Positive relationships at work: Workshopping ideas and making connections

Submission #: 13559

Proposed sponsor: Organizational Behavior (OB) Division
Other possible sponsors: Managerial and Organizational Cognition (MOC) Division

ABSTRACT

The development of positive relationships at work is important to both employees and organizations. Individuals who maintain positive workplace relationships tend to experience more positive emotions and have higher job and life satisfaction. Within academia, the study of positive relationships at work is growing rapidly, incorporating new methodologies, theories, and approaches that build upon our existing knowledge. The purpose of our proposed PDW is to facilitate the continued growth of the positive workplace relationships literature by (1) continuing to build and grow a community of scholars passionate about positive workplace relationships and (2) offering scholars the opportunity to share and receive feedback on their current work. Specifically, the session is intended to enable scholars to overcome pressing challenges in their work – from the theoretical to the methodological. Throughout the session, participants will have the opportunity to discuss current (and future) research projects with knowledgeable peers and experts. It is our hope that the proposed session will not only help attending scholars push their work forward, but also galvanize further research development in the burgeoning area of positive relationships at work.

INTEREST TO SPONSORING DIVISION

Primary sponsor. For several years, the **Organizational Behavior (OB)** Division has sponsored the proposed PDW. We believe our current session again aligns with this division in several ways. First, research on relationships at work informs many of the topics in the division's domain, including interpersonal processes and outcomes such as trust, leadership, teamwork, socialization, and development. Thus, we anticipate a highly interactive session with participants from across a range of disciplines. Second, research on relational dynamics and mechanisms continues to be a relatively underdeveloped area of organizational behavior. The workshop format of our session is designed to help advance scholarship in the area of relationships at work. We have invited a diverse group of experