether you're

involved in a lot of the decision-making or not. The tasks would still be the same."

However, she did acknowledge that she may have exhibited more creative behavior if

"…if there were people that were less opinionated. You know every once in a while,

people would be like this is what we are gonna do. And that's what we're gonna do. This

is the direction. Any other direction is not going to be considered. Or an idea." So, she

stopped contributing to the ideation, and chose to allow her job to be more task oriented.

She never felt the clique negatively affected her motivation, however, as she "…was still

probably motivated because I enjoyed the work I was doing, but I probably wasn't

motivated to participate in the bigger picture thing. I think that might be… I found the

box that I was happy in."

With regard to management or human resources, Participant 2 did not feel that

they could have played a role in mitigating the dynamic generated by the presence of a

clique in the group. She felt that it was common, or "… the nature of the beast…" for

organizations to have cliques and didn't feel that management could do anything about it

and that in this case the breaking up of the clique "…happened naturally." She also didn't

think that not being part of the clique had any impact on her career and that "I don't think

I would have been in any different position. I mean, had I worked with them directly or not or have been in the team, I don't think anything would have different have happened." But that being part of the clique may have in the long run benefited the members "It may have affected them. It may have affected where they went."

Structural Description Participant 2

Participant 2 was a seasoned marketing professional who had held many positions before she encountered this clique, both as a leader and an individual contributor. Her many experiences prior to her role where she encountered the clique likely helped her navigate the challenges of working in a team with a clique, where she was not part of the clique. She found herself excluded from key decision-making and communications as the clique focused on themselves but felt that her strong relationship with her manager and also the role she saw herself as occupying allowed her to perform her job effectively and to keep herself motivated. However, she acknowledges that the exclusionary behavior of the clique caused her to withdraw from actively participating in brainstorming or ideation sessions, where her experience and contributions could have been beneficial to the business situation. She chose to see her role as task oriented, in order to reconcile the tension between knowing she had value to contribute to the organization and feeling that her ideas and contributions would not be valued. Because of where she was in her career, she did not feel that her prospects in the organization were hindered by the presence of the clique, but she acknowledged that for the members of the clique being a part of the group may have helped their future prospects.

Textural Description Participant 3

Participant 3's experience with the phenomenon occurred after she left her long-time employment with a telecommunications company, in order to go work for a cable company. She experienced the situation of a clique with her new vice president, whom she had a previous relationship with, and some of her coworkers. She recognized the situation soon after going to work in this new position that she was not in an environment that was going to make her feel at home:

> It was a team of people that had been working together for... for many years and were friends. And so, definitely for the first six months of my tenure at the company, it was a hard adjustment because I had to fit in the culture and that meant also have the ability to be part of a… the group. And until I was able to find a way to fit in… you felt you feel outside… that you feel like an outsider.

Rather than feeling welcomed in the new role and at the new company, she felt "…alone…" and that it gave her "…a sense of insecurity." She identified the leader of the clique, her boss, as having tendencies to not be very inclusive in her behavior, that you were either a part of her inner circle, or you were not: "…my boss, that's very much her style. She... she is someone that develops close connections. And she's not at all politically correct nor aware … so the behavior is a bit… I would not say professional." Having worked with this woman in a previous role, Participant 3 felt that gave her an edge on other members of the team that were also not part of the clique:

> [L]et me put it this way, I worked with her for years and we had a close relationship, so that's how I was able to integrate myself into that group and into

this specific environment. I think that someone who came, for example, from [redacted] would have been not lasted in this specific multicultural team, would just not, it is inappropriate, the comments and the behaviors and the likes and dislikes.

But her immediate team was not the only place she encountered cliquish behavior at her new company:

There was also the cross functional team outside of my immediate team, which was an adjustment. This is a very white, very proper, old fashioned group of people that I have to work with when I first started at [redacted]. It took a while for me to gain the respect and the ability to be heard and…and someone that could be a part of any conversation with the team.

Participant 3 recognized that the behaviors she was seeing across the team, from the member who were a part of the clique, that it was being driven by the leadership: "…the leader makes it OK. And ferments it too. Yes, absolutely." And that is almost "a bit of what happens in this company, it's a bit of a bully culture, and if you're lucky… you become likable and then you fit in. Which is what happened to me. Eventually I was able to manage it (laughs). But you have to be liked. You have to find a way to be liked." This need to fit in and be accepted by the clique led her to adjust her behavior: "…[s]o that meant that for the first six months, whenever someone was extremely rude to me, I'd still have to be polite and smile and be helpful and cooperative and to, you know, to win them over." When people were not able to find a way to fit into the clique within her organization, she saw negative consequences: "…eventually they got fired."

While she struggled to fit into the clique within her own organization, she recounted how that made her feel:

It made me feel very insecure… it made me feel that… I was depressed during that time period … I was depressed for the first six months that I can… I don't know for certain if it was the adjustment or if it was also the sense of loss. Probably it was a mix of both. But what I can tell you is that for six months I had a complete… I lost all my sense of confidence, and I was… depressed is a bit more, but I was very sad. I cried every week. I regretted the decision to… to take this job every week.

She identified her own stubbornness and strong will as what go her through this time: "And the only thing that got me through was choosing one, that I could not accept failure, you know, I wasn't going to fail." But that it took a serious toll on her wellbeing: "But the first six months I… I… I lost all… not self-esteem, but all sense of wellness and confidence and it was terrible." She identified that the clique didn't just benignly ignore or exclude people that were not part of the inner circle, they actively targeted them: "So, the people of the clique, they are friends, you know. They all hang out together, they go out for drinks together and they plan … plan against the people that were not part of the inner circle." They actively worked to eliminate their coworkers who had not been accepted into the inner circle: "[s]o, basically the ten people that were close and they knew each other, there were conspiring constantly to get rid of the outside ones." This caused the people who were not liked were "…always on the defensive." While

Participant 3 did not feel she was identified with the group who was considered not part

of the inner circle, because of her relationship with her boss, she observed it:

> I was in the middle of all that, not engaging but that was my observation. So, it
>
> was a very polar…very polar type of organization, and eventually the people that
>
> were not liked were let go. So, today, the people that are not part of the inner
>
> circle, they know it. They know that there is a preference.

And she witnessed that for those people not a part of the inner circle, it is very

hard to be motivated. They made statements like " …you know, so and so is not going to

look at our work or whatever, because I am not… [part of the group] you know… you

know what I mean?" She classifies the situation as a "…toxic…" environment.

> This situation caused Participant 3 to dread going to work: "…my feelings about
>
> work were that I hated to go to the office, and I hated going to work, right. I just hated it.
>
> I hated it. I dreaded every day having to go into the office." She felt that because she was
>
> not considered a member of the inner circle, that she was treated differently "… that the
>
> first few months when I was in a meeting, and I was talked to in a way that was highly
>
> disrespectful." And caused her to behave in ways that may not have helped her:

> I don't think I reacted the way that I should have. Luckily for me, I learned how to
>
> handle those situations. But when… when that happened to me, it immediately
>
> affected me because you're in a meeting and all of a sudden someone is being
>
> very disrespectful and… and I was losing my cool. And by that, I mean that I
>
> would either freeze and not be able to answer at first or convey a sentence that
>
> makes sense. Or I would just get flustered. It impacted me emotionally and I

wasn't able to… it was so shocking to me that… I didn't know how to let it not

get to me, or not show it.

Despite the challenges, she continued to focus on producing excellent work:

"…[i]t didn't affect my… my… the work I delivered because I am very headstrong.

That's the only reason why they didn't affect the actual work that I delivered." However,

she did recognize that the situation did have an effect on her ability to be create at work:

It did affect me because to be creative at work and to come up with solutions,

right, it's a risk, right? When you have to present an idea or share with someone

an idea, it's taking a risk, a risk that that idea may not be well received or

understood, right? So, when there isn't a sense of trust, right, in this type of

environment, if you are not part of that group, you are not part of the circle of

trust, right? So, it limits your creativity, because ideas or solutions that you may

have, you just keep them to yourself because you're either just not feeling

comfortable sharing it or you don't feel confident or you just don't want to deal

with it if they don't understand where I'm coming from, you know, and I get some

negative feedback in public. So, you know, it does it does limit your creativity

because it affects your confidence. and then with that stuff, you know, you stop

dreaming…you stop dreaming.

In addition to the loss of her confidence when her ideas were ignored or dismissed

it:

[M]ade me angry. Ummm… any idea that I had… any idea that I had… that I

actually brought myself to push it, I knew that it was a good idea or a good

solution. So, in my mind, every time I was told no, I told myself I will bring that idea back up maybe a few weeks or a couple months. And so, I will do that. And then every time that I was no, I will bring it up again. I will tell myself I know that eventually they will say yes.

Participant 3 felt strongly that the leadership team should have played a more active role in ensuring that everyone was "… respected and… treated equally" And that "… [u]sually when you have this type of situation it starts with the leadership, right?" And that the leadership team should have played a more active role in mitigating the situation, rather than Human Resources, which had proven ineffective. And that sharing the situation with Human Resources could backfire on the employee. She witnessed this happen firsthand: "…that's what happened. And it wasn't helpful because there was retaliation. Eventually, they got fired." She concludes that she does not feel she would have lasted in her new role if it wasn't for the fact that she has a very strong personality: "…you have to be a strong person to get through it and not lose your job or lose the motivation to deliver at work" and that if she hadn't had such a strong personality she would have "…I would have quit. I don't think I would have stayed. I think I would have quit. Yeah. I would have looked for another job."

Structural Description Participant 3

Participant 3's lived experience of working in a team with a clique, while not being a part of the clique, was one of emotional struggle. The situation was compounded by the fact that the situation Participant 3 found herself in was vastly different from the company she had just come from after working there for 20 years. She had to adjust to a

new company and what she described as a really unhealthy working situation. This led

her to experience extreme emotions such as sadness and depression. She felt disrespected

by her new colleagues, those that were part of the clique within her immediate team, and

by the culture of the larger organization. She witnessed individuals who were not part of

the clique be harassed, and even were plotted against by the clique to deliberately

ostracize them or prevent them from being successful. She felt that if she had not had a

history of working with her vice president from her past job, and if she wasn't such a

strong personality, she would not have lasted, she would have felt forced to quit given the

toxic nature of the working environment. She felt that she was not heard by her

colleagues, she felt isolated, and that she had to fight to have her ideas considered. Her

strength of character helped her overcome these obstacles, but she did not emerge

unscathed, she continues to feel that her creativity and work product are hampered by the

unwelcoming work environment.

Textural Description Participant 4

Participant 4's experience with the phenomenon occurred when she was hired to

manage a piece of business for an advertising agency. Her responsibility was customer

relationship marketing (CRM) while the rest of the team was focused on brand building.

The CRM role was filled later than the other roles, so that "…by the time I came into the

business, all of the relationships had been formed already…um… and, you know it was

very hard to break into that." In addition, she felt that there was an additional bond

among the others on the team because "…they didn't understand the direct marketing

world at all," so they didn't understand the work that she did. Participant 4 felt that this

led to the perception that "… they knew what they were doing, but I didn't." In addition, she felt that her more conservative demeanor and her older age than her colleagues may have contributed to the feeling of not being part of the group "…and I felt very… like tossed aside…" and "I felt that I wasn't really part of the team. I felt left out. I felt like I was never 100 percent in the know of everything that was happening with the client or what was going on with our… with our group. And it made me feel like I, you know, like I couldn't get it… I felt ineffective."

Participant 4's lack of being part of the team affected her relationship with her employees, where people would want to leave her team to be with the in crowd: "I had one girl in particular… [who] wanted to change from working on my team to this person's team… really just so she could be part of it, because she felt like that's where the fun was and that's where everything was happening…." The perception of those who were not part of the cliques was that: "… that's where all the action was and that's where the information was and that's where the accolades were going." She felt that she was never given the same access to information across the team: "…I never felt like I was getting all of the information that I needed to know about what was going on with the client. How… how the new campaign was performing. Umm… just key information that would have made my job easier because I wasn't in that circle and that information was being passed through that circle."

Participant 4 also felt not being part of the clique hindered her relationship with her client, in that "…I haven't been let in on a personal level to make friends with the people on my team who could make it easier for me to make friends with the client." She

never felt that the situation affected her work product: I had a job, it was sort of separate from what they were doing. It was very easy for me to do the job that I needed to do and corral the people that I needed to do, because they were different with a different group of people across departments.…" While she was able to do her job effectively, however, Participant 4 stated that the situation: "…from a personal perspective, you know, it made me doubt myself. It made me feel like, well, am I putting myself out there enough?" in terms of building relationships with her coworkers and clients.

These feelings led her to feel she did "…not feel confident for a long time. I felt very much like I wasn't performing well… even though I was." She also felt that she had to work extra hard, as she was not part of the clique to get noticed and to effectively do her job: "I…I…I felt like I had to… um… get myself invited to meetings. I really had to push to get into that group of people or get in front of my boss to show her who I was and the type of work that I do. So, it made me very doubtful of myself and uncomfortable. It did produce a bit of anxiety. Yeah, that was uncomfortable."

Participant 4 also felt that the presence of a clique hindered a higher level of creativity amongst the team: "…I felt like we could have been more creative as a cohesive unit if we could have all come together." She also felt the situation was very demotivating:

> [I]t's terrible to have to go to work and feel like, oh, God, you know you're going to feel left out… I can't get the information I need. My team is unhappy because they want to be working with these other people. It just it really kind of puts a negative spin on things and makes you doubt your own ability. Like I said, I think

it causes anxiety. And I'm just… it's just very uncomfortable. So, yeah, it's very

unmotivating.

With regard to management and human resources, Participant 4 struggled to find

a role management could have played: "…[h]ow do you go to management or human

resources… and say there's a clique and I'm not in it and I feel bad and it's causing me

problems?" She didn't feel that human resources would or could play a role in mitigating

the circumstances that arise where there is a clique: "…I don't really look at human

resources as being able to do anything unless something happens that puts you in

jeopardy or if something happens… that's something that you're offended by", and that

the behaviors that can arise when a clique is present is driven by "…the company culture.

And I think that that's more the issue. It's a company culture…Who controls the culture

of a company? That's a hard thing to say. To a point, human resources does but I also

think leadership does."

Structural Description Participant 4

Participant 4's lived experience of working in a team with a clique, while not

being a part of the clique, was one that left her feeling inferior and not a part of the larger

team. She struggled with having duties and responsibilities that were important for her

role and for the client, but that her colleagues and the clique didn't understand, and

therefore didn't value. She felt alienated from her peers and from her clients. She felt that

the close relationship between colleagues, where she wasn't included, put her at a

disadvantage with the people she managed as well. Because the clique was seen as the

fun group, and the group where things were happening and you could more easily get

noticed, she struggled with morale on her team and keeping her team happy, which made her feel even more inferior and left out than just not being part of the clique did. Ultimately, for this participant, she was able to break through the barriers and develop a relationship with her boss, a member of the clique, and to find her place within the agency, but it was a struggle due to her feelings of not belonging. She felt that the presence of a clique in the agency had a deleterious effect on the overall team creativity with regard to problem solving and doing the best work they could for their client, and it was personally demotivating for her, as she struggled to come to work, had feelings of anxiety, and being uncomfortable at work.

Textural Description Participant 5

Participant 5 experienced working with a clique when he was not part of the clique in a former place of employment, where their director and a few of his coworkers had formed a tightknit relationship that he felt excluded from. He stated that trying to be part of any conversation or discussion this group was having was difficult: "You almost have that awkward feeling like… ok, maybe I shouldn't be here, like you just feel awkward about the whole thing." He felt that conversations with members of the clique were stilted, unless you were a part of the clique: "It felt like discussions were more in… more informal when you're a part of the clique. And then if you weren't…it seemed to be… they seem they'd be much more…cautious of what they might say or how they might position things… a little bit…um…more protected, I guess." And he felt that if you were a part of the clique, you were given freer access to information: "I feel like more information was shared when you're a part of the clique, then if you weren't." Although

Participant 5 didn't necessarily think that it was always deliberate: "[it wasn't]

necessarily that they weren't willing to share that information. It just seemed to be

because if you have a little bit more… because I think conversations were a little bit more

unrestrained. It just seemed that they were able to share more information." Because

Participant 5 had a cordial relationship with the members of the clique, he "…always felt

like I got the information I needed." But he recognized that wasn't the case for everyone:

"…[b]ut I can also see others that would have felt differently, that didn't necessarily

totally get along." Getting along with the clique, and being accepted by the clique, even if

he wasn't a part of it, allowed him to get the information he needed: "… I always thought

I could still do a pretty good job because as long as I… aligned with their thinking, right,

or supported their thinking… you were good. You know what I mean? And they, like,

would take care of you." The clique would also help give people they liked, even if they

were not admitted into the clique: "…they would be more likely to expose you to other

people within their clique or even to their…their bosses…they seem to be much more

willing to… you know, support you, bring that exposure to you and talk you up a little

bit, right?"

Participant 5 also felt that being liked by the clique or maintaining a relationship

was important to his success, and that he would curtail his own opinions or ideas to

maintain that relationship: "… I think when you're reporting to a clique or a part of the

clique, I think you're more… your more pressured to be a yes person, right? Because…

you know, if I say something that contradicts what they're saying, or whatever, then

you're kind of potentially going to be labeled an outcast, right, and then you're not part

of… you're not part of that information circle anymore." He felt that through his ability to maintain a relationship with the members of the clique, and to remain on cordial terms with them, his drive and motivation to do his job well was not impacted, but that he "… [could] totally see where counterparts that weren't a part of it, how it could be very demotivating because you know that anything you take for consideration, it's more likely you're not gonna be perceived all that well or perceived at all or accepted at all. So that could be very unmotivating."

With regard to management or human resources having any effect on the behaviors of a clique, Participant 5 was skeptical, feeling that it is human nature for people to from bonds with others: "…humans in general are just social animals, you know, and we tend to gravitate towards people that you click with." And that trying to address those kinds of situation with management or human resources could have a negative effect on the person in the long run: "…what you what you say and what gets back to certain people and that makes the rounds to the grapevine, that could come back on you and look really bad."

In his current role, Participant 5 was experiencing another side of a situation with a clique, where he was not a part of the clique, and was not making great headway in forging relationships with these new coworkers. This has led to a period of self-reflection and self-doubt that he had not experienced in his primary example of working with a clique, where he was not a part of the clique: "…I probably have evaluated myself a lot more in this last year than I probably ever have. And again, I think it just maybe it's just insecurity to some extent, right?" This situation has caused him to question if it is his age,

his appearance, his depth of experience and even his personality, what it is that has caused him to struggle finding a way to be accepted by the inner circle: "Yeah, you just… you just start to like trying to think like, why? Why do people not seem to be bringing you into that inner circle, if you will?" He recognizes that his past experience with his current manager at former company could also play into it, or his newness to the group: "…And again, maybe it's just because it's a new thing. Maybe it is because of my connection with [redacted] they are still threatened by that… I don't know. But it's just interesting and not personal. I like to think that, but I don't know." And he hopes that over time he will be able to overcome the clique barriers at this new company and forge a more friendly relationship with his new coworkers.

Structural Description Participant 5

Participant 5's lived experience in a former job of working in a team with a clique and also in his new role, has led to very different experiences. In his former role, while the experience of not being part of the clique left him with feelings of being excluded, not in on the latest information, or that he didn't have access to all of the information they clique did, he felt that his positive relationships with the members of the clique and his generally congenial personality allowed him to stay close enough to the clique that he didn't feel his job was affected, or that he didn't have opportunity to advance or be noticed. He recognized that he would subvert his own personality or his ideas in order to be supported and accepted by the clique but felt that trade off allowed him the opportunities for more interesting roles and for exposure to higher level executives. He also recognized that his teammates who did not enjoy as good of a relationship with the

clique as he did potentially have less exposure, felt greater exclusion from the clique, and potentially didn't have as many opportunities, which they may have found unmotivating. In his new role in a different company, he is now experiencing what it is like to not be accepted by a clique within his new company and team, and it has caused him some self-reflection and self-doubt about that lack of inclusion. However, he rationalizes that it is due to his close relationship with his current manager, which pre-dates his coming to work for the company, that has led to his new teammates treating him with caution and not allowing him access to or to be a part of the clique.

Textural Description Participant 6

Participant 6 experienced the phenomenon in her current role working in a large investment bank. She describes it as: "…there's definitely a clique of a managing director… two managing directors and their direct reports like there's two managing directors and two executive directors under them that form… that have a clique that definitely make me, and other folks feel excluded in the way that they work together." In this situation, there are four total teams: "…And we four teams have to work really closely together to get any client engagements executed. And two of the teams are very cliquey and together and a bit exclusionary. And then there's other two teams who have to work together and kind of jump in to get things done and executed so that we can do our jobs and serve our clients." Participant 6 sees herself and her team as part of the excluded group "…I'll call in-groups and two out-groups, and my team is one of the outgroups." She sees this as a direct result of the position of the senior executives within her team, which "…that then trickles down into the working dynamic of our teams

together, not because the people necessarily at the working team level can't get along well, but because people at the more senior level don't. And so that then sets the dynamic for how everybody in the groups work together and the attitudes they have for each other."

She sees the dynamics of the clique manifest itself through the in-groups aligning amongst themselves, and excluding the out-groups: "…they definitely have side conversations and side agreements either outside of meetings… they go off and make a decision and then just come back to the room like… We've talked about it and this is what we're going to do. Like here there's a disregard in some cases for the opinion of the other two teams and they'll just go make some decisions and don't consult or want to have conversations with anyone about it." This ability of the two managing directors to align against the other managing directors has affected their ability to perform their jobs to the same level as the inner circle and has created an appearance of not being as effective as the other teams:

> I think they are perceived and treated better by their boss because they're seen… like… as getting things done and moving… they're moving the ball forward towards meeting their specific goal. I think they are perceived in that way and so then treated accordingly… rewarded and treated accordingly within the larger organization because they're known to be able to get things done, and when you put KPIs up on the board, theirs look better because they're rigging the system to be able to deliver against them at the detriment of the other MDs.

The ability of the clique to rig the system in their favor becomes a recipe for future success: "..[y]ou also can see that [their boss] continues to give them different opportunities and expanded spheres of influence." Participant 6 believes that this dynamic of in-groups and out-groups is detrimental to the company's clients: "…I think at the end of the day, we do the wrong thing for our clients because we're not optimizing to… agnostic of KPIs or internal politics, I don't think we're always delivering the right things for our clients." The situation causes her to feel frustrated and angry: "…it generally pisses me off…" and it "…annoys me on a philosophical level." She also believes that being part of the out group in this organization dynamic has a detrimental effect on how she is perceived within the organization: "…I think it ultimately reflects poorly on me with people who have a good… have a good reputation in the firm and, you know, have done things and are generally well respected that I'm not seen as part of their group and in some cases in an adversarial group. That upsets me sometimes." However, she is able to rationalize it by her own understanding that she does not intend to stay at this company long-term: "…[a]nd then other times I go like, well, I'm not going to want to be there forever, so whatever… it's not it's not a big thing… but it changes based on what side of the bed I wake up on."

Participant 6 recognizes that there is a greater level of communication among the members of the clique than is happening with non-members by witnessing their accord and effortless alignment to decisions on calls and in meetings:

> You could just infer then that there's communication… happening that you're not seeing but is happening in real time, whether it be a text message or IMs or emails

or whatever even mid conversation… it's just like you get on the phone, you have a conversation, they just kind of bowl over everyone because we don't have a strong enough leadership in the outgroup to push back and fight against it. So then, they just kind of win and you just kind of sit on the outside like okay, great.

The situation with there being an in-group and an out-group has led to a "…suboptimal work product overall…" for the client and the company, but that she has "…been able to optimize my personal… my part of the puzzle, like my personal work…." While Participant 6 does not see this as a situation that sets her up for success, she is able to rationalize working within it as she doesn't have long-term ambitions to stay with the company:

I think it tarnishes my personal brand to be associated with this, and on the wrong side of it in some cases. But it… but then at the end of the day, I sign off and I'm like, alright… whatever. Like, it's not… just it's not somewhere I want to work forever, and it's good enough for now. And I… I don't have the energy or the desire to play this game of chess with them. So, I just kind of move on from that and move on with my life.

However, she recognizes that if she had long term ambitions with the company:

If it was something that I felt much more strongly about and was part of… a company, and a business I felt really passionate about, if this… this was something I wanted to devote my life to, this would be a very distressing situation and frankly, I probably would be trying to move out of my group and into a different group, um, just to like… distance myself from it.

Participant 6 also feels that the situation she is in has had a definite impact on her ability to be creative within her role:

I think there's a lot of different creative ways you can try and get to a solution for a problem or a situation with the client or whatever, we just don't ever get to that because, you know, you know the path we're gonna go on and it may slight deviations within that path, but, you know… you're… you're at A and you know how you're gonna get to B pretty much based on the dynamics of the organization. So, it definitely stifled my creativity and thinking outside the box, because I… there's… there's no reason to do it because the only the only way you can be creative is to think about how you're gonna get on the path that they're prescribing.

She also feels that the restrictions placed upon her by the dynamics of the clique affect her ability to be motivated as well: "…[i]t affects my motivation to really change things up and think differently and bring an outside perspective… I don't think we work any less hard, but it definitely, um, limits the motivation to be a change agent and try and do things differently." Participant 6 does not feel that human resources could help alleviate the situation in her company, where the members of her identified clique have such a controlling influence, but she does believe that her leadership has the ability to change the dynamics, but instead chooses to encourage it: "…he sets that tone of like whoever is left standing is the victor, and he will let his direct reports like argue with each other and fight and come to… he like almost forces these alliances to happen because that's the only way these people are going to survive, in some cases." She

believes that if leadership were to change the way that they interact with their management team, and encourage cooperation and a better working relationship, rather than encouraging divisiveness, then that would trickle down to the working teams and make a better working environment.

Structural Description Participant 6

Participant 6's lived experience in her current role of working with a clique, where she and her larger team are not part of the clique, has created a dynamic that hinders and restricts her ability to be successful within the organization. She recognizes a higher level of communication and interaction with senior management for the teams that are part of the inner circle of the clique, and that there is a lot of behind-the-scenes agreements and alignments being struck that further alienate her team and another team that is part of the out group. She swings from feeling that she does not care, as she has been able to optimize her performance to a level acceptable to her given the circumstances, and anger and frustration that she and her team is not able to do a better job for their clients and to advance themselves given their subordinate positions in the dynamics of the clique. She feels that she is not given access to decisions making, although she acknowledges that once a decision is reached, she is given the tools and information she needs to do her job. However, the controlling nature and dominance of the teams that make up the clique limit her ability to be creative in her job and has a negative effect on her motivation to go above and beyond. She feels that given her lack of long-term commitment to the company, and does not intend to remain there for an extended period of time, that she can work within the restrictions set by the clique, but if

she had aspirations for a future within the company, the dynamics of the clique would force her to seek another role, as she feels her opportunities are limited.

Textural Description Participant 7

Participant 7 experienced a clique in while working in a role in a company she worked for over 28 years. The clique was comprised of her manager and her coworkers in a situation that she felt very directly targeted her. She felt that no matter what input or suggestions she made in to the manager, it would be disregarded because she wasn't part of the clique: "…any kind of project that we had, that three of us worked on, any kind of input that I would provide was disregarded, even though I had… I think… I thought I'd had a really good input. And regardless of what [her co-worker] said, [her manager] would take that as, okay, that's our next step." The constant rejection of her ideas and input took a toll on Participant 7: "…[s]o… it seems you just… you just feel so out of control… you don't feel validated… You don't feel valued. You feel like you don't contribute towards that project, that you're more of a… I don't know… support than a part of the team." The situation made her "…feel really bad about myself because I felt like no matter what I did, I wasn't ever going to be a part of that team. And so, I was really frustrated… and, you know, it got to a point where I wouldn't speak up because I wasn't valued anyway. So, it was… it got to a point where you're like… you kind of give up."

Participant 7 felt that one of the members of the clique would provide support behind the scenes, but would not overtly support Participant 7: "…[teammates name redacted] would call me separately away from [manager] and would say, hey, [Participant

7] that was a really good idea. I love that you think out of the box, and you give me ideas. But as you can see, [manager] doesn't want to hear from you. So maybe you and I can have a separate conversation and then I can bring it up. And that's how we would try to work around things sometimes." This dynamic occurred frequently, with Participant 7's coworker, who was a part of the clique, working with Participant 7 behind the scenes to understand Participant 7's ideas and bring them forward as her (the co-worker's) own. Participant 7 stated that "…[it] was fine with me, because I was like, you know, I just want to get the work done. So, I didn't care."

The difference in the treatment by the manager and leader of the clique, and Participant 7's coworkers was pronounced: "… [manager] would always thank [coworker] and request her opinion. And then she would say, you know, that's a great idea…. When I would try to interject, or had an idea or whatever, she wouldn't even sometimes acknowledge it… she would just… she… she acted as if she never even heard me say anything." Participant 7 attempted to address the situation with her manager but was met with denial and resistance: "…I know she and I had a conversation around that and then we moved on from that. But then, you know, she never changed her opinion of me." She periodically would bring it up again, and again, "…she and I would have very lengthy discussions. So, I didn't shy away from addressing the issue because I had to work with her, so I wanted to try to address that… to try to move past it. But… that never happened."

Participant 7's manager would also not share information with her, but rather limited information sharing within the clique, and would often times keep information

from Participant 7 and when Participant 7 would come back to discuss her plans, then her manager would derail them by giving her updated information or sending her in another direction:

> She wouldn't give me details from her meetings with [the director of the team] or anyone, so she would just kind of let me run with that. And then when I came back and said, OK, this is like, you know when we can do the drop…she would say, oh, well, I spoke with [the director] and this is what she wants to do… [s]he has all this information, but she wouldn't… she didn't provide it. So, I'm like going out there and working really hard to get everything nailed down so I can give her the details. But like I said, she wouldn't share her stuff, that she would communicate with [a member of the clique] or what [the director] wanted she wouldn't communicate that with me.

She also felt that her manager limited her opportunities within the team and more broadly: "…I don't think she would give me any special projects or anything", and actively worked to prevent her from getting any exposure. She would actively thwart any attempt by Participant 7 from getting any exposure to their director, even when she was being asked to do a project at the director's request: "… I said, well, can I set up a call with her? And she's like, well, you can, but I'm going to be on it. And I'm like, like I said, I want to hear from her. I don't care if you're on it or not. But [the director] wouldn't take my calls."

Despite the adverse working conditions, Participant 7 was determined to continue to do a good job: "…[i]t actually kind of made me more determined to make sure that

everything was right. Because I didn't want anything happening that really would support her thoughts about me. And so, I really did try harder, I think when that happened." But despite her determination to continue to do an excellent job despite the circumstances, it did take affect her work behavior: "I do have to say I think I had a mental block for about a year where I felt really nervous speaking up like in meetings because I used to get pinged all the time. Don't speak, don't say anything, like I used to get there all the time."

Participant 7 considered going to human resources, but in the end decided not to, despite having documented the treatment she was receiving from her manager. She spoke to several people about going to human resources, as was advised by her trusted coworkers that "… HR really tries to protect management more so than like, you know, somebody who is complaining. And so, I don't know other than … almost like putting a black mark on your name that you wouldn't want to go to HR so people would know, oh my gosh, she complained to H.R…." so in the end she did not speak to human resources despite the evidence she had collected. Participant 7, however, did feel that human resources should be set up to help in situations where there is a clique, and to act as a facilitator to enable conversations that could move the situation forward: "…I think they should have facilitated maybe a conversation…" to help improve the working situation between Participant 7 and her manager as well as the clique.

Structural Description Participant 7

Participant 7's lived experience of working with a clique, where her manager and her coworkers were a part of the clique, but she was not, was highly traumatic for her. Her manager actively blocked her from receiving vital communications, being able to

contribute in a meaningful way, and to do her job effectively. This was very difficult for Participant 7 to deal with emotionally, as she felt devalued and that she was undermined and humiliated by the manager of her team, and the leader of the clique. She felt that her manager and the clique actively worked to discredit her, and to prevent her from getting any meaningful exposure within the larger organization. While Participant 7 felt that this situation made her even more determined to do a good job, it also made it more difficult as her manager was advising her coworkers from helping or aiding her in the execution of her work. While Participant 7 considered seeking out help from human resources, and even documented her treatment by the clique for support, she was discouraged from reporting the abuse as it was felt that reporting it would put Participant 7 in an even worse situation, as organizationally it was not felt that human resources would provide the needed help, and it may actually reflect badly on Participant 7 if it got back to her manager, and she retaliated. In the end, Participant 7 was forced to leave the group to seek a more palatable working environment, and it would take her a while to recover from those feelings of inferiority and fear.

Textural Description Participant 8

The experience of working with a group that was a clique, where the participant was not member of the clique, as experienced by Participant 8, occurred when the participant was part of a team whose function was generally not appreciated or valued as highly as other functions within their larger team. The leader of the clique was the director of the marketing team for a large telecommunications company. Participant 8 was the lead of the pricing team under that director:

We were a group of ... three to four people… that supported the larger team, but

to a certain degree, we were always… not necessarily left out, but just treated

differently, maybe beyond the scope of the jobs that we were doing…. We were

more detached, I think, from the larger marketing group because we did not do

pure marketing, if you will. I won't say that was to our detriment, but it… it just at

times made you feel…umm… I can't even characterize… characterized the

feeling. You just felt somewhat as an out… somewhat as if you were an outsider.

Participant 8 felt that the director of the team treated the two teams, marketing

and pricing, very differently: "…the marketing group I would refer to them…as the cool

kids. They were… they just were more… they became more of a friendship unit. They

seem to have a good time, whereas our meetings…our one on ones with the

director…were very much business oriented." This dichotomy left the pricing team and

Participant 8 personally feeling left out and not a part of the team:

It's almost like you're back in high school or whatever and just, you know, we'd

be working, be diligently doing our jobs and the rest of the team would be hooting

and hollering and having a good time. And that's… and we just weren't ever

included in that in the office. Now, that probably sounds trite or shallow or

something, but it just made you feel like you were missing… that you were

missing something.

Participant 8 felt that the director of the team was a good communicator overall,

but because he and his team were not a part of the marketing clique, he felt that he would

often "…hear things… sometimes secondhand through friends that worked in the

marketing group. We would hear later [than the rest of the team] ….” Participant 8 did

not feel that there was malice or a deliberate effort to keep information from him or his

team, but that: “…. when you hear things secondhand, whether it's the intended or not

that you didn't get the information, it just makes you feel a bit of an outsider.” Due to the

nature of the marketing team's role versus the pricing team's role, he felt that there was a

naturally adversarial relationship between the two teams as one vied for the best price to

achieve market penetration, while the other team sought to preserve margins, which led

naturally to “…just a little bit of a we versus them or us versus them type of situation.”

Despite these challenges, Participant 8 never felt that this situation affected his

ability to do his job:

> I think to this day I still try to do the best job I can… I just try to do my job, heads
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> down and get it done and try to do a good job. There'd be annoyances. It might…
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> might just piss me off… I won't say ruin my day, but it might put me in a bad
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> mood that day. But I never let it… I don't know that... I don't think it ever
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> impacted my… the quality of my work.

He also felt that over time, he adapted to the situation of not being a part of the

clique: “…if you're an outsider, then you kind of adapt and you become I don't know, it's

a self-fulfilling prophecy. You become the outsider and then you adapt accordingly, just

to be successful at your job as an outside and a contributor.” He did feel, though, that the

situation of him not being part of the clique forced he and his team to work harder than

the other teams that were part of the clique: “…[w]e always… I mean, I just I felt like we

had to always over prepare to pass muster. In other words, we knew there would be

pushback and we just had to be completely bulletproof prepared so that we could manage

so that we could manage the flak or whatever." Participant 8 also did not feel the

situation affected his ability to be creative, as the role he occupied was focused on

numbers, and he felt that being creative was not a natural byproduct of his job: "… we

worked in sort of concrete numbers, so I won't say that there was no creativity required

because we had to do a lot of creative finance. But I don't… we always did our best for

the company."

When it comes to going to human resources to address any inequity he felt with

his director and the marketing versus pricing teams, Participant 8 reiterated that he did

not feel it was a situation worth of human resources intervention, but that "…if it had

gotten bad, I would have had HR involved and I imagine they've got protocols for such."

But he never felt that the feeling of us versus them that was generated between the

marketing teams and the pricing teams warranted escalation to human resources, as he

felt there was no malice, it was merely a function of their differences in jobs and a natural

affinity the director of the team had for the marketing function and that team versus the

pricing team.

Structural Description Participant 8

Participant 8's lived experience of working with a clique was different than many

of the other participants in the study as he felt that the organizational differences between

the two teams, which were under the same director, causes a lot of the "us versus them"

mentality and feelings, especially as the director displayed a marked preference for the

marketing team, which manifested itself in a more friendly and casual relationship than

that which Participant 8 and his team enjoyed with the director. While not feeling that this was personally motivated, Participant 8 experienced a lot of the same emotions and feelings of exclusion, isolation and being treated differently as other participants of the study felt. The more casual and jovial relationship that the marketing team enjoyed, and displayed toward each other, left Participant 8 feeling left out and isolated. He also felt that the closer relationship of the marketing team to the director allowed them to have greater access to information, and to have that information sooner than he or his team received it. However, despite this, he never felt that the situation affected his ability to be motivated or his job performance, and by the rather objective versus creative nature of his job, he never felt that the situation negatively affected his ability to be creative in his job, as it wasn't really required.

Textural Description Participant 9

Participant 9 experienced the phenomenon of working for a vice president (VP) where this VP and several of her direct reports had formed a clique, but where Participant 9 did not feel she was a part of that clique: "…there clearly was a clique environment in that a lot of my peers had this… I felt sometimes unhealthy relationship with my VP. There was clearly a group of people that were always in the know of what was going on, always involved in the latest things that were happening." This situation caused Participant 9 and her peers who also did not perceive to be a part of the clique to feel:

> …out of the loop. But it wasn't just me, it was other peers. So, there were ten of
> us… let's just say maybe seven of them were part of the clique and three of us
> were not part of the clique. And so, there was just a lot of situations where you

would attend a meeting, and clearly you could see that conversations were happening outside of the meeting, and it wasn't the first-time information was being shared. Or things were being given to other folks to give them opportunities to take a lead on a project or pursue things or get involved in things. And it always made, at least me feel, always left out.

This situation caused Participant 9 to try and become part of the clique, but without success: "…I was always catching up or trying to understand the dynamics and trying to figure out how to integrate myself into conversations with either my peers or my VP. But clearly, the VP was not interested, at all, in that situation, in integrating anyone else outside of that clique. So, it was… it was always… they always felt a little bit like out of the loop." Participant 9 indicates it was very clear that the VP had no interest in bringing those outside of the clique into the inner circle: "…she was 100 percent directing things to that group or clique, right. And if you kind of interjected or had a comment or something, it wasn't really welcome, you know? You felt like, yeah, you're not part of this conversation." Participant 9 stated that "… it wasn't so direct, but it was subtle enough that you always felt like you were on the outskirts." The members of the clique would also exhibit this behavior, even when the leader wasn't around "…[y]ou know, you come out of your office, I would come out of my office, and it was always like these impromptu conversations that were happening with the clique. And it was never like, hey, [redacted], come join us, hey [redacted] catch up with us, here's what's going on. Did you hear this or hear that?" Participant didn't feel that all of the member of the clique would not share, there were some members who would be willing to share

information with those outside of the clique: "…I would say maybe half of them were, you know, I think the other half, I don't know if they enjoy being part of the group and kind of carried that and kind of wanted to keep it to themselves. But I knew who I could go to… to kind of find out what's the latest, what's going on."

This exclusion by the clique made Participant 9 feel:

I think I felt that there were limited opportunities for me. I don't really have someone who is going to like try to help me grow, encourage me, give me opportunities to succeed or move on to other things or just go to bat for me about things. I felt that I was pretty much on my own and had to make the best of the situation because it was uncomfortable. It was an uncomfortable situation because you know that… it just felt… it just felt that you were the third wheel all the time.

To combat this, Participant 9 saw the members of the team that didn't feel a part of the clique becoming closer, and sharing what information they could uncover on their own: "…[w]e would sometimes gather together also and say… like, did you guys hear anything or what's the latest information? I think basically the clique and non-clique basically stayed within their own groups." Participant 9 felt that to even get included in any of the clique gatherings, she would have to "…almost impose yourself on that clique to be included. Like, hey you guys going to lunch? I'll walk with you, you know. Or hey, you going to go to that meeting that we're all supposed to be going to…."

Participant 9 wondered if the VP hadn't encouraged the clique behavior, and in fact had been the main driver of the clique, if the situation would have arisen among her peers: "…[i]t just seemed like it was almost created by the VP and then it develops

among itself, and they develop the relationship, and they develop all that cliquey 'in the know' that everyone else didn't know, and they almost fed off of each other and, it clearly created an environment of the knows and the don't knows." She felt that due the closeness of the clique and their relationship with the VP that "… there were opportunities clearly provided to the clique that were not provided to those that were not in the clique." And even when something was her responsibility, if it was being presented to senior leadership, then her piece would get consolidated with other presentations, and her contribution "…became like it was almost minimal, like minimizing my input versus providing me that opportunity to do that, perhaps consolidating all of that, allow me to present like hey, what's going on, here's what happened, here's the other pieces of the team, let me present what transpired." And that her VP focused on "…leaning towards shining the light on those that were in the clique" rather than give those not in the clique opportunities to be seen.

Participant 9 found over time that the situation "…became… exhausted for me, it was exhausting to go to work mentally because you always had to kind of battle that, and it was just so apparent that it was kind of exhausting." She saw it as:

> There's another layer of effort that you're always having to do on top of your job, right? So, you're doing your job and you're working really hard. But then there's this other layer that you have to deal with in order to deal with your VP on a day-to-day basis. It just became…. as opposed to it being a relationship where it was a two-way street and the person was supporting you and interested in what you

were doing and working with you and including the team, as a comprehensive…

it was almost like you were battling that piece of it on top of doing your job.

In order to be heard, Participant 9 felt that it took an additional layer of effort that those in the clique didn't have to deal with: "…just trying to kind of manage through that. Like, okay, what's the strategy of how I'm going to have this conversation? How am I potentially going to present this information and be allowed to then take it and do something else with it and not have it be taken away from me or say, okay, great, then give it to so and so, and she'll work that, you don't need to worry about that."

Participant 9 also felt the situation was unrewarding, which contributed to her feeling exhausted "…we never really felt appreciated, you know? You would work really really really hard, and it was always like, great, but not… not the same kind of accolades that that the clique would get, right? You would get the 'Ok, thanks', where the accolades the people in the clique would get were like, 'hey, that's great', 'hey, present that to senior level', do this, do that. So, you just never felt really appreciated for your work." With regard to her work, Participant 9 always felt that she "…always try to do the very best at all times." But she felt that the situation was very stressful and that it "…created a lot of stress for me" and that it may have "…impacted my ability to be confident in my work and be… at times… intimidated perhaps on what I was doing, right, and felt unsure about things." She stated the situation "…possibly made me feel a little… small. Made me, you know, protective of, you know, of really going out there and just being as fantastic as possible, because it was going to be like, yeah, whatever."

With regard to motivation, Participant 9 felt that she had an inner drive and was self-motivated, so that while she was still motivated to do a good job, with was internally driven and that the lack of support took a toll on her "…spirit as a person. I felt like I was just not… I was losing… like I said, I felt like it was like crushing my spirit a little bit in terms of doing what I had to do." She felt that her leader was not at all motivating, and that she used negative reinforcement and fear tactics as motivation. Participant 9 also felt that the situation discouraged ideation or creativity of thinking: "…at some point, there was no nurturing at all or any encouragement to do… to…to explore more… to learn, to learn more… to do things a different way. It was it was not… it was not a nurturing environment." And she felt that this environment negatively "…impacted my creativity. I feel like many times it was more like, just get it done, move on and just do it, because at the end of the day, it doesn't really matter how you do it, when you do it, just get it done because it's not like you're going to get a 'hey, that's a great job', or 'hey, here's some more opportunities'." She also felt that the situation affected her ability to advance or move about the organization. Not being part of the clique meant that "…I wasn't given the opportunity to perhaps network with my VP's peer of networks…", and she felt that she missed getting "…a lot of exposure and opportunities… I was not included in that networking opportunity. So, yeah, I do believe that it did impact my ability to advance further."

With regard to human resources, Participant 9 felt that they missed the opportunity to do something that may have helped alleviate the situation. She feels that there is an opportunity for human resources to "…have more transparency to the next

layer down and have conversations with them in terms of how the work environment, what's going on in the work environment. Not do surveys, but really having conversations and understanding how the climate is that the leader is creating." She felt that in her situation human resources missed the opportunity to have affected her situation, as they were made aware of it on several occasions and never acted upon it.

Structural Description Participant 9

Participant 9 experienced the phenomenon of a clique with her VP and several of her peers where she was not a part of the clique. She felt isolated and left out of crucial discussions, key information exchanges, and the opportunity for senior level exposure and support. Her situation was driven directly by her VP, who made her preferences for certain members of her reporting team over others clearly known. The people within the VP's clique were given greater opportunities and chances for exposure, and many of them echoed the behavior of the leader, keeping key information to themselves and not sharing with their peers. This situation had a debilitating effect on Participant 9's psyche, creating within her a malaise of spirit that she found exhausting. Her own internal drive kept her level of performance to a high standard, but she found herself exhausted by the effort it took to keep motivated with so little positive reinforcement from her VP. Participant 9 felt that the VPs method of motivation was through fear tactics and negative reinforcement. This situation created an atmosphere where creativity was stifled, as Participant 9 didn't feel that she would be rewarded for thinking outside of the box, and actually felt that she would be punished for attempting to go above and beyond the

dictates of her VP. Participant 9 also felt that this situation stymied potential advancement opportunities and her ability to progress in the organization.

Textural Description Participant 10

Participant 10 experienced the phenomenon early in her career while working at an advertising agency. The clique she experienced included her boss, the man her boss reported to and a co-worker. She indicated that while working with these individuals she often felt left out or excluded from their relationship: "…the guy in charge, he was really friendly with my direct boss and someone else who was working on the account at my level… [s]o, he was kind of like – to me –he was like favoring her. I don't even remember her name, but I feel like he was favoring her. And then my direct boss … saw that his boss liked her, so then he started to favor her." She perceived that that favored treatment resulted in better opportunities for her co-worker: "…I felt that my comments weren't getting the kind of attention that hers was, the kind of attention that she was, and that she was giving more recognition, more preferential treatment and better assignments…."

The clique tended to do things together, and not include Participant 10: "…they would drive to meetings together and they wouldn't invite me…." Participant 10 also felt that she wasn't given the chance to exhibit her capabilities "…this other person would take the lead in meetings on most stuff, or I would say, oh, I could take the lead on this, she'd say no…no… I'll take the lead on it." She even felt that the way they communicated left her feeling excluded:

They tend to form own, you know, like inside lingo on how they talk about things, they laugh with each other with inside jokes. And when you are trying to get stuff done, you're like, that's nice, but, but I don't know what you're talking about and how am I going to be a part of the group if that's just like you have your inside language and when you ask what's that about? Oh, don't worry about it… it's… it's nothing. And you feel like you're missing out because they're talking and relating to things that you can't relate to.

She tried to address the issue with the more senior leader, but was rebuffed: "…he's like, you know, I think [redacted] … is a very smart person. I don't think you understand what she brings. She has good client skills and things like that." Statements like this caused Participant 10 to start to experience self-doubt: "…maybe he was right? I don't know at this point now, but I just felt like I was being left out because I wasn't a part of everything that they were a part of." And this made her feel "…like chopped liver." She stated that she felt that she was "…not good enough and that kind of thing. So, it made me feel I felt like my value wasn't being recognized and… that there wasn't necessarily a good place for me on the team."

These feelings permeated her daily working situation, leaving her feeling uncomfortable, and in retrospect, Participant 10 recognizes that she may have felt jealous of the preferential treatment that her coworker was getting from the other members of the clique versus how Participant 10 was treated "…it just made me feel less of. And not … not like… she had capabilities, but I had capabilities, too and they just weren't… like [redacted]'s was being recognized. Like there's only one place to get recognized and

[redacted]'s filling that spot. So that made me feel like… like I was a lesser player on the team." She saw the clique interacting on a personal level, in a way that left her out: "…[t]hey would laugh more with each other. They would laugh more and talk about their personal lives… oh, what you do this weekend… and… hahahaha that's so funny.…" It left her feeling they were sending an unspoken message of "…we're the cool kids and you're not."

Participant 10 also felt that her direct boss was the ringleader of the clique, and often was the cause of her feelings of inferiority: "… [coworker's peer] she was pretty nice … I guess I just… I envied her because I wanted to be that person. But …my boss …he wasn't good. His bosses' boss was good, he was nice to me, and I think I even talked to him about it. But my boss, he just played favorites.…" She felt her status as not being part of the clique affected the level of communication she received: "… you do lose communication if you're not part of that group because they talk amongst each other and word has to trickle down unless someone is very good at communicating what's going on, which didn't always happen all the time in that situation. So, yeah, it does have an impact." Participant 10's ability to do her job was also compromised: "…when you don't know as much about what's going on, you can't bring solutions… you can't… you can't have your point of view listened to because you don't know what's going on. And they have information that kind of gives them the ability to work with the most… with additional information that you don't have."

After a while, the situation caused Participant 10 to feel that in order to be recognized for her contributions she needed to look for another job:

Eventually I started to say, oh, I need to go somewhere else or something. This isn't working for me. You know… I always did my job and I… you know, I enjoyed it. But you feel like you're optimized in a situation where you can make a meaningful contribution and that contribution is valued and recognized. I didn't necessarily feel like that in that situation. So, eventually, I looked for a different situation or position.

While she still felt that she was performing her job, she felt that the situation caused her to lose her motivation: "You can only try so much and then you get banged on the head and then you're like forget about it, I'm not going to try anymore." Participant 10 did try to address the situation with human resources, without success: "…I did go to HR, and she was like, well, there is nothing I can do." Despite this, she did feel that there is a role human resources should plan in a situation like a clique: "…[t]hey should be like a mediator… [t]hey should talk to the who has concerns… not like taking sides, and say this is what is going on, right, you know, let's see how we could work this through and come to a conclusion that kind of works for both of us…." However, while she believed human resources should play the role of an independent party to help employees manage the dynamics of a clique, she had not seen it succeed in that role: "…I never thought HR was independent, cause they really work for the company."

Participant 10 also felt that when there is a presence of a clique in a company, that "…people aren't going to be viewed necessarily by the work they do, they're going to be viewed by who likes them or if you're in with this group or you know, this one will promote this one because she's friends with this one versus the work, kind of stuff like

that. So, you just feel that it's lost opportunity [for the company]." However, she did view the presence of cliques in a company in a pragmatic way: "…[y]ou know, we have this bad thing against cliques, but that's sort of how the world works…cliques sort of have a personality type too, you know, and then if you don't fit with that personality type, it's not about the work, it's about the personality type, and if you don't fit that personality type then, you know, it's not going to work here." And she felt that as a member of a clique, a person would get presented increased opportunities: "…[y]ou can get promoted… it's always easier to go forward if you have someone who is advocating for you. That's generally, you know, how it works…it is kind of human nature, you know… I used to be all cliques are bad, but you know, it's kind of human nature."

Structural Description Participant 10

Participant 10 experienced the phenomenon of a clique early in her career. She felt that the member of the clique formed a bond that she was excluded from. That they had their own way of communicating, that she was cut out of discussions, and that the members of the clique would interact and socialize and regularly excluded her. The favoritism shown to her peer, who was a part of the clique, she felt resulted in lost opportunities for Participant 10 to demonstrate her capabilities and to position herself for future growth within the company. She felt her contributions were devalued, and this caused her to experience self-doubt and to feel inferior to her peer. Over time, she felt the situation affected her naturally motivated personality, and she felt that there was little reason to put herself forward or try harder, as her peer was always going to have the advantage and get the opportunities that should have been more equitably distributed.

She sought support and advice from leadership and from human resources, both of which proved unsuccessful through her leader's involvement in the clique and human resources unwillingness to intercede. Eventually this situation led Participant 10 to feel that she needed to leave the company and find another position in order for her to be able to advance her career and for her emotional health. Participant 10 did not view her situation as unique, however, in that she felt that cliques are a natural result of human interaction and bias towards certain individuals over others. She also felt that there were benefits to a clique, if you were a part of the clique, then you were given additional opportunities and an easier road to success. With regard to human resources, she felt their role in a company where there was a clique should be to mediate and resolve the situation. However, she didn't feel that it could or would fulfill that role, as she did not view them as having the ability to be independent of the company, and to always be working in the company's best interest versus the employee. In the end, Participant 10, even after having felt the negative effects of being in a situation where there is a clique and she was not a part of that clique, felt that cliques are a natural part of human interaction and that there was little that could be done to mitigate their effects.

Textural Description Participant 11

The clique that Participant 11 encountered in his career occurred when he was promoted to Vice President in a telecommunications company. Shortly after that, the senior vice president he was reporting to left the company and he ended up working for a different senior vice president who had a clique of a few directors that were either now reporting to Participant 11 or were also on the same team as Participant 11. The dynamic

was tense from the start, as this senior vice president had a "…very negative perception of [Participant 11's previous organization] and he kind of came in with his guys that worked for him in Dallas for many years." This senior vice president made his feelings for Participant 11 known: "…it was very clear from the very start that he saw me as old guard that…needed to be moved out for new thinking." The members of this senior vice president's clique were well aware of his feelings toward Participant 11, and it was clear in retrospect to Participant 11 that they had known about the reorganization in advance of the announcement. A few weeks before the announcement Participant 11 had an interaction with a clique member and looking back, Participant 11 felt:

He already knew… had known that I was gonna get a different job at that time, probably a week or two before the reorg. So, I felt like they had a connection. I also would walk past the hall… down the hall and then I remember distinctly walking past and [redacted], [redacted] and [redacted] were all in that office talking about me. And I kind of caught them, and I just kept walking.

Participant 11 stated that the senior vice president and the members of the clique made it very clear that opinions and ideas from non-clique members were not welcome: "… in staff meetings it was painfully evident. He had me, this gay boy, [redacted] and this guy, African-American guy. And it was basically [redacted], [redacted] and [redacted] talking about stuff and we're over in the corner. And if you came out with any idea or any opposing point of view, it was quickly squashed and sometimes… sometimes pretty painfully squashed, like the old adage, like reward people in a group and reprimand them in private. It was kind of the opposite."

The situation quickly deteriorated for Participant 11, taking a toll on his emotional health: "…[h]onestly, it was just hell for me. I remember driving to work every day, listening to like self-help books and stuff because I was just like, oh my God, I was miserable. I wanted out so bad." The senior vice president exhibit abusive behavior to any non-clique member of his staff: "…he was very much a bully kind of approach. Bullying, I would say, definitely say that was kind of his style with me in particular and with others. But I think me in particular, where he would criticize you in front of the group, he would make you… belittle you." It left Participant 11 questioning his own abilities and fearful: "… I felt incompetent. I felt fear for my… more for my reputation than my job. Fear of losing my job and being fired, where you wouldn't get a package." And to cope, he avoided his boss: "…[y]eah, and I would just avoid him… because… which is the worst thing I could have done, but I just did not want to be anywhere near him. Which is not helpful to your career."

Participant 11 felt that those in the clique had access to information and communicated more frequently amongst themselves than with the other members of the team who were not part of the clique: "…I think the news that I would find out would be through the grapevine, and they already knew it. Like [redacted], [redacted] would already know it, they'd be ahead… they'd know what was coming next. They know that reorg's were happening and they know about decisions being made. Meetings coming up. And then they knew about the strategy at a different level than we did." He also felt that the situation affected how effective he could be at his job: "…I was less confident… I had no authority…I knew that nobody had my back and so I was much less confident…."

The situation got so bad that he had begun to hate his job: "…I lost my confidence and I started to doubt myself. And then it wasn't fun anymore. It was more frightening than fun. More fear of making a mistake than…. I just never really had to fear before."

Participant 10 felt that trying to work in a situation with a clique also negatively affected his ability to be creative, stating:

Creativity just was not born out of fear. Creativity comes out of having your mind free to go places it wouldn't go normally. And I think that's probably one of the biggest… probably one of the biggest corporate negative impacts for [redacted] in total was just there was so much head cutting that everybody felt fear at some level, which really limits creativity. Right? You can't be creative in a fearful environment.

Despite the hostile working conditions, Participant 11 felt there was nowhere for him to turn, and that human resources was "…unpowerful…" and he felt that bring them into the situation "…would have made it worse…." He also did not feel he had any recourse by talking to anyone else higher up or the senior vice president's boss: "…boy, that's a dangerous thing to do, right? I mean, and then you look like a whiner, right? I don't think it's… I think it's a lose situation…[y]ou look weak and I'm not sure you helped yourself." In the end Participant 11 was laid off, which he felt was a direct consequence of not being a part of the clique, and the poor treatment he received by his boss, who was the leader of the clique.

Structural Description Participant 11

Participant 11 experience of working in a situation where his boss and several of his peers, where he was not a part of the clique, left him in a situation where he felt abused, bullied, and discriminated against. The abusive behavior of the clique left Participant 11 feeling insecure and caused him to start to doubt his own capabilities. The clique's discrimination of anyone outside of the clique, and their treatment of the outsiders, created a situation where it was difficult for Participant 11 to be effective in his job, as he didn't feel supported and that those he was working with recognized that he did not have the backing and support of his boss. This left Participant 11 feeling fearful of his future at the company, and that he would be fired, despite his exemplary performance throughout his career at this company. He hated going to work, he avoided his boss, and he pulled back from seeking opportunities to lead or to put himself forward, as he no longer had confidence in his ability to be successful in his role. He felt that he was not given the information he needed to effectively do his job, and that the members of the clique had that information and knowledge earlier and with more depth than he or is peers that were not a part of the clique were given. This compromised his ability to effectively execute his job. And he felt he had nowhere to turn, that human resources was ineffective and not set up to advocate for the employees. He felt that going to human resources or seeking help from other senior executive would leave him exposed to even more abuse, and that it would make him look weak for not being able to handle the situation. Eventually, he felt his not being part of the clique led to him losing his job in a lay off and he left the company.

Textural Description Participant 12

Participant 12 encountered a clique at his workplace early in his career. He was young, just out of college, and went to work for a small, start-up type of company. He identified the clique as being made up of the CEO of the company and several people from the department that Participant 12 worked in. It was very apparent from the start to Participant 12 that these people were a clique: "…it was very transparent. They were always together, including the CEO… it was almost like it was impenetrable…." Participant 12 recalls being very eager and motivated to become a part of the clique: "…I was very eager, it is sort of my personality, I am very eager. And I wanted to be a part of things. That makes me feel good, that is motivation for me, you know? So, I actually wanted to fit in, I didn't really know any better." He met with resistance from the clique, however: "…[i]t sort of starts by when you try to be part of things and you hit a stone wall. It takes a while… it took me a while to understand that it wasn't me. It was the fact that I wasn't right. And so it was like… it was difficult…." He became very driven to become a part of the clique: "…I actually found myself more motivated by becoming in with the clique then when I was in what I was actually supposed to be doing. I wanted to fit in with them more because I felt that that was more important than the job I was supposed to do. Those are the things that I was thinking about, and I wasn't thinking about learning the job and things like that, I was thinking about how do I get in with those people?"

For Participant 12, not being a part of the clique made him feel "…insecure? You feel like… I was like… I was like hyperaware; I was like second guessing everything I

say. Did I sound stupid? Or did I say that wrong, or did I… and not even work related, but interpersonally to the point where I feel I was trying too hard, I was like overcompensating at first." He felt that the clique exhibited a feeling of superiority from the rest of the team: "…I remember them giving each other a look out of the side of their eyes, like they were having this silent conversation with each other, like a shit talking look. It wasn't like in a fun way, it was like what came to mind was very high school, like a very clique-y." However, he didn't feel that the way the clique made him feel was persona, but rather the members of the clique were just very into each other: "…[i]t's not like they disliked me, they didn't get me that impression. It was more like they were very tight with each other." Through perseverance, though, Participant felt that "…over time, I feel like they warmed up to me. And I still don't know… it's not like… it's not like they are not good people, I just don't know if they were aware. I don't think they were doing it on purpose, I just think it was a lack of self-awareness."

As a way of compensating for his feelings of being left out, Participant 12 also became closer to the other people in the department who were also not part of the clique: "…what I was doing was forming a clique with the other people who were not part of the clique. We formed our own kind of open clique with the other people who were not part of the clique. We sort of got together." And Participant 12 found himself focusing on work that he thought would get him the attention he craved from the clique, even if it was not something he considered important or was a focus of his job:

> I would find myself latching on to things that they had interest in and then
>
> bringing it to them, being like, hey, what do you think you think of this, what do

you think of that? Even if I wasn't personally that into it, just doing it… I was using work in a way just to ingratiate myself to them. To get their approval. So that was what I was focusing on.

After a while, Participant 12 became close to another, more senior member of the team that was not a part of the clique, and that helped him reevaluate his priorities as well as helped him to start to break the ice with the clique: "…There was another person that became a mentor to me…not part of the clique, he was like an older guy. Now he couldn't care less about that stuff, and he could get away with it. And once I saw that, I actually started focusing on other things that had an impact and I started to actually do real work. And it's funny, when I started to do that, I started fitting in with the others."

When evaluating how his work focus changed because of the presence of the clique in his department, he felt that is priorities shifted from what was important to fitting in with the clique: "…[b]efore I started it was all about the big picture, and then it became all about making these three people happy. And because of that I didn't really learn anything. Well, I learned life things, but I didn't learn anything about the actual vision…." He also found not being a part off the clique was very demotivating for him, and that it affected his behavior at work: "…there was this period when I was not motivated at all. I was very unmotivated. And I worked from home for like two weeks. Like, I don't think I went in. I didn't want to… like I don't want to go there." And because he was so focused on pleasing and fitting in with the clique, his work began to suffer for fear that he would do something that would displease them and affect his chances of becoming part of the clique "…because I wanted to fit in so badly, I feel like I

had a fear of giving them something they wouldn't like, it was almost easier not to deliver something, then to deliver something they wouldn't like. So, sometimes I would sort of stall, until I was sure they would be really happy, you know?"

With regard to how management or human resources could help mitigate the effects of a clique in an organization, Participant 12 stated that one way was for the "…senior leader to not be a part of it…[n]ot to say that he can't be friendly with people, of course he should be friendly, but he like engaged in it directly." Participant 12 did feel that it was possible for there to be a role for human resources, but that they would need to be made aware of the situation, and in his case "…someone would have to tell them. And I certainly wasn't about to do that… I still think it would have been like I was ratting on them, like I was tattling or something." But he feels that while human resources could have a role, it is "…more about senior leadership, establishing a culture in their organization, and being good examples for everyone else." And he wondered about why people form cliques, what is the psychology behind forming a clique "…I just wonder what the motivation is for those in the clique. Is it that they feel insecure… is it that they need to feel control?" He identified that the effect of the clique can go beyond leaving a person feeling excluded, but that it can have a larger effect on employees who are not part of the clique "…it's sort of like bullying. It feels like being passively bullied, without the intention of the bully. Instead of someone saying, hey, [redacted], you suck, it's more like them suggesting that, you know…."

Structural Description Participant 12

Early in his career, Participant 12 experienced a clique involving the CEO of his company and several people within his department, while he was not a part of the clique. Participant 12 struggled with this dynamic, as his personality was such that he wanted to be a part of the group, and to be liked and included. He was personally motivated by being a part of the dynamic, and by being liked, and not being included in the inner circle of the clique was hard for him. He recognizes in hindsight that this caused him to focus more on figuring out how to be a part of the clique, then on doing the work he was responsible for. His focus shifted to understanding what it would take for him to become accepted by the clique and brought into their inner circle, rather than on work that was meaningful to him and his position in the company.

As time went on, he found himself becoming demotivated by his inability to become a part of the clique, and found himself procrastinating on delivering work if he was afraid they would not like the work, or delaying delivering on his work until he was sure he would produce something that would please the clique. He avoided going to work for a time, and working from home, in order to avoid the feelings that being an outsider gave him. Eventually, in response to not being a part of the clique, Participant 12 forged tighter relationships with other members of the team who were also not a part of the clique. He also forged a mentoring relationship with an older member of the team, who was accepted by the clique while not being a part of it, and this relationship helped Participant 12 focus on doing work that mattered and could have an impact, and this

refocus eventually allowed him to achieve what he had been trying to do all along – have a closer relationship with the members of the clique.

With regard to the role management or human resources could play in helping a company mitigate the effects of a clique, Participant 12 felt that the most effective tool for mitigating a clique in the situation he experienced was for the senior leader to have set the tone, and not have participated in and been a leader of the clique, but to establish a culture where employees are treated equally. He believed that the culture set by the leader of the company, while intending to be open and equitable, had the opposite effect by the leader's participation in the clique, and that it had the effect of leaving employees feeling a similar effect to that of bullying, through making a person feel inferior and not as good as the members of the clique.

Textural Description Participant 13

The clique the Participant 13 recalled occurred within his larger team in the marketing department of a telecommunications company. The clique consisted of a director and several of Participant 13's peers, but Participant 13 was not a part of the clique. This clique had a close, personal relationship with each other that excluded other members of the team who were not a part of the clique. Participant 13 identified them as "…it seems like they did a lot of things… just that group, that didn't necessarily involve others from the office. I mean, I even think about like lunch time and maybe even outings after… drinks afterwards, after… after work, whereas in most cases we had larger gathering. But in many instances, they kind of did their own thing." This dynamic left Participant 13 feeling "…disappointed…" that they would exclude others from the office

in the outings, and that their behavior with other members of the broader team who were not a part of the clique was "…it just seemed like they were kind of protective. Maybe they were kind of guarded, I guess, they had known each other for many years. They knew their… their families, their kids, their spouses, and all that. And I just thought that it kind of felt like you were an outcast." Participant 13 recalls one instance when a coworker was in town on business, and Participant 13 was wondering if they were all going to get together for dinner, and was told by a member of the clique that no, he had other plans, then later saw on social media that a select group of people had gone out to dinner, and he felt "…disappointed. I thought, well, I worked with him. I know him. I know a lot of these people. And I thought it was kind of an insult."

The predominant feelings that Participant 13 felt by not being a part of that ingroup centered around disappointment and exclusion. He didn't feel that his work or his prospects in the company were affected by not being a part of the clique, but he was hurt and confused when he was not included in social events or meetings: "…I was a bit confused because we've worked on several big projects in the last six months with some of some of [redacted]'s team. And I just was a bit confused. Well, why wasn't I included?". And he felt that the clique was very insular, and were very protective of their relationship with each other, and not letting others in "…it's kind of like they weren't letting others in, except maybe a few people here and there from other teams that they had known through the years…."

While Participant 13 felt excluded from social events or being part of the inner circle, he didn't feel that the clique treated him differently when it came to their working

relationship "…everything was always professional. Everything was always professional. I didn't… I didn't feel slighted or anything in that regard… anything where we were partnering on some project together, I [never] felt like I was shortchanged or treated differently." Despite not being a part of the clique, Participant 13 felt that he received the information he needed to do his job effectively, and that the communication between members of the clique and those outside of it was effective: "I think regardless if there had been this clique or not, I would have gotten the same level of information. I think because they were definitely very helpful, very knowledgeable in their area of expertise. And I… I don't feel like any information would have been withheld from me." He also did not feel that being a part of the clique negatively affected his work performance or motivation: "…I don't feel like it had a negative impact on my job performance whatsoever or my motivation on what… to do good work that I was doing at the company. So, I don't feel like there was any impact on it."

When asked about the role that management or human resources could play in mitigating the effects of a clique in an organization, Participant 13 did not feel there was a great deal that could be done besides reminding people and leaders that when hosting social events or gatherings outside of work, to be more inclusive of all members of the larger team "…I'm not really sure how HR could have played a pivotal role in keeping morale and other nuances within the broader team, you know, in check, but… other than when there's instances where you're having gatherings of people at work and all. That be sure to include the broader team in any type of social event and other things when it makes sense."

Structural Description Participant 13

Participant 13 was very focused on the social aspects of the dynamics between those who were a part of a clique that he experienced, and those who were not a part of the clique. In his particular case, his recollection of the clique he experienced involved a director within his larger team and members of that director's team. He experienced feelings of exclusion from the clique, that they were guarded in their communication with nonmembers of the clique, and that they tended to exclude nonmembers from lunch invitations and events after work, where members of the clique would meet and socialize. Participant 13 saw the members of the clique building strong friendships outside of work, that included spouses and children and weekend activities, that the nonmembers were excluded from. He never thought that the clique behaved in a manner that was unprofessional when it came to work or communicating anything he needed to get his work done, but he did feel that by eliminating non-members from after work activities, and other social events with coworkers, that it left him feeling disappointed and hurt. Participant 13's words and emotions conveyed a strong desire to be a part of that clique, and to have been given the opportunity to participant in the social activities and friendship the clique exhibited. While he did not feel that his opportunities at work or in his role were affected by the clique, he was hurt and emotionally vested in the behavior of the clique, and their behaviors of exclusion. With regard to human resources being able to affect any kind of change, Participant 13 was skeptical, but did advise that human resources should convey a policy of inclusion when it came to work events and after work social activities, in order to allow all members of the team to feel included.

Textural Description Participant 14

Participant 14 experience with a clique occurred when she was hired into a company as a contractor, but then subsequently became an employee. Initially, she encountered the clique when she joined the company, these individuals had all worked together at an advertising agency and had subsequently been hired into this same company Participant 14 was working at. This connection and past relationship forged a bond within this group that excluded others from becoming part of the clique: "…[t]hey were all based in Dallas. And they were definitely… they were… there were a chosen few and they were all from that agency." Participant 14 also felt that the members of the clique looked down on people who were not like them: "…because they talked about college rivalries a lot, and I when I got hired, I had a two-year degree, so I had never gone to three- or four-year college experience. So that was a little off putting. Just having that kind of hanging over my head that I wasn't… I didn't have this four-year degree." Participant 14 stated it was easy to see the clique's connection and that "…it was definite they were running the show…."

Experiencing this made Participant 14 angry: "… [i]t was irritating, I think, more than anything. You know, you're… I'm doing a good job and I'm working hard and I'm making contributions. And it wasn't being noticed. And I couldn't… for anybody who's on the outside looking in and you're like, well, why aren't I in (laughs)? I am like, what do I have to do?." This dynamic also made her uncomfortable: "…it always made me a little on edge when I had conversations with [redacted], I always felt like I had to gauge my words and I couldn't be my true self." And she stated that she never felt that her

exchanges with the clique were genuine "…[a]nd I always thought that there was there was something… ulterior motives going on with those people that I could never… I never felt comfortable around them."

Participant 14 never felt she could trust the members of the clique when she had to deal with them, and she was "…always…concerned about getting thrown under the bus like something… and I don't know if that was rational, Patricia, I really don't. But that's what I felt. It was always, okay… am I doing the right thing? Am I not doing the right thing?." She also felt that her opportunities were limited because she was not a part of the clique: "…I always got the feeling that I was never going to progress in my career if I was going to have to report to [redacted] long term. That was just… I wasn't going anywhere."

Participant 14 felt that she and other non-members of the clique were always on the outside: "…[t]he communication intra-clique was inside jokes, constant inside joke. And they would say these things to each other and just crack up laughing and the rest of us who were not in the clique would just be going…hmmm… okay, that's great, you know? What are you people talking about?." Being outside of the clique took a toll on Participant 14's confidence: "…I think it really does a number on you, like, it really does eat away at your self-confidence to some degree. Like, what is wrong with me? Why am I not worthy of having an inside joke with people?" This erosion of confidence also helped limit her career: "…[a]nd I think to some degree it does prevent people from actually taking risks in their career or going for what they want, because in my instance, there

were a lot of opportunities that I didn't take because I thought, well, I'm just not the favored and just not an option, really, for me to try."

Eventually the lack of encouragement and support from her boss, who was a member of the clique, started to affect her motivation and drive:

It absolutely soured me to some… back then, I was just like anything… anything for the company. I will do my job. I will work hard, and I will push stuff out. I didn't feel it was appreciated…and I do think it definitely creates a toxic environment, right, when you are working and you are doing what you're asked to do and going above and beyond and not having that recognition, it really wears on you emotionally. And it makes it very difficult to get out of bed and go to work with a positive attitude.

When Participant 14 compared her current job to this past experience, it allowed her to identify how having a clique within a team, when you are not a part of that team, affects performance: "…it's really making me see what I have now and the environment I have now it's completely and vastly different than what was happening back… back in the day at [redacted]. So, it does make a world of difference when there is inclusivity rather than having people that are just very tightly knit and keeping others out."

With regard to management and human resources, Participant 14 did not think human resources could have been effective in helping mitigate the situation. She tried to go to human resources at one point and stated that "…I went to HR because… just because the morale was so horrible …and got absolutely a non-response. So, HR is basically there to protect management, the company, they're not there to deal with issues

that individual employees have. And that's just based on my experience… yeah… I don't think that HR is effective in dealing with cliques in the company." When reflecting back on her experience, Participant 14 did feel that the experienced had strengthened her to a degree, and that "…I think it made me a better manager. I think I tried to be as inclusive with my teams and the teams that we interact with as possible. I think it did make me a better manager." And she believes that people forming alliances with each other, and creating cliques is natural: "…[a]nd, I'm not saying this as this is a good thing, because there really shouldn't be these little pockets of favoritism, but uh… it's just human nature, and it's going happen. I think you… I don't know that you can train it out of the system, you know?"

Structural Description Participant 14

Participant 14 experienced a clique when she went to go work for a telecommunications company and continued to have experiences with that same clique or members of the clique during her 20-year tenure. The clique, she felt, was established even before these individuals had joined the company, and that once one person was with the company, they gradually brought in the others, and then supported and created an exclusive environment for the members that allowed them to have advantages and opportunities that were not present for employees who were not a part of the clique. This dynamic created a disadvantage for non-members of the clique, limiting their opportunities for meaningful roles and advancement.

Over time, this situation demoralized Participant 14, and she began to feel insecure and limited herself from pursuing opportunities that may have created

advancement within the company for her, as she felt her options were limited because she was not a part of the clique. She also felt anger and irritation that the clique was behaving in a manner she felt was reminiscent of high school, with their own inside jokes and dismissal of anyone who was not a part of the clique. Despite an attempt to engage human resources to help, when they did not provide any assistance to mitigating the clique or the effect it had on employees, Participant 14 now believes that human resources is not an option in organizations experiencing the effects of a clique, as she believes their primary focus is on the company and management, and not in support of thee employee. Over time, Participant 14 came to believe that her future in the company was limited and chose to leave. However, she does believe that having had the experience, she feels that it improved her own behavior as a manager and allowed her to be more aware of not replicating that environment in her new role, and she works to provide an inclusive environment for her new team. Participant 14 also believes that eliminating cliques is not a likely outcome for organizations, as it is human nature for people to gravitate towards certain people and exclude others, so while she understands fully the negative consequences of cliques, she also does not believe they can be eliminated from corporate life.

Textural Description Participant 15

The clique that Participant 15 experienced occurred between a senior vice president and several of Participant 15's peers. The members of the clique had worked together at for many years, and through a merger of two companies, Participant 15 and the members of the clique worked together. She stated that it was easy, early on, to

identify that they were a clique and that they were not interested in being inclusive of other members of the team:

> They socialized together… they would go to happy hours and they would talk about that. They had their own little language… umm… inside jokes of things that they would laugh about and sort of like finish each other's sentences and 'you know this'… and 'hey, man, thinking about that'. So… their language, the connection that they shared, the way they listened to each other, umm… but when other people spoke, they had a tendency to interrupt… overrule…. not pay attention.

And for members of the team who were not a part of the clique "…their closedness made everybody on the outside feel left out and inferior." For Participant 14, not being part of the clique made her feel "…inferior and wrong." But over time, she learned how to manage her relationship with the members of the clique in a way that allowed her to make some progress with them:

> Eventually I came to the conclusion of… the way that I dealt with that was I would pick off one or -- one or the other -- of the directors and try to stakeholder something in advance so I could get at least one of the three of them on my side before I went in to discuss something with the group, because you could not have an open, honest dialogue due to the closedoffness thing that and not being heard.

Through this technique, she felt that she was able to have some success in having her point of view heard and potentially her ideas implemented. Another technique she developed was to:

Let them talk and then try to position ideas that if I could say it the right way, then

they would grab it and make it sound like it was their idea. And I would roll with

that because in the end, all I want is to be able to do is get my program going.

And so, I didn't really care. And I realized that that was one way to use their

closedoffness kind of against them to get what I wanted.

Despite what she felt was her ability after time to manipulate the situation to her

advantage, Participant 15 felt that the situation of trying to deal with the clique affected

her emotionally:

It made me feel… frustrated. It made me feel… anxious. It made me feel umm…

angry. It made me feel… sad, I guess. Because I was on the outs looking in. And

it didn't seem as if… because of the way… because of the… there being a vice

president involved it didn't seem as if there was anything I could do about it or

that it was ever going to change.

She also felt that because she was on the outside of the clique, that she was "…on

the defensive, very much on the defensive. I guess that's another feeling that I had."

Participant 15 also felt that she was at a disadvantage to her peers who were a part of the

clique, because being part of a clique with the senior vice president gave them exposure

to information she was not privy to:

That senior executive, that vice president shared a lot with those two directors. So,

they were in the know on strategic initiatives, they were in the know on budget,

they were in the know… on business priorities, business objectives. Maybe I

would even say some of the… politics of the players that were… involved in

running the business. So, there was a lot of insider knowledge that I think they got

as a result of that… their close relationship with that vice president, that if you

were a regular director and you were on the outside, you didn't get access to that,

at least not -- maybe it eventually came out to everybody -- but, I believe they got

it sooner and they got more of it than anybody outside of the… outside of the

clique got it. So, there would be information in there that would be helpful for

people to have in terms of setting goals for their team, setting priorities,

understanding where money was going, what it was going to be used for, knowing

some of the players; so, they had an advantage in knowing that information and

getting that support from senior executives that other directors did not get… or

that I myself did not have.

Participant 15 also felt that this created a situation where the members of the

clique did not have to put in the same level of effort in order to achieve their objectives:

"…I am absolutely convinced that they did not have to work as hard or as smart because

everything that they said, every idea they had, no matter what, they… they were never

wrong, they were always right, and everything was always rubber stamped." Because of

this situation, she felt that her emotions and motivation to do a good job ping ponged:

"…sometimes I would get very fired up about it and I'd be like, you know, I… I can do

this… if I have to work ten times harder then I will do that… and I'm creative and I am

just going to solve this problem. And other times, I would just throw up my hands and be

like, it's just not fair. And that would be frustrating. And you would… I would… I would

feel defeated before I even started." While Participant 15 felt that her natural optimism

kept her from spending too much time feeling demotivated, she felt that the situation drove a lot of inefficiency and wasted resources: "…[i]t just seemed as if it took a lot of extra energy, time and effort and a lot more… sucked a lot of emotion out of me because you were trying to deal with this other dynamic in addition to just solving a business problem."

While Participant 15 felt that, because the clique a different part of the larger team she worked in, not being a part of it didn't have a negative effect on her career, she did think that being a part of the clique definitely helped the members of the clique: "…in the organization that we work in no one gets promoted unless everybody is on board. So, let's just say that both of those two guys that were directors back then rocketed on to various levels of vice presidents… I would say they reaped the benefit of being in the clique." With regard to feeling if the clique had an effect on her ability to be creative, Participant 15 had mixed emotions:

> I believe that the… best creativity and strongest innovation and the best work gets done when people feel safe. And when there is a clique and you're on the outside of it, it's fundamental survival threat. So, you don't feel safe. So, I guess might I have come up with even better ideas than I did at the time, if I felt safer, I would say yes, so it…it did… it did affect my ability to be creative. Not completely, but I would say partially.

Participant 15 did not feel that there was a role that human resources should play in mitigating the effects of a clique, as she felt it was more suited to "…compensation, benefits, job description, recruiting… all those kinds of repeatable processes. But when it

comes to handling a clique in the workplace, I don't think that's an HR thing…." Where she does believe that the effects of a clique should be managed is at the leadership level, and that leadership played a role in creating the situation she experienced "…I think the organization that I worked in at that time, umm… over a series of years went through a crisis of leadership and that manifested itself in a lot of different ways…" including creating an environment where the clique she experienced could thrive. Participant 15 does believe that a leader can have "…go to people and not engage in uh... clique-y behaviors. And not create the feeling that some people are a part of the crowd, and some people are out. I think you can have close working relationships with multiple people without creating a clique." But she does believe that what she experienced fell into the realm of a clique "… for these three individuals, it was definitely a clique." In the end, Participant 15 summed up her experience as:

> I netted it out that it undermines the effectiveness of a team and the work that gets done. In general, because of this lack of acceptance and the lack of safety and the energy that is expended in trying to go around and figuring out how to navigate that clique in order to get seemingly simple business tasks completed, so it's a… it's a resource drain that is unnecessary.

Structural Description Participant 15

The clique that Participant 15 experienced occurred when her company merged with another company, and an existing clique from the second company was blended into her organization. The individuals that made up the clique had a long-term working relationship and created an environment where nonmembers of the clique felt excluded

and inferior. The members of the clique were often dismissive of the opinions of others and forced Participant 15 to find creative ways of managing the situation so that she could accomplish her objectives. Participant 15's own internal drive and generally optimistic nature allowed her to manage her own reaction to not being part of the inner circle of the clique, but she did experience periods where she struggled to say motivated when faced with opposition from the clique.

She felt that she had to work harder to have her ideas and opinions heard, and to succeed in her role, than the members of the clique had to, as she felt that the affiliation her peers had with the head of the clique, a senior vice president, allowed them to have their ideas accepted and acted upon much more easily than those outside of the clique. She also felt that the member of the clique had greater opportunities and were able to advance in the organization more quickly because of their affiliation with the clique.

She also felt that her degree of creativity and ability to be innovative was compromised by the unwelcoming atmosphere created by the clique. While Participant 15 felt that a leader can have go to people, and people within the organization they rely on more than others, when a leader creates an "us versus them mentality", and a clique situation, it drains the energy from the larger organization, and creates an environment that is not conducive to innovation and inclusivity. She felt that the situation that she experienced was a drain on resources and energy, as nonmembers of the clique had to expend time figuring out how to achieve their objectives despite the blocks put forth by the clique.

Synthesis

Once the individual textural and structural descriptions were completed, the next step was to integrate the individual textural and structural descriptions in order to develop a synthesis of the phenomenon. For individuals having experienced working in a situation where there was a clique, involving the leader of the team or organization and two or more members of the team, but where the individual was not a part of the clique, this often led to the questioning of participant's value to the corporation and their own personal work, with the experience of not being part of the clique causing participants to feel insecure about the decisions they would make, their actions and about their job security. As Participant 2 described it "… it really sort of made you feel like anything you had to say wasn't gonna be valued", and as Participant 15 stated it "… made me feel inferior and wrong", and for Participant 9 it "… it possibly made me feel a little… small."

Participants also often felt excluded, and that they felt they were not a part of the group or team. Participant 1 described it as "… [s]o that particular group of people kind of got together and I very much felt frozen out." This feeling of being excluded could result in feelings of distrust or of being an outsider, as Participant 14 described it "… and I always thought that there was there was something… ulterior motives going on with those people that I could never… I never felt comfortable around them."

Participants often felt that because they were not a part of the clique, that there was a lack of opportunity for them, and that members of the clique were given more opportunities to succeed or given more exposure. Participant 15 stated that "… I would

say they reaped the benefit of being in the clique …" while Participant 9 felt that her lack of being part of the clique prevented her from potentially making vital connections within her company "… I wasn't really provided the opportunity to… perhaps network with my VP's peer of networks …." And Participant 14 felt that she held herself back because she did not feel she could be successful because she wasn't part of the in-group "… there were a lot of opportunities that I didn't take because I thought, well, I'm just not the favored and just not an option, really, for me to try."

Many participants experienced a decrease in motivation or felt that they were less motivated over time due to not being a part of the clique, although some used the challenge of not being a part of the clique to motivate them to try harder to succeed, as Participant 1 described it "… you want to prove your worth and show them."

Many experienced feelings of decreased creativity, or that the insecurity and sense of fear not being part of the clique instilled in them hampered their ability to be creative, although a few indicated that they felt their job was more task oriented and therefor they did not view their jobs as creative to begin with, and therefore the presence of a clique had little effect on them. The majority of participants felt that their not being part of the clique limited the information they received or caused delays their peers in the clique did not experience, with the majority of participants feeling that they were limited or excluded from information, while a few of the participants received the information they felt they needed to do their job.

Discrepant Cases

A few discrepant cases emerged, but on a much smaller scale. Several participants pointed out the harm a clique can do to a company in general, as Participant 15 described:

I just think if I netted it out that it undermines the effectiveness of a team and the work that gets done. In general, because of this lack of acceptance and the lack of safety and the energy that is expended in trying to go around and figuring out how to navigate that clique in order to get seemingly simple business tasks completed, so it's a… it's a resource drain that is unnecessary.

Several research participants equated the presence of a clique in an organization, particularly with the leadership as part of that clique, to bullying and the harmful effects that bullying can cause. Participant 10 described her situation as:

Everybody, from what I remember from back in the day… everybody loved her. And I was like, she's such a bully. Why do people love her? Like, I don't understand. And not the way she [unintelligible] but the way she handles things. You know, she was very cliquey, and if she liked you, great, but if she didn't like you like you, you were out of there."

Participant 10 also questioned if a clique is always a bad thing, stating "… it's always easier to go forward if you have someone who is advocating for you … that just weighs the scales, and you know, you can say whether it's good or bad, but it is kind of human nature, you know?"

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Initially this study sought to have up to 20 interviews in order to achieve saturation, or that point at which no new information can be gleaned (Johnston et al., 2016). However, after 12 interviews, no new information was forthcoming from the participants. Three additional interviews were conducted to confirm that saturation had been achieved, and at that point the interviews were concluded. A 16th interview had been scheduled and initiated, but after asking the participant to describe a situation where she had been in a situation where there was a clique, involving a leader and two or more individuals, but she herself was not part of the clique, it was identified that she did not believe she had experienced the phenomenon, and the interview was terminated. According to Paul (2017) a typical phenomenological study will range in participants from 5 – 25, depending on the topic and the diversity of the narrative. Therefore, concluding the interviews at 15 when data saturation is within the acceptable standard for a phenomenological study.

Transferability

Each of the 15 interviews in this study was recorded and transcribed. The interviews yielded a rich amount of data in the form of detailed description, or what is considered thick description (Vagle, 2014). The research and findings represent the personal, lived experiences of 15 individuals, all of whom experienced the phenomenon of working in a situation where there was a clique, involving a leader of the group and two or more members of the group, but where the participant was not a part of the clique.

The diversity of the experiences, and the rich storytelling of each of the participants is captured in the data and can provide insights and applicability to a range of industries and organizations, with particular emphasis on the study of leadership, employee behavior, and human resources management. The findings are particularly applicable to how individuals experience and interpret their situations at work when they feel there is a clique present.

Dependability

Each of the 15 interviews were transcribed verbatim, first through the electronic transcription service NVivo Transcriptions, and then manually checked and adjusted as needed to ensure that each participants words and inflections were captured faithfully in the transcription. Every research participant was given a chance to review and approve their transcript (see Appendix E). Confidentiality was ensured by the redaction of all personally identifiable information, and each participant was given a code that is reflected in the transcript and throughout the findings, namely Participant 1, Participant 2, etc. to protect participants' anonymity.

The participants names and codes, and all approvals, have been stored separately from the transcripts using a digital storage device, and backup copies have been made to ensure safety. These devices have been stored separately in secure locations, and the data will be maintained for the required five years per Walden University requirements. After five years, the electronic data will be deleted from the storage devices and the devices will be recycled. All physical notes and printed versions will also be destroyed through shredding and recycling.

Confirmability

Prior to starting the interviewing for this phenomenological study, I engaged in a reflective process to document my own experience with the phenomenon, and to help identify any potential prejudices or biases that potentially could have surfaced in the interview process or data analysis (Yiannis, 2015). I then conducted a pilot study to help identify if the interview questions yielded sufficient description of the phenomenon and allowed participants to have the space and freedom to describe and reflect on their own experiences thoroughly, and after concluding the pilot study, I made an adjustment to the Interview questions in the final study to add an additional question. This question was designed to explore new findings that emerged in the pilot study regarding human resource management that was unexpected.

Participants were also provided with an overview of the research in their invitation letter (see Appendix A) and informed consent. At the start of each interview the participants were read an overview of the research study from the interview protocol (see Appendix C). They were also given an opportunity to review their transcripts and provide any input to anything they felt did not accurately convey their thoughts or interview input (see Appendix E).

Study Results

The data solicitated for this phenomenological study is derived from seven semi structured, open-ended questions. The original design for the study was intended to have six questions focused on the lived experiences of individuals who have experienced the phenomenon of a clique within their group, team or organization that included a leader

and two or more additional members, but the participants did not perceive themselves to have been part of the clique. There was an added focus on creativity and motivation, and how those are affected by the presence of a clique. However, another area of interest was uncovered during the pilot study, and a seventh question was added to address the role that human resources plays when a clique is present.

Each of the semi structured questions yielded rich data about how an individual experiences the presence of a clique, that includes a leader of the team, and two or more individual members. In addition, consistent themes emerged across the data that help to provide a more macro view of how the presence of a clique at the leadership level affects employees who are not a part of that clique. These themes were then further grouped into categories, to help describe how research participants experienced the phenomenon: psychological, structural, and organizational factors.

Category 1: Psychological Factors

Research participants experienced a range of psychological factors that influenced their perception of the experience of working in a team where there existed a clique.

Feeling Excluded

The most frequently expressed emotion from participants was the feeling of exclusion or being excluded. Participant 12 described it as:

There was a clique, I think, for sure there. One of the executives [redacted], some of the people from my department, so it was very transparent. They were always together, including the CEO, the senior leader, [redacted]…[t]hey were like… it

was almost like it was impenetrable…[i]t sort of starts by when you try to be part

of things and you hit a stone wall.

Participant 9 described her experience as:

There clearly was a clique environment in that a lot of my peers had this… I felt

sometimes unhealthy relationship with my VP. There was clearly a group of

people that were always in the know of what was going on, always involved in the

latest things that were happening. And basically, for myself, I was always… I

always felt out of the loop…it left me feeling kind of left out of the things that

were happening.

Participant 8 described his feelings about the members of the clique as "… the

cool kids. They were… they just were more… they became more of a friendship unit.

They seem to have a good time, whereas our meetings…our one on ones with the

director, were very much business oriented." Participant 5 described his experience as

"…[t]hey're all kind of talking amongst themselves, sharing amongst themselves without

a lot of inclusion. You almost have that awkward feeling like… ok, maybe I shouldn't be

here, like you just feel awkward about the whole thing." In her experience, Participant 1

experienced the clique as "… that particular group of people kind of got together and I

very much felt frozen out."

Not Feeling Valued

Another common theme that emerged that the majority of participants

experienced was that participants did not feel valued by the leader or the clique, because

they were not part of the clique. Participant 2 stated that "… my input was probably

never really valued …" by the individuals that were a part of the clique that she had to work with. Participant 10 explained a situation where the leader of her team and her boss favored a peer of hers, who was part of the clique:

> To me…he was like favoring her… I feel like he was favoring her. And then my direct boss … saw that his boss liked her, so then he started to favor her. Then I was like, wait a second, I have equally… I have things that need to be heard. And I felt that my comments weren't getting the kind of attention that hers was, the kind of attention that she was, and that she was giving more recognition, more preferential treatment and better assignments because of that … I felt like chopped liver … it made me feel I felt like my value wasn't being recognized and… that there wasn't necessarily a good place for me on the team.

> Participant 14 also described that she did not feel valued within the team:

> When you are working, and you are doing what you're asked to do and going above and beyond and not having that recognition, it really wears on you emotionally. And it makes it very difficult to get out of bed and go to work with a positive attitude.

> Participant 2 felt her "… input was probably never really valued' and that the

clique "… made you feel like anything you had to say wasn't gonna be valued."

Participant 7 encountered the situation between herself and a clique within her own team, where "… any kind of input that I would provide was disregarded, even though I had… I think… I thought I'd had a really good input …" and that "… you just feel so out of control… you don't feel validated… You don't feel valued. You feel like you don't

contribute towards that project, that you're more of a… I don't know… support than a part of the team." Participant 9 experienced similar feelings:

> She was 100 percent directing things to that group or clique, right. And if you kind of interjected or had a comment or something, it wasn't really welcome, you know? You felt like, yeah, you're not part of this conversation. Thanks for the input, but this is the group that I'm going to deal with, and… it wasn't so direct, but it was subtle enough that you always felt like you were on the outskirts.

Feeling Insecure

Many of the participants recalled that the situation left them feeling insecure about themselves or their position in the team or in the company. Participant 3 stated that that "[y]ou feel… that sense of confidence… is… is ripped from you. Any you feel… you can feel alone… but for me… for me, it gave me a sense of insecurity" and that it took her "… a while for me to gain the respect and the ability to be heard and…and someone that could be a part of any conversation with the team." Participant 1 thought that her manager was trying to get her fired:

> I think she was trying to get me fired. She was taking notations of the things that I was doing or not doing. And there was literally a running total of the things that she perceived as not good activity. And I was horrified. One thing that would hurt my psyche significantly and to because if somebody thought that I wasn't doing good job, was trying to get me literally fired from a job, potentially, was horrifying.

The situation also made her feel:

I felt stupid, and the reason it made me feel stupid is because she kept saying

things in ways, like, with the perception that I was stupid. And I just wanted to

tell her I'm a very smart person. I have a very high IQ and I'm a very nice person.

You should be… but it made me doubt my success and my ability to do things,

and I felt very much on the outside.

Interview 10 described that her situation made her feel "… less of… like I was a

lesser player on the team…" then her peer who was a part of the clique. Participant 11

felt so terrible about the situation that he sought help "… I remember driving to work

every day, listening to like self-help books and stuff because I was just like, oh my God, I

was miserable …" and that in his situation he felt:

I felt incompetent. I felt fear for my… more for my reputation than my job. Fear

of losing my job and being fired…and I would just avoid him… which is the

worst thing I could have done, but I just did not want to be anywhere near him.

Which is not helpful to your career.

And for Interview 11:

[Y]eah, it made me feel… I guess… insecure? You feel like… I was like… I was

like hyperaware; I was like second guessing everything I say. Did I sound stupid?

Or did I say that wrong, or did I… and not even work related, but interpersonally

to the point where I feel I was trying too hard, I was like overcompensating at

first. So, it definitely made me feel insecure, and I was definitely over aware of

everything.

Participant 14 also feared the damage the clique could do to her:

I always was concerned about getting thrown under the bus like something… and
I don't know if that was rational… I really don't. But that's what I felt. It was
always, okay… am I doing the right thing? Am I not doing the right thing… it
really does a number on you, like, it really does eat away at your self-confidence
to some degree. Like, what is wrong with me? Why am I not worthy of having an
inside joke with people?

For Participant 15 the situation made her feel "… inferior and wrong …." And
that she was "… on the defensive, very much on the defensive." Participant 3 felt all her
confidence was eroded:

[T]hat sense of confidence… is… is ripped from you. Any you feel … for me, it
gave me a sense of insecurity…[i]t made me feel very insecure. Ummm, it made
me feel that… I was depressed during that time period…I lost all my sense of
confidence, and I was… depressed is a bit more, but I was very sad. I cry every
week. I regretted the decision to… to take this job every week.

Negative Emotions

Many of the participants also felt a range of other emotions that affected their emotional health, such as anger, fear, frustration, and exhaustion. Participant 1 experienced anger, which is something she felt she didn't normally feel: "…[a]t some point you just get … you get angry, which I don't normally get…" and she recalled a specific situation:

I remember being very angry and just taking my pen and going, okay. I just walked out… I think I had probably ripped through that paper to the second layer of paper. I just…okay…I was very mad and I'm sure that was completely obvious that I was. But yeah, made me feel bad about myself.

Interview 6 also felt anger at the situation she experienced "…I mean, [it] generally pisses me off…." Participant 15 experienced similar emotions:

It made me feel… frustrated. It made me feel… anxious. It made me feel… angry. It made me feel… sad, I guess. Because I was on the outs looking in. And it didn't seem as if… because of the way… because of the… there being a vice president involved it didn't seem as if there was anything I could do about it or that it was ever going to change.

Participant 11's experience over time caused him to fear the clique and the leader of the clique, because of the way he was treated by them, and that while he had previously enjoyed work, he now found it was "…more frightening than fun. More fear of making a mistake than…. I just never really had to fear before [at work] …." And for Participant 3, her situation was such that she "… hated to go to the office, and I hated

going to work, right. I just hated it. I hated it. I dreaded every day having to go into the office." And Participant 7 felt the same way "… I was like… I hated going to work…."

Participant 9 found the situation exhausting: "… I think my feelings about work became… exhausted for me, it was exhausting to go to work mentally because you always had to kind of battle that, and it was just so apparent that it was kind of exhausting."

Feeling Determined

Some participants, however, turned the situation of working with a clique where they were not part of the clique around and were determined to not let it get to them, or to not let it affect their work or their wellbeing. Participant 3 felt that the situation made her more determined to succeed "…[a]nd the only thing that got me through was choosing one, that I could not accept failure, you know, I wasn't going to fail" and that she was not going to let the situation defeat her:

> When you… your entire career, twenty years where you haven't gone through this nonsense and then you go through it, you realize how terrible it is and you have to be very… you have to be a strong person to get through it and not lose your job or lose the motivation to deliver at work…I didn't leave my previous job, and my previous career to fail now. That's the only thing that got me through.

Participant 1 felt similarly:

I tried to work hard or even in some cases to do a good job because I needed them to know that I was successful. That I understood the business. That I knew how to do my job as best as I actually did know how to do my job at that time.

For Participant 15, her emotions vacillated between determined and frustrated:

Sometimes I would get very fired up about it and I'd be like, you know, I… I can

do this. I'm just going to… if I have to work ten times harder then I will do that…

and I'm creative and I am just going to solve this problem. And other times, I

would just throw up my hands and be like, it's just not fair. And that would be

frustrating. And you would… I would… I would feel defeated before I even

started.

Thoughts of Quitting

Many of the participants entertained thoughts of quitting their job or finding a

different position within the company because of the situation they were experiencing

with their particular clique. Participant 1: "… I thought about quitting. I literally got

like… I'm done here. I can't be successful. I can't get things completed …I'm out of here.

I'm going to have to find another job. I'm going to quit." And for Participant 10:

Eventually I started to say, oh, I need to go somewhere else or something. This

isn't working for me. You know… I always did my job and I… you know, I

enjoyed it. But you feel like you're optimized in a situation where you can make a

meaningful contribution and that contribution is valued and recognized. I didn't

necessarily feel like that in that situation. So, eventually, I looked for a different

situation or position." For Participant 3, while eventually her situation got better,

she felt that if it had not "…I think… I think I would have quit. I would have quit.

I don't think I would have stayed. I think I would have quit. Yeah. I would have

looked for another job.

Behavioral Changes

Several of the participants saw their own behaviors change in response to having been in a situation with a clique where they were not a part of the clique. Participant 12 found himself...

[L]atching on to things that they [the clique] had interest in and then bringing it to them, being like, hey, what do you think you think of this, what do you think of that? Even if I wasn't personally that into it, just doing it… I was using work in a way just to ingratiate myself to them. To get their approval. So that was what I was focusing on.

And that when he was working with the members of the clique he was "…focused on bullshit. But bullshit I thought they would smile at…" and that "…it became all about making these three people happy…."

And for Participant 14, she felt she needed to put on an act or to change her behavior when she was working with the clique:

So, it always made me a little on edge when I had conversations with [redacted], I always felt like I had to gauge my words and I couldn't be my true self. There was there was this level of, I want to say, fake professionalism that would come from them, because you'd have these business conversations and it was all buttoned up, and, yeah, we're gonna do this, everything's great. But then you get out and maybe have… go to a happy hour. And they were there, and they were just like completely different people. And I can't… I'm not up for that.

Participant 3 found herself bending over backwards to make the members of the clique like her, and to not give them any cause to target her:

But you have to be liked. You have to find a way to be liked. So that meant that for the first six months, whenever someone was extremely rude to me, I'd still have to be polite and smile and be helpful and cooperative and to, you know, to win them over.

Participant 3 struggled with managing her own natural inclinations to assert herself or let her true personality shine through, and keeping the members of the clique happy:

But when… when that happened to me, it immediately affected me because you're in a meeting and all of a sudden someone is being very disrespectful and… and I was losing my cool. And by that, I mean that I would either freeze and not be able to answer at first or convey a sentence that makes sense…I don't think I was able to act in a way that would be cool and calm whenever I encountered something like that.

And for Participant 8:

I think just over time you adapt your behavior to… to mitigate issues that have come up … I think your behavior going forward on a regular basis you adapt to the environment. So, if you… if you're an outsider, then you kind of adapt and you become I don't know, it's a self-fulfilling prophecy. You become the outsider and then you adapt accordingly, just to be successful at your job as an outside and a contributor…I mean, I just I felt like we had to always over-prepare to pass

muster. In other words, we knew there would be pushback and we just had to be

completely bulletproof prepared so that we could manage so that we could

manage the flak or whatever.

Category 2: Performance Factors

The situation of working in a team where there was a clique, and where the

participants in this study were not a part of that clique, caused many of the participants in

the study to feel that it had an effect on their performance at work as well.

Access to Information

The majority of the participants in the study felt that not being part of the clique

definitely affected their access to information. This ranged from not feeling they were

getting the information they needed, to feeling they only got part of the information to

experiencing a delay in getting information. Participant 10 saw the member of the clique

as communicating within themselves and not sharing information with others:

I think they communicated amongst themselves. And then I'd be like… then I'd

find out, oh this happened, and they'd be like, oh yeah…you do lose

communication if you're not part of that group because they talk amongst each

other and word has to trickle down unless someone is very good at

communicating what's going on, which didn't always happen all the time in that

situation. So, yeah, it does have an impact.

Participant 14 experienced a similar situation with the clique she encountered at

her work:

The communication intra-clique was inside jokes, constant inside joke. And they would say these things to each other and just crack up laughing and the rest of us who were not in the clique would just be going…hmmm… okay, that's great, you know? What are you people talking about?

Several participants felt there was a lack of communication coming from the clique, or that the members of the clique would be in the know sooner or with more depth than other members of the team. Participant 2 stated that "…[i]t affected the work because you're hearing something from someone else. And not firsthand." Participant 10 felt this lack of complete transparency in communications affected her ability to do her job:

You know, when you don't know as much about what's going on, you can't bring solutions… you can't… you can't have your point of view listened to because you don't know what's going on. And they have information that kind of gives them the ability to work with the most… with additional information that you don't have. So, yeah, it does impact my ability to do what I had to do.

Participant 11 experienced similar concerns, and felt it also left him at a disadvantage when it came to strategy:

I think the news that I would find out would be through the grapevine, and they already knew it. Like [redacted], [redacted] would already know it, they'd be ahead… they'd know what was coming next. They know that reorgs were happening, and they know about decisions being made. Meetings coming up. And then they knew about the strategy at a different level than we did.

Participant 15 also experienced this:

So, there was a lot of insider knowledge that I think they got as a result of that…

their close relationship with that vice president, that if you were a regular director

and you were on the outside, you didn't get access to that, at least not -- maybe it

eventually came out to everybody -- but, I believe they got it sooner and they got

more of it than anybody outside of the… outside of the clique got it. So, there

would be information in there that would be helpful for people to have in terms of

setting goals for their team, setting priorities, understanding where money was

going, what it was going to be used for, knowing some of the players; so, they had

an advantage in knowing that information and getting that support from senior

executives that other directors did not get… or that I myself did not have.

Participant 4 felt that the presence of the clique prevented her from having enough

information to do her job effectively:

I never felt like I was getting all of the information that I needed to know about

what was going on with the client. How… the new campaign was performing…

just key information that would have made my job easier because I wasn't in that

circle and that information was being passed through that circle because they

worked on the launch.

There was also a feeling among many of the study participants that the manner in

which the clique spoke to members of the clique versus those who were not a member of

the clique was different. Participant 5 described it as:

It felt like discussions were more in… more informal when you're a part of the clique. And then if you weren't…it seemed to be… they seem they'd be much more…cautious of what they might say or how they might position things… a little bit…um…more protected, I guess… I feel like more information was shared when you're a part of the clique, then if you weren't. And not necessarily that they weren't willing to share that information. It just seemed to be because if you have a little bit more… because I think conversations were a little bit more unrestrained. It just seemed that they were able to share more information… it's a little bit more guarded… then things like the conversation or what's being shared is not as free flowing, if you will.

However, Participant 5 also felt that because he had forged a good working relationship with the clique, even if he was not a part of it, that he generally got the information he needed to do his job. But he also observed that he could see where some peers, who did not have as good a relationship with the clique, might have struggled:

If they like you and feel you have something to offer, I think they're a little bit more willing to interact more with you. That's why I felt like nothing was necessarily held back from me. I always seemed to get the information I wanted. Whereas… whereas I think people that they didn't feel that they liked… or didn't think the same way as they did… you know… almost like… they didn't really want to share because they wanted to not really necessarily get any obstacles or objections so they can kind of do what they want to do.

However, several of the participants in the study felt that there being a clique did not prevent them from getting the information they needed to do their jobs effectively. Participant 14 felt that "… I want to say that the business communications were enough to allow me to do the job that I needed." And Participant 13 felt similarly:

I think regardless if there had been this clique or not, I would have gotten the same level of information. I think because they were definitely very helpful, very knowledgeable in their area of expertise. And I… I don't feel like any information would have been withheld from me.

Effects on Creativity

Many of the participants in the study felt that the presence of a clique within the team, but they were not a part of that clique, had an effect on their being able to be as creative as they could be because the fear of being mocked or dismissed constrained their willingness to put ideas forward. Participant 1 experienced this with the leader of the clique that she encountered:

She had a tendency to try to make me feel stupid. And when you feel stupid, you don't bring ideas to the table because nobody wants to open your mouth and appear unintelligent. You're going to be quiet and you're going to remove the opportunity for them to ridicule you or to make you feel bad about yourself. So, from a creative perspective, I'm not bringing new ideas to the table. I try to address the things that I have. I try to do the best job that I can. Why bring forth new ideas when I know it's just going to be scoffed at.

Participant 11 had a similar experience and reflected on the overall impact on the company when creativity is curtailed:

Creativity just was not born out of fear. Creativity comes out of having your mind free to go places it wouldn't go normally. And I think that's probably one of the biggest… probably one of the biggest corporate negative impacts for [redacted] in total was just there was so much head cutting that everybody felt fear at some level, which really limits creativity. Right? You can't be creative in a fearful environment

Participant 15 also felt that the unsafe environment she found herself affected her ability to be creative:

I believe that the… uh… the best creativity and strongest innovation and the best work gets done when people feel safe. And when there is a clique and you're on the outside of it, it's fundamental survival threat. So, you don't feel safe. So, I guess might I have come up with even better ideas than I did at the time, if I felt safer, I would say yes, so it…it did… it did affect my ability to be creative. Not completely, but I would say partially.

As did Participant 5:

It did affect me because to be creative at work and to come up with solutions, right, it's a risk, right? When you have to present an idea or share with someone an idea, it's taking a risk, a risk that that idea may not be well received or understood, right? So, when there isn't a sense of trust, right, in this type of environment, if you are not part of that group you are not part of the circle of

trust, right? So, it limits your creativity, because ideas or solutions that you may have, you just keep them to yourself because you're either just not feeling comfortable sharing it or you don't feel confident or you just don't want to deal with it if they don't understand where I'm coming from, you know, and I get some negative feedback in public. So, you know, it does it does limit your creativity because it affects your confidence. and then with that stuff, you know, you stop dreaming…you stop dreaming.

Participant 5 felt that the pressure to fit in with the clique and not be labeled as not fitting in with the group kept him from being his best creative self:

I think when you're reporting to a clique or a part of the clique, I think you're more… your more pressured to be a yes person, right? Because… you know, if I say something that contradicts what they're saying, or whatever, then you're kind of potentially going to be labeled an outcast, right, and then you're not part of… you're not part of that information circle anymore.

Participant 6 thinks that the presence of a clique in an organization "… leads to a suboptimal work product overall." Participant 4 felt that "I felt like we could have been more creative as a cohesive unit if we could have all come together." And Participant 9 also saw the presence of a clique negatively affecting her performance:

I felt that the creative side was… at some point, there was no nurturing at all or any encouragement to do… to…to explore more… to learn, to learn more… to do things a different way. It was it was not… it was not a nurturing environment. And I felt like it definitely impacted my creativity. I feel like many times it was

more like, just get it done, move on and just do it, because at the end of the day, it

doesn't really matter how you do it, when you do it, just get it done because it's

not like you're going to get a 'hey, that's a great job', or 'hey , here's some more

opportunities', 'hey, let's do it'. It wasn't that… it was more of a transactional

kind of machinery. Like just get the job done and it… and now go back to where

you sit and I'll come to you when I need the next thing, 'cause you're not part of

my clique.

However, Participant 2 had a different take, she felt that the presence of the clique

did not affect her ability to be creative, because she did not feel her role was of a creative

nature, and that the work she did didn't necessarily require creativity "… when your job

is pretty task oriented, it's still easy to do the task regardless of whether you're involved in

a lot of the decision-making or not. The tasks would still be the same."

Effects on Motivation

The question regarding whether or not participants felt that the presence of a

clique had a negative effect on motivation had a more mixed reaction, with some

participants feeling that the clique made it very difficult for them to be motivated to do

their job, and then others felt that the presence of the clique actually stimulated them to

be more motivated, and to prove themselves; and some felt that they experienced both

emotions at different times when working with a clique.

Participant 10 felt that the presence of a clique, for her, was very demotivating:

Because you just felt like, oh, you know, you're always going to get… it's not an

even… even on a level playing field. Someone's going… their stuff is going to be

heard first…[s]o, yeah, I think it does contribute to going, okay, I don't think my

work is going to be recognized or valued here in. You can only try so much and

then you get banged on the head and then you're like forget about it, I'm not

going to try anymore.

Participant 12 found himself at one point in his tenure, very unmotivated by the

situation at his workplace:

There was this period when I was not motivated at all. I was very unmotivated.

And I worked from home for like two weeks. Like, I don't think I went in. I didn't

want to… like I don't want to go there. So, it definitely impacted my motivation.

And I would say my productivity, too. I just never really thought about this. But

the fact that that clique existed, because I wanted to fit in so badly, I feel like I

had a fear of giving them something they wouldn't like, it was almost easier not to

deliver something, then to deliver something they wouldn't like. So, sometimes I

would sort of stall, until I was sure they would be really happy, you know?

For Participant 2, she also experienced a loss of motivation to bring anything new

to the table or to go beyond her job description:

You get to the point where you don't think they're gonna have an interest in what

you have to say. It's just easier not to even say anything. It's just easier to take

notes and not to say anything, and just go execute.

For Participant 3, she could see the impact that the clique was having on her team

as well as herself: "…[s]o, today, the people that are not part of the inner circle, they

know it. They know that there is a preference. And so those people are not motivated at

work." And that these employees "…definitely lack commitment and motivation. They are not motivated at all. They're just getting their paycheck."

Participant 4 had a similar experience:

It's terrible to have to go to work and feel like, oh, God, you know you're going to feel left out… I can't get the information I need. My team is unhappy because they want to be working with these other people. It just it really kind of puts a negative spin on things and makes you doubt your own ability. Like I said, I think it causes anxiety. And I'm just… it's just very uncomfortable. So, yeah, it's very unmotivating.

Participant 6 felt it affected her ability to be motivated to try new things and to think outside of the box:

It affects my motivation to really change things up and think differently and bring an outside perspective, which is frankly what I think I was hired to do... So, I definitely think it influences my motivation to do things differently and try new things.

And Participant 9 felt that it not only affected her spirit, but also her emotionally:

It definitely impacted my motivation. I think that I was self-motivated as a person to do things, but it definitely had an impact. It had an impact on my motivation, but it also had an impact on my spirit as a person. I felt like I was just not… I was losing… like I said, I felt like it was like crushing my spirit a little bit in terms of doing what I had to do. I had to do it with my own self-motivation. I don't feel like there was any motivation at all. Actually, the motivation this person

employed was mostly a fear tactic motivation. That was really primarily the

approach that was basically the MO from day-to-day perspective.

Not all the participants felt that they were negatively affected by the presence of a

clique when it came to motivation. Several felt that it actually helped push them along

and motivated them to deliver. Participant 13 felt that "… I don't feel like it had a

negative impact on my job performance whatsoever or my motivation on what… to do

[the] good work that I was doing at the company." And Participant 8 felt that, while the

situation angered him, it did not stop him from performing his job:

 I think to this day I still try to do the best job I can. I try to… I try not to… I try

to ignore the crowd at work, if you will. And I just try to do my job, heads down

and get it done and try to do a good job. There'd be annoyances. It might… might

just piss me off… I won't say ruin my day, but it might put me in a bad mood that

day. But I never let it… I don't know that... I don't think it ever impacted my…

the quality of my work, if that is the question.

Over time, Participant 12 eventually became motivated by the desire to fit in with

the clique, rather than feel excluded from it:

[O]ver time, I actually found myself more motivated by becoming in with the

clique then when I was in what I was actually supposed to be doing. I wanted to

fit in with them more because I felt that that was more important than the job I

was supposed to do.

Ability to Succeed

Another theme that emerged from the participant data was that many of the participants felt that their ability to succeed was hampered by there being a clique in their team, which involved a leader on their team, and they were not a part of that clique. Interview 1 expressed that while she "… continued to try to do a good job. It's just I felt very much like I didn't have the opportunity to… to succeed." Interview 10 observed in her work experience with a clique, and with a leader of the clique "…she was very cliquey, and if she liked you, great, but if she didn't like you like you, you were out of there." And she generally observed that:

> You feel…people aren't going to be viewed necessarily by the work they do, they're going to be viewed by who likes them or if you're in with this group or you know, this one will promote this one because she's friends with this one versus the work, kind of stuff like that. So, you just feel that it's lost opportunity.

Participant 15 felt that things were easier for her coworkers who were a part of the clique, in that their close relationship to the leadership of their group gave them an advantage over non-clique members:

> I am absolutely convinced that they did not have to work as hard or as smart because everything that they said, every idea they had, no matter what, they… they were never wrong, they were always right, and everything was always rubber stamped. For anybody outside the clique everything was dissected and scrutinized to the Nth degree. And you had to go through a rigorous round of approvals and discussion. For the people inside the clique, it was a rubber stamp… of course, we're going to do this.

Participant 6 observed of the clique she experienced that "… [y]ou also can see that he continues to give them different opportunities and expanded spheres of influence." And that her not being part of the clique negatively affects her opportunities at the company "… it doesn't set me and my own personal brand up for success. I think it tarnishes my personal brand to be associated with this, and on the wrong side of it in some cases."

Participant 9 saw members of the clique being given special opportunities that she was not exposed to "… things were being given to other folks to give them opportunities to take a lead on a project or pursue things or get involved in things. And it always made, at least me feel, always left out." And that not being part of the clique negatively affected her future opportunities:

I think I felt that there were limited opportunities for me. I don't really have someone who is going to like try to help me grow, encourage me, give me opportunities to succeed or move on to other things or just go to bat for me about things. I felt that I was pretty much on my own and had to make the best of the situation because it was uncomfortable. It was an uncomfortable situation because you know that… it just felt… it just felt that you were the third wheel all the time.

And she saw her peers being given exposure that she was not able to achieve:

I wasn't given the opportunity to perhaps network with my VP's peer of networks, right? So, even my VP had her cliques, right, at her level. And so, there was a lot of the cliques that would get involved with the VP cliques, right? And get a lot of exposure and opportunities there. But I was not included in that networking opportunity. So, yeah, I do believe that it did impact my ability to advance further.

Interview 10 saw the advantage to the members of the clique in her organization and more generally: "…[y]eah, you can get promoted…it's always easier to go forward if you have someone who is advocating for you. That's generally, you know, how it works."

Category 3: Organizational Factors

While informal, a clique is a structural unit within an organization, that is both enabled by the organization, and helps to shape it. The presence of a clique in an organization, especially when there is a leader involved, has implications for both the people who are a part of the clique, and who are not. Several themes emerged from the participant interviews that helped highlight how organizations are affected by cliques, and the role that employees feel the organization can play in determining how much that clique is allowed to affect performance.

Human Relations

Human relations emerged in the pilot study as a factor that can or should play a role in helping employees deal with cliques, with the participants in this study offering up a range of opinions on the role of human relations. Many felt that the human relations department was ineffective in managing cliques, and several cited a fear of retaliation if they were to engage human relations to help them to manage the effect that a clique had on them or their team.

Participant 1 felt that involving human resources would have hurt her in the long run:

I could have had a conversation with HR. But how would it affect that, and how would it affect my feelings about it? Oh, you told on me, the bully is gonna be meaner, just smarter about it. Like I probably would never have gone to HR…it probably would have ultimately come back on me -- from what I felt, it would have been retaliation and I would have had to move on.

Participant 11 expressed similar feelings:

I always feel like HR is so unpowerful (long pause). I don't… like… at [reacted]

they were so distant they would never even have noticed that…I don't think they

would have done anything, and I think it would have made it worse. To me, HR

works for the company, not for the employees. And I think their way of dealing

with it would be either not to deal with it or to go figure out… have somebody

talk to [redacted], and that would not be the right way to deliver a message to

[redacted] via HR and potentially his boss. I think it would have made it worse,

personally. I'm not a big believer in HR.

Participant 3 reflected on a situation at her company where some of her coworkers

actually did go to human resources to try and address the issues with the clique, and it

backfired on them: "…[t]hey reported the incident, they went back to the VP or the senior

VP…. And it wasn't helpful because there was retaliation. Eventually, they got fired."

And Participant 7 through about calling human resources in her situation, but in

the end decided against it after talking to some colleagues.

I was told that HR really tries to protect management more so than like, you

know, somebody who is complaining. And so, I don't know other than … almost

like putting a black mark on your name that you wouldn't want to go to HR so

people would know, oh my gosh, she complained to HR, and so do you want that

on your record?

Participant 10 does feel that there is a role for human resources, and that they

should act in an objective manner to help employees solve issues when they occur at

work.

> They should be like a mediator. You know, they should say, okay, this is what's going on here. They should talk to the who has concerns… the person the concerns are about concerned about, you know, in a best case scenario, like not like taking sides, and say this is what is going on, right, you know, let's see how we could work this through and come to a conclusion that kind of works for both of us, for both parties here, so, they feel like they're being heard, and the other person still feels like they're still in control of situation, but this person is looking for more opportunities, maybe you can look for ways to create more opportunities, or more oversight or you know supervision if you feel that they're not there yet.

However, in her case with the clique she experienced, she did not feel ultimately that they were able to provide any support when she did approach them with her issue:

> If you feel that you're not getting heard properly, you can go to, you know, an independent third party…but I never thought HR was independent, cause they really work for the company, but you know, like someone else who's going to resolve it and stuff. But there wasn't anyone like that there. And I think I did go to HR, and she was like, well, there is nothing I can do.

Participant 12 also felt that there could be a role for human resources when there is a clique at a company and that they potentially could help alleviate the situation for the employee, even if he himself did not feel that it was the right thing for him to do in his situation.

HR has a weird stigma. I still think it would have been like I was ratting on them, like I was tattling or something. I would have expected them to… if I had gone to them… I guess I would have expected them to give me advice, and not have expected them to engage. More to have them help me understand how work through that, more in a counseling role. Not that I would have wanted them to call them down and have a conversation.

Participant 8 also thought that if his situation had gotten to a point where he could not cope with it anymore, he could have gone to human resources for help "… I mean, hypothetically, if it had gotten bad, I would have had HR involved and I imagine they've got protocols for such."

Participant 14 felt overall that there is no role for human resources "… I don't think human resources is effective. I don't think human resources is effective as a rule, to begin with, number one." She also feels that human resources is not designed to help the employee, but rather to help the company manage the employees.

HR is basically there to protect management, the company, they're not there to deal with issues that individual employees have. And that's just based on my experience… yeah… I don't think that HR is effective in dealing with cliques in the company.

Participant 4 agrees: "… I don't really look at human resources as being able to do anything unless something happens that puts you in jeopardy or if something happens… that's something that you're offended by." And Participant 11 felt that human resources

was simply too distant from the day to day of the working teams that they were not able to provide any support.

> What I think is the opportunity for HR in general is, again, first to have to be aware of it. I think that they need to have more transparency to the next layer down and have conversations with them in terms of how the work environment, what's going on in the work environment.

Leader Behavior

The behavior of the company leader was a theme that emerged from the discussions with participants. Several felt that the formation of cliques within a company are a byproduct of the company's culture, and that rather than look to human resources, a company should look to the company's leadership to understand cliques and how to manage them. According to Participant 15 "… when it comes to handling a clique in the workplace, I don't think that's an HR thing, I think that's a leadership thing." Participant 10 feel that "… there's always a role that leadership can play where they kind of lay out what's expected of managers to manage people and say this is the sort of behavior …." And according to Participant 3:

> The leader makes it OK. And ferments it too. Yes, absolutely. It's just … specifically in my team it's just… it's a bit of a bully culture. And some leaders become bullies. And… that's a bit of what happens in this company, it's a bit of a bully culture, and if you're lucky… you become likable and then you fit in. Participant 3 went on to explain:

I think HR management needs to first have the right institutions in place, the right… um… it extends from the culture. So… the leadership team should have ensured that everyone was respected and um… treated equally. Usually when you have this type of situation it starts with the leadership, right?

For Participant 6's situation, she saw the culture at her company as coming directly from the leader or her organization:

He sets that tone of like whoever is left standing is the victor, and he will let his direct reports like argue with each other and fight and come to… he like almost forces these alliances to happen because that's the only way these people are going to survive, in some cases. So, I think him intervening and setting a different tone for how things should be done and how people should conduct themselves absolutely would help.

Participant 9 had a similar experience within her own situation:

It just seemed like it was almost created by the VP and then it develops among itself, and they develop the relationship, and they develop all that cliquey 'in the know' that everyone else didn't know, and they almost fed off of each other and, it clearly created an environment of the knows and the don't knows.

When asked what a leader could do to help alleviate the situation where there is a clique within their organization, Participant 12 advised that he thinks "… it is more about senior leadership, establishing a culture in their organization, and being good examples for everyone else." And in his case, he saw his CEO as creating the clique culture in his company:

The CEO he would often walk around the office with clients. And they would

come into the marketing department once in a while, and they would talk to the

clique, but not really talk to anyone else in the room. He would make a point to

make it known that they were his crew.

Participant 15 offered that a leader can take steps to create an atmosphere inhospitable to

clique formation:

I believe that a leader can have go to people and not engage in uh... clique-y

behaviors. And not create the feeling that some people are a part of the crowd,

and some people are out. I think you can have close working relationships with

multiple people without creating a clique. Umm… but for these three individuals,

it was definitely a clique.

In addition to the 13 main themes there were a few discrepant cases that emerged.

Participant 10 identified that there were benefits to being in a clique, and that a clique is

an outcome of nature human relationships "… it's always easier to go forward if you

have someone who is advocating for you. That's generally, you know, how it works."

And that her feelings about cliques have changed over time "… it is kind of human

nature, you know… I used to be all cliques are bad, but you know, it's kind of human

nature."

Two of the participants thought that having worked in a situation with a clique,

that it strengthened them both personally and as a manager. Participant 14 stated:

I think it actually -- having reflected on it, having been affected by it -- I think it made me a better manager. I think I tried to be as inclusive with my teams and the teams that we interact with as possible. I think it did make me a better manager.

And for Participant 3 the experience of having worked in an environment with a clique, it helped her realize her own inner strength "… you realize how terrible it is and you have to be very… you have to be a strong person to get through it and not lose your job or lose the motivation to deliver at work."

The participants in this study all experienced having worked in a team, department, or organization where there was the presence of a clique, and they were not part of that clique. Many experienced psychological reactions that included feelings of exclusion from the inner circle around the leader, not being valued and feeling insecure in their work and in their position in the company. Several felt anger, sadness, and depression brought on by feeling not part of the clique and by feeling excluded. Some of the participants thought about quitting or looking for another job within their company, and several saw their behavior shifting or adjusting to accommodate the clique.

There were also performance factors that impacted by the presence of the clique, from not getting access to needed information they needed to doing their job, or access to opportunities that members of the clique were given, or exposure with other leadership. Not being part of the clique also suppressed many of the participant's creative thinking and ideas, as they were afraid of being ridiculed or discounted. Many saw a drop in their motivation as well, as they felt their work wasn't given the same attention as the members of the clique, or that working hard didn't matter as they would never be able to

get ahead like the members of the clique. Some, however, felt that they were actually more motivated to not let the members of the clique get them down.

There were also organizational effects from the presence of a clique in a team or organization. Many felt that their human resources departments were ineffective at dealing with cliques or did not do enough to mitigate the effects of cliques. A fear of going to human resources and having it come back at them in the form of retaliation or being seen as week or tattling on the clique was prevalent. Some who did think human resources could play a role mostly thought they could function as a mediator in the situation. While most felt human resources would not have an impact on a clique in an organization, several participants recognized that leadership could and should have a role. The participants felt that the leader being a part of the clique or supporting the clique in an organization enabled the poor behavior exhibited by clique members, and that a leader should not partake in any cliques and should actively manage to prevent cliques from forming or should set the example for the organization that clique behavior was not acceptable.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of individuals identifying as belonging outside of workplace cliques formed within their organization's culture. The primary question that study sought to address is: What are the lived experiences of employees identifying as belonging outside of workplace cliques formed within their organization's culture?

A pilot study was conducted to ensure that the questions were clear and allowed participants to share their experiences openly and with detail. During the pilot study a finding relating to the role that human resources should occupy to address a clique in an organization was uncovered, and a seventh question regarding human resources role was added to the study.

The modified Van Kaam method was used to analyze the data (Moustakas, 1994). Using this method, each participant's transcript was reviewed extensively. All non-relevant data was removed, and participant descriptions that were pertinent to the research question were coded and common codes were merged to form 13 major themes. These themes were further aligned against three main categories: psychological factors, performance factors and organizational factors. Individual textural and structural descriptions for each participant were also crafted, which helped define the participants lived experiences regarding the phenomenon.

One major theme that emerged was the feeling of being excluded, of not feeling part of the in-group, of being cut out of events, meetings, and decision-making opportunities. Not feeling valued also emerged as a key theme, where respondents felt that because they were not a part of the clique their opinions were not important, and that this made them feel inferior with regard to their peers who were part of the clique. Many experienced negative emotions such as anger, sadness, and jealousy that they were not a part of the clique.

Another key theme to emerge was that the majority of participants did not feel that they were given access to the information they needed, due to not being a part of the

clique. They felt that members of the clique often had access to more information, or had that information earlier, which provided them with greater opportunities. A similar number also felt that not being part of the clique affected their performance, including making them feel less confident, and not as willing to put themselves forward or try as hard, or causing negative emotions such as anger to be exhibited at work.

With regard to creativity and motivation, feeling less creative and less motivated emerged as dominant themes, although motivation had a wider range of effects, in that some participant felt more motivated to achieve in the face of a clique, and that they wanted to prove themselves. This did not emerge with creativity, as participants felt that their creativity was negatively affected or not affected at all.

The role of human resources was primarily seen as being either non-existent or negative, with most participants feeling that human resources were ineffective in dealing with situations where a clique existed at work or did not play a role in helping the participants navigate the situation. Many respondents felt that a clique was larger than a human resources issue, as it stemmed from leadership and corporate culture.

Chapter 5 will provide further discussion of these key themes, conclusions, and recommendations for further study to advance the understanding of the phenomenon of a clique involving a leader, and two or more members of the group has on individuals who are not a part of that clique. The implications for social change stemming from this research will also be reviewed.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of individuals identifying as belonging outside of workplace cliques formed within their organization's culture. I conducted this study to help bring further understanding, and to help fill the gap in knowledge, of the effect that workplace cliques have on employee behavior (Turhan, 2014). I also wanted to expand knowledge on organizational outcomes (Marion et al., 2016).

The research findings revealed that when there is the presence of a clique within a team or organization, including a leader and two or more members of that team or organization, employees who are not part of the clique experience feelings of exclusion and of being left out of discussions, opportunities, and even social gatherings. They feel that they are not valued and that their contributions are not recognized, which can lead to feelings of anger, sadness, and inferiority. Turhan (2014) identified the need to better understand employee behavior when faced with a workplace clique, and these findings provide a rich, personal view of the feelings and behavior of employees through the narratives of individuals who have experienced the phenomenon.

Another theme that emerged was a feeling that participants who were not a part of the clique were often not given access to the information they needed, or that they would receive the information later than members of the clique. Participants felt this caused them to have wasted time and work or to have not been able to be as close to the organizational strategy or plans. Not being part of the clique also was identified as affecting work performance, as it caused individuals to question their own abilities,

which led them to be less willing to share ideas, put themselves forward to speak, or seek opportunities for advancement or recognition. These findings provide greater insight into how working in an organization led by a clique affects work outcomes, which Marion et al. (2016) identified as needing further understanding and study. In particular, the findings in this study provide personalized accounts of how employee behavior can change or how a clique can affect personal work outcomes, through the firsthand description of those who experienced it.

Creativity and motivation were also identified as being negatively affected by the presence of a clique, in that members who were not part of the clique often felt that their creativity was hampered by the feelings of fear and inadequacy that being outside of the clique engendered. Many participants said they felt demotivated by not being a part of the clique, as they felt their efforts were ignored or undervalued, and that the members of the clique would be given greater consideration. Motivation, however, was not always seen as being affected, with a few participants stating that they were more motivated to succeed in the face of the clique, or that their own self-motivation overcame the negative feelings that the clique caused. These findings extend existing literature on the effect that cliques can have on motivation and creativity (e.g., Hur et al., 2017; Jarman et al., 2014) by providing thick descriptions of the phenomenon through the lived experiences of those who have experienced it.

Last, the stances of the pilot and final study participants toward human resources had striking similarities. Human resources emerged in the pilot study as a group that should play a role in mitigating the effects of cliques in the workplace. The participants

of the final study viewed it as a group that was more aligned to management and the well-being of the company, and not as an effective force for managing the presence of cliques in an organization. Many felt that it was not human resources' role to manage clique dynamics in the workplace, but that it stemmed from leadership or company culture. The findings regarding the role human resources played, or did not play, in providing employees with assistance to deal with the feelings or outcomes that not being part of a workplace clique engendered yield new insights into the study of workplace cliques. These findings have potential future implications for the role human resources could or should play in helping employees manage the situation of being outside of a workplace clique. This finding also provides potentially rich opportunities for future research into cliques.

Interpretation of Findings

The problem that I sought to address in this qualitative transcendental phenomenological research study was the lack of understanding of the experiences of employees identifying as belong outside of workplace cliques formed within their organization's culture (Huang & Line, 2019; Pellimer & Rothbard, 2018). The research findings help to fill the gap in current knowledge that exists with regard to understanding employee behavior and organizational outcomes when faced with a clique (Marion et al, 2016; Turhan, 2014). Four concepts comprised the conceptual framework of this study: motivation, creativity, knowledge sharing, and organizational commitment. These concepts were derived from a review of four theories: social exchange theory, leader-

member exchange theory, social identity theory, and self-determination theory. The interpretation of the study's findings is organized around these four concepts.

Motivation

The findings regarding how a workplace clique affects employee motivation when the employee considers themselves to not be a part of the clique are mixed. Although many participants felt that their motivation was negatively affected by the presence of a clique in their workgroup, several felt that it actually increased their motivation, and some felt it had no effect on their motivation. In some cases, respondents contradicted themselves within the same interview, with both responses being reflected in the findings. Those respondents who indicated they found the presence of a clique demotivating cited things such as feeling unappreciated or ineffective, fearing failure, being underutilized, being unable to be heard, or have their ideas recognized, and being disconnected from key sources of information or meetings as contributing to their lack of motivation. These findings are consistent with the literature, where it is demonstrated that people are motivated by the return they get from their behavior (Khalid & Ali, 2017). The research also supports that when employees believe that an organization is working in their best interests, they will be motivated to reciprocate with greater work effort (Hur et al., 2017). Fiaz et al. (2017) found that negative feelings about work, including poor self-esteem, can lead to decreases in productivity and engagement, both of which were reflected by the respondents of this study. This study added to these findings by providing additional insights through the personal accountings of individuals who had experienced the

phenomenon of a workplace clique while not being a part of it, through rich descriptions of their feelings, emotions, and unique experiences.

Participants' differing views on cliques and motivation--some found the lack of being part of a clique motivating, though others did not find it had any effect on motivation--is also reflected in the literature. Horng et al. (2016) found that individuals with a strong internal motivation will see less of an effect on performance than employees with weaker internal drives. This internal (or intrinsic) motivation manifests itself in a greater persistence to achieving tasks (Parker et al., 2017) and creates more engaged employees (Gillet et al., 2016; Kuvaas et al., 2017). Several of the research participants reflected these findings in that they stated that not being part of the clique made them more determined to succeed (Participant 1) or that they were naturally so goal focused that they were not going to let the clique negatively impact their performance (Participant 3).

Creativity

The findings in this study are consistent with the literature with regard to creativity. All of the respondents indicated that the presence of a clique had a negative impact or no impact at all on creativity. Two of the respondents (Participant 2 and Participant 8) felt that their jobs were more task oriented or analytical and therefore did not require sufficient creativity for the clique to have had an impact. Many of the research participants who felt that the situation negatively impacted their ability to be creative indicated that their position as not being part of the clique created an unsafe environment for them. They specifically stated the fear of being ridiculed, of being seen as not

intelligent, or of their ideas being discounted as inhibitors of creativity. Several respondents indicated that they "gave up" after previous attempts at sharing ideas or trying to think differently were rebuffed by members of the clique.

These findings are consistent with the literature on creativity. Several of the studies reviewed identified feeling psychologically feeling safe as a key component to the ability to be creative (Han et al., 2017; Khalili, 2016; Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2017). Kim et al. (2016) found that it is important for individuals to perceive that they are in an environment that allows for risk-taking and individuality when exploring or expressing new ideas. In addition, Jaiswal and Dhar (2017) found that employee creativity is high when organizational commitment is high and when employees feel supported by both supervisors as well as coworkers. These findings help to address the call by Marion et al. (2016) for greater insight into how workplace cliques affect work outcomes, by providing new insights through the personal accounting of how this phenomenon affected peoples' work behavior, creativity and motivation, all drivers of work performance and productivity.

Knowledge Sharing

The majority of the research participants found that knowledge sharing was impacted by the presence of a clique within their work group, with the majority of participants stating that they did not feel that they got the information they needed to do their jobs, or that the information was delayed in getting to them. They also felt that members of the clique seemed to receive more information, or received it earlier, than non-members. Several of the respondents shared that they felt that the clique

communicated more fully and with greater depth of information than with non-members, or they "… talked amongst themselves …" as Participant 10 interpreted it.

Several of the participants also perceived the lack of sufficient or timely knowledge sharing to have a negative impact on job performance. Participant 4 felt that she did not receive sufficient information to do her job effectively. Participants 11 and 15 indicated that the lack of information sharing affected their ability to understand the broader strategy and goals, which hampered their job performance, and potentially limited their opportunities within the organization. However, although the majority of the participants expressed that knowledge sharing was negatively impacted by the clique, Participants 2, 5, 13 and 14 all shared that they felt that they received the information they needed to do their jobs effectively.

The effects of a lack of knowledge sharing among members of the clique to nonmembers as experienced by the research participants is reflected in the literature. According to Want et al. (2016), knowledge sharing helps to improve organizational productivity and innovativeness, resulting in increased competitive advantage. This can be seen at the individual level as well, with respondents echoing this finding when they felt their lack of knowledge affected their ability to perform their jobs, or to have the same advantages and opportunities as their counterparts who were a part of the clique. Israilidis et al. (2015) found that companies that with poor knowledge sharing may waste time and resources and may exhibit poor decision-making due to delays in information sharing with those who are in need, doing the work, or making decisions. Omilion-Hodges and Ackerman (2018) emphasized the importance of leaders understanding how

their interactions with employees across the organization can influence knowledge sharing among employees. The recounting of the personal experiences of the research participants adds to the body of knowledge through the vivid and highly personal experiences of individuals who have lived through the phenomenon of a workplace clique.

Organizational Commitment

Pentareddy and Suganthi (2015) defined organization commitment as the psychological attachment that an employee feels towards their organization, and how strongly they identify with that organization. Lapointe and Vandenberghe (2018) defined it as the force that binds an individual to an organization. In this study, organizational commitment was seen as weakened by the presence of a clique, with several research participants sharing that they thought about quitting or finding a new job within the company as a direct result of their experience working with a clique. Often these thoughts stemmed from feeling that there was no opportunity for these individuals to succeed within the organization, because they did not belong to the in-group or clique. Participant 14 felt that because she was not part of the clique, it prevented her from going for new opportunities or asking for projects, that not being part of the clique held her back, and that the situation made it "…very difficult to get out of bed and go to work with a positive attitude."

Some of the participants found their jobs onerous and going to work difficult because of the presence of the clique at work. Participant 11 stated that he hated work, and hated going into work, and would be in a complete state of dread on the drive in.

Participant 14 found himself avoiding work, and avoided going into the office for a while, choosing instead to work from home in order to avoid the clique.

One participant, Participant 6, indicated that she was able to emotionally manage the dynamics of the clique because she lacked organizational commitment. She stated that "… if [redacted] was somewhere, like I said, hey, I want to… I want to get promoted, I want to work here for a really long time … like this would be a distressing situation to me because I do think it doesn't set me and my own personal brand up for success."

These findings are consistent with the literature, and that when employees are lacking in organizational commitment, they show decreased passion and engagement in their roles (Chen & Wu, 2017). It has also been shown to be a key predictor of voluntary turnover (Thompson et al., 2017). Many of the respondents to this study demonstrated both traits, with decreased engagement in their roles and a desire to quit. Committed employees also exhibit a greater willingness to offer suggestions and recommendations that improve the performance of the organization. This was confirmed in the findings of this study, with several participants stating that they held back or choose not to offer ideas or suggestions for fear of being dismissed or denigrated by the members of the clique. The participants' detailed descriptions of how the situation weakened their commitment to the organization, and lessened their desire to perform at their best, and in some cases even to go to work, adds to the body of knowledge regarding cliques, and their effect on workplace outcomes.

In this study, all of the participants were sharing their lived experiences of working in a clique where one of the members was a leader within their organization. According to Dappa et al. (2019) a leader that provides a positive and satisfying work experience will result in employees who feel attached toward the organization and will create a barrier to employees leaving the company. This could be seen in the reverse in this study, where the presence of a clique where the leader was a member of that clique, resulted in a significant number of the research participants wanting to quit, or having a decreased desire to go to work, or feeling an active dislike for their job and the company.

One finding that emerged from the study that was not anticipated was the role that human resources plays in the presences of a clique in the organization. In the pilot study, human resources emerged as an entity that was seen as needing to have an active role in managing and preventing cliques within organizations. While not a focus of the research, the role of human resources was touched upon the literature review, with a proposal from Jaiswal and Dhar (2017) that human resources policies and practices must be set up to inspire employee creativity and innovation, but not as a possible solution to ending workplace cliques or a source of support for employees dealing with a clique.

In the final study, half of research participants found human resources to be ineffective in situations where there is a clique at work, and half also saw no role for human resources when employees are navigating a clique at work. Several of the participants felt that human resources was designed to protect the company rather than the employee, and that the act of going to human resources could result in retaliation, or making the situation worse. Participant 11 shared her experience, where employees went

to human resources for help dealing with their situation of a clique at work, and the employees were eventually fired by the leader of the clique.

A few of research participants felt there was a role for human resources in helping with their situation, and they primarily saw that role as that of a mediator or independent third party (Participant 10). Participant 12 felt that if human resources were to get involved, their first step should be to advise the leader not to be a part of the clique, as their role should be inspiring the entire organization, rather than creating a situation where some people were part of a select group and the rest of the employees felt excluded.

The findings around human resources and the role that they do, or do not, play in helping employees manage through the experience of a workplace clique, was an unexpected finding in the pilot study and supported through the final study. This finding was not expected as it did not come through in the review of the literature regarding cliques yet is surfaced as a significant finding in this study as having a role in how employees experience workplace cliques. This finding adds to the body of knowledge regarding how employees experience workplace cliques and offers a potentially rich future area for extended study regarding workplace cliques.

Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations to this study is that it is reliant on the memory of the participants to accurately and with clarity recall situations that may have occurred several years in the past. This arose during a few of the interviews, where participants struggled to recall sequence of events as they occurred, or failed to remember the names and

positions of minor actors in the narrative. Most of the participants seemed to have clear memories of the phenomenon, but the potential degradation of the memory of the exact events exists as most of the events told by the participants occurred a number of years ago.

A second potential limitation to the study is that participants may have had a fear of discovery, as a few still worked at the place where the phenomenon occurred, while most had moved on to new situations and no longer interacted with the individuals who were mentioned in the study. Several sought reassurances at the start of the interview that no names would be included in the study, or any personally identifiable information shared, or that the names of the companies where the events occurred would be shared. All participants were assured that all names, places, and personally identifiable information would be redacted, and were reminded that all information would remain confidential, but some information may have been withheld or details withheld for fear of discovery.

A third limitation of the study is that I personally experienced this phenomenon, and for several years worked in an organization that was led by a clique, where my leader was a part of the clique and there were three members of that clique who were my peers. In order to prevent bias from affecting the interviews, data analysis and findings, I engaged in self-reflection and époche, which according to van Manen (2014) is the process of freeing oneself from the constraints and prior presumptions of the experience which may affect the process. In addition, the interviews were conducted using a series of seven semi structured questions that allowed participants to discuss their experiences

openly and freely, and I refrained from any interjections that would have revealed my own experiences with the phenomenon, in order to ensure that I did not influence the participants' storytelling. All data was factually represented and interpreted according to the literature.

Recommendations

One recommendation from this study that emerged as an unexpected finding in the pilot study was the role of human resources when there is a clique in an organization or team, involving the leader and two or more members of the organization or team. When this finding was added to the final study, it produced mixed results from research participants. An equal number of participants felt that human resources was ineffective as felt that there was no role for human resources when it came to managing cliques involving leadership in the workplace. Many of the participants felt that human resources' role was to protect the company, and not the employees, and several felt that engaging in human resources to help them manage the dynamics of the clique they had experienced would have resulted in retaliation against them. Participant 3 cited an instance with the clique situation she had experienced where individuals who had involved human resources to help had, in the end, been fired.

This lack of faith in the ability of human resources to play any role in managing the dynamics of a clique in the workplace, or to have any role that was perceived as beneficial to the employee, offers a significant opportunity for future study with regard to cliques but also more broadly on the role that human resources plays in employees' work experience and satisfaction. Jaiswal and Dhar (2017) proposed that human resource

policies and practices needed to be set up to inspire creativity and innovation, as when employees feel that their needs are met and they have autonomy in their work, they are in a better place to drive innovation in the workplace. However, if employees have little faith in the role or the policies of their human resources department, it is unlikely that these employees will have their needs met in such a way as to create that sense of safety and autonomy where they can be innovative. Particularly if they are experiencing the dynamics of a workplace clique, and where they feel they cannot find any acceptable resolution beyond leaving that position or the company. Given this new and unexpected finding with regard to cliques and employees' insights into the lack of faith they have in human resources' ability to aid when faced with a workplace clique, there exists an opportunity for future research with regard to cliques, employees, and human resources. This research could seek to understand how employees view human resources, and to understand what human resources could change to shift employees' perceptions that its function is either ineffective or working against employees and for the management of the company. This future research may help inform potential human resources reform.

A second opportunity for future study would be to conduct a quantitative study to understand the prevalence of cliques in the workplace. The 15 participants of this study had originally been selected because they had formerly worked for the same large telecommunications company as mysefl, and where I experienced the phenomenon. Interestingly, only a handful of the participants used that company as their example of where they had experienced a clique involving a leader and two or more members of their organization. The experiences cited by the participants ranged from advertising agencies,

to large financial institutions, to a startup. Several participants indicated that they had experienced the phenomenon more than once in their career. The findings of this study support the literature, which demonstrates that the presence of a clique affects the functioning of the organization and impacts its employees with regard to job productivity, satisfaction, turnover, and commitment (Choi et al., 2015). Understanding how prevalent this phenomenon is would help to quantify the negative impact workplace cliques have on corporate performance and the bottom line. Further quantitative research that helped to quantify the impacts to productivity, employee turnover, and innovation could potentially help to galvanize companies to address the behavior when it occurs within their organizations.

Implications

This study sought to contribute to positive social change by providing insights into the lived experiences of employees who are working in organizations or teams where there is the presence of a clique, which includes the leader of that team. This study provided many insights into how employees experience that phenomenon, and how it affects them personally. Stephan et al. (2016) defined positive social change as the process of transforming behavior and social relationships in such a way that the outcomes benefit individuals, organizations, and society beyond the initial advantages that may be realized by those who instigate the change.

This study provided insights into how employees experience a workplace clique, and how it affects them personally, with an emphasis on creativity and motivation. This study identified several possible negative outcomes of workplace cliques, including

feelings of exclusion, not feeling valued, a loss of creativity and motivation at work, feeling that their opportunities in that role were limited by their not being a part of the clique, and a desire to change jobs internally or quit.

Addressing workplace cliques and the negative consequences that this study uncovered, can offer many opportunities for positive social change. The negative psychological effects that participants experienced by not being a part of the clique, or feeling excluded from the clique, was damaging to employees' sense of self-worth and caused them to doubt themselves in terms of their abilities, intelligence, and value to the organization. These doubts resulted in feelings of anger, sadness, and frustration. It also caused employees to not seek opportunities that may have allowed them to grow and to provide greater value to the organization. This study may offer opportunities for companies to identify the need for organizational reform, to identify and address organizational culture and leadership behavior that supports the formation and sustaining of workplace cliques. Eliminating workplace cliques would improve workplace morale and create a safe environment that would allow creativity to flourish.

At the individual level, eliminating workplace cliques could help employees feel empowered and free to express ideas and thoughts. Providing that safe haven where individuality can thrive, and where employees feel free to express themselves and their ideas, can help companies to innovate and grow. Jaiswal and Dhar (2017) stated that when employees feel that their needs are met, that they have some autonomy in their work, and are committed to organizational goals, they are in a better place to drive

innovation within the organization. Innovation is a critical component to organizational success.

At the management level, this study demonstrates that when workplace cliques are present, particularly with a leader of the organization, it has damaging consequences to the organization. The majority of participants did not feel that they received the information they needed in a timely manner, or at all, because the leader communicated more effectively and frequently with the members of their clique, rather than with non-members, creating disparities among teammates. Non-clique members also felt that those who were part of the clique were given more opportunities, and that members were more valued, and their ideas given greater credence. The deeper understanding of the effect that the workplace clique had on employees that this study provides could affect managerial change. By making leaders aware of the negative consequences of forming workplace cliques, and creating an "us versus them" culture, perhaps leaders will be more conscious of the bonds they form with their employees, and of the need to treat employees fairly and equally, and to create a safe environment where all employees can thrive.

With regard to practice, this study offers several areas for organizational and managerial changes. Human resources emerged as an area lacking in its ability to be effective in mediating between clique members and non-clique members, where most participants felt that human resources was ineffective or could potentially actually cause the employee harm. Many participants stated they found human resources to be geared to helping the company and not to the employee. These negative impressions regarding the

role and effectiveness of human resources offers the opportunity for companies to evaluate the role of human resources in the organization and to effect positive change. This could be facilitated by potentially restructuring or refocusing human resources to become advocates of the employee rather than just management. Several participants in the study felt there was no recourse other than to leave or accept the situation, with its negative consequences to their psychological state, work performance, or organizational opportunities. Having an effective human resources department where employees felt they would be heard and their concerns addressed, may help lower employee turnover and the resultant costs associated with hiring and training new employees, and help employees be more satisfied and effective in their jobs. This area provided an unexpected and new aspect to the study of cliques and extends the body of knowledge regarding the phenomenon of employee experiences with a workplace clique.

Conclusions

This study sought to address the need to have a deeper understanding of the experiences of employees identifying as belonging outside of workplace cliques that had formed within their organization's culture. Through in-depth, one on one interviews with 15 research participants who each identified as having worked in an organization with a clique, where they were not a part of the clique, several key findings emerged. Employees who were not a part of the clique felt excluded and felt that they were not valued for their contributions. They felt they were given fewer opportunities, and that they had less access to information that would allow them to succeed. These feelings had negative consequences on the participants' abilities to be creative, and led many of them

to be less motivated. Most felt that they did not have any effective recourse to help them manage the situation, and human resources was viewed as ineffective or as having no role to play. These findings help provide deeper understanding of a workplace clique, and how employees, who are not a part of the clique, experience this phenomenon. It also helped to extend the existing body of knowledge through personal accounts of how the phenomenon affected work outcomes; and surfaced the role employees felt that human resources currently plays, and the role it should take, in helping to manage workplace cliques.

The findings from this study have implications for social change, helping organizations and leaders understand the consequences of allowing workplace cliques to form, including the negative effects on employee creativity and motivation. It also provides a view to employees' attitudes about human resource organizations, with opportunities to improve human resources' role in employee satisfaction and engagement, and to lessen turnover, with its associated organizational cost.

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Appendix A: Invitation Letter

Date

Dear (Suffix) First Name, Last Name

The Lived Experiences of Employees Identifying as Belonging Outside of Workplace

Cliques

This letter is to invite you to participate in a research study addressing the lived experiences of individuals who are working or have worked in an organization or a team where there is the presence of a leadership clique. For the purposes of this study, a clique is defined as a group of three or more individuals who have become linked to one another in such a way that it feels like they are their own unit. The selection for your participation is that you are currently working or have worked in an organization that you perceive there to have been a leadership clique and you did not perceive yourself to have been a part of that clique.

If you agree to be in this study, you will participate in an interview session that will last approximately 45 - 60 minutes at your convenient location. Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. There will be no compensation for participating in this study. Your identity will remain confidential and your name will not be disclosed to any outside party. There are no foreseeable risks in your participation in this study. The data that will be collected from your interview will be stored in a secure and locked area for five years and then the data will be destroyed in accordance with Walden University policy.

If you are willing to participate, please review and sign the accompanying Informed Consent form provided and return via email to patricia.foster@waldenu.edu. The consent form provides more detailed information about the study, what you can expect from the study and what your commitment will be by participating in the study. Should you have any questions prior to agreeing to participate, you can Patricia Foster at [redacted]. You can also call the Walden University representative at 612-312-1210 or send an email to irb@waldenu.edu in case you need to discuss anything regarding your rights as a participant privately.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Patricia O. Foster

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. Identify a situation where you were in a position where you were working in an organization or team where you perceived there to have been a clique, defined as a group of three or more individuals who have become linked to one another in such a way that it feels like they are their own unit, where you did not feel a part of that clique. Please describe this situation to me in detail.

2. Please describe for me how your perception of not being part of the clique made you feel?

3. With regard to team interaction, describe how the team interacted and communicated among its members, particularly among those who were a part of the clique and those who were not.

4. Now, thinking about your own personal experience with working in a team with a clique, which includes a leader of the team, where you were not a part of that clique, how do you think it affected your personal work behavior or feelings about work? Or your actual work product? Can you describe this?

5. Expanding that further, do you feel that the presence of a clique within the team, where you were not a part of the clique, had any influence on your ability to be motivated or creative? Why or why not? And if yes, can you describe this to me in general terms or describe a specific instance?

6. Now, reflecting back again on that situation and our discussion today, is there anything else that you would like to share regarding your personal experience of working in an organization or team where you perceived there to be a clique,

involving a leader of that team, where you did not perceive yourself to be part of the

clique?

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Good morning/afternoon. Thank you for your willingness to be a participant in this research study. My name is Patricia Foster. I am a student at Walden University, pursuing a Ph.D. in Organizational Leadership and Change. The study you have agreed to participate in is in partial fulfillment of a doctoral degree. The information you provide today is important in the areas of management and leadership as it can contribute to the body of knowledge by providing an understanding of the lived experiences of employees.

This interview will focus on the presence of a leadership clique within organizations, specifically defined as when a leader or a person in a superior position has developed a closer relationship with some members of the team than others or formed a clique.

The questions that will be asked are meant as a guide and to provide a starting point for your responses. There are no right or wrong answers here, I am simply asking for your honest feedback regarding your lived experience of that situation now or in the past. My input is meant to guide the interview, not in any way to provide feedback or to contribute to your recollections.

If at any time during this interview you are uncomfortable with any questions or your potential answer, please let me know and we can address that. You may stop at any time, ask for a break, or pass on answering a question. This interview will likely last 45 – 60 minutes.

All the information obtained in this interview will be kept strictly confidential, and your name, title, organizational affiliation or any personally identifiable information

will not be shared within the study, and you will be given an opportunity to review and comment on the transcript of this interview.

The approval number for this study is 11-19-19-0238541 and it expires on 11/18/20.

Do you have any questions? If not, let's get started. Thank you.

Patricia Foster

Appendix D: Confidentiality Agreement

Name of Signer: Patricia O. Foster

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: "Exploring Employees Experiences Working in the Presence of a Leadership Clique."

I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement, I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.

2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.

3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.

4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.

5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.

6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.

7. I will only access or use systems or devices I'm officially authorized to access, and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix E: Confirmation of Interview Transcript

I, [fill in name] confirm that I have read the transcript provide to me by Patricia Foster and confirm that the information therein reflects my comments and input during the interview conducted on [date].

Signed _____

Appendix F: Pilot Study Invitation Letter

Date

Dear (Suffix) First Name, Last Name

The Lived Experiences of Employees Identifying as Belonging Outside of Workplace Cliques

This letter is to invite you to participate in a research pilot study addressing the lived experiences of individuals who are working or have worked in an organization or a team where there is the presence of a leadership clique. For the purposes of this pilot study, a clique is defined as a group of three or more individuals who have become linked to one another in such a way that it feels like they are their own unit. The selection for your participation is that you are currently working or have worked in an organization that you perceive there to have been a leadership clique and you did not perceive yourself to have been a part of that clique.

If you agree to be in this pilot study, you will participate in an interview session that will last approximately 45 - 60 minutes at your convenient location. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time. There will be no compensation for participating in this pilot study. Your identity will remain confidential and your name will not be disclosed to any outside party. There are no foreseeable risks in your participation in this pilot study. The data that will be collected from your interview will be stored in a secure and locked area for five years and then the data will be destroyed in accordance with Walden University policy.

If you are willing to participate, please review and sign the accompanying Informed Consent form provided and return via email to patricia.foster@waldenu.edu. The consent form provides more detailed information about the study, what you can expect from the study and what your commitment will be by participating in the study. Should you have any questions prior to agreeing to participate, you can reach Patricia Foster at [redacted]. You can also call the Walden University representative at 612-312-1210 or send an email to irb@waldenu.edu in case you need to discuss anything regarding your rights as a participant privately.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Patricia O. Foster

Appendix G: Revised Interview Questions

1. Identify a situation where you were in a position where you were working in an

   organization or team where you perceived there to have been a clique, defined as a

   group of three or more individuals who have become linked to one another in such a

   way that it feels like they are their own unit, where you did not feel a part of that

   clique. Please describe this situation to me in detail.

2. Please describe for me how your perception of not being part of the clique made you

   feel?

3. With regard to team interaction, describe how the team interacted and communicated

   among its members, particularly among those who were a part of the clique and those

   who were not.

4. Now, thinking about your own personal experience with working in a team with a

   clique, which includes a leader of the team, where you were not a part of that clique,

   how do you think it affected your personal work behavior or feelings about work? Or

   your actual work product? Can you describe this?

5. Expanding that further, do you feel that the presence of a clique within the team,

   where you were not a part of the clique, had any influence on your ability to be

   motivated or creative? Why or why not? And if yes, can you describe this to me in

   general terms or describe a specific instance?

6. Looking back on your situation, what role do you feel that management or human

   resources played or could play in a situation where there is a clique?

7. Now, reflecting back again on that situation and our discussion today, is there anything else that you would like to share regarding your personal experience of working in an organization or team where you perceived there to be a clique, involving a leader of that team, where you did not perceive yourself to be part of the clique?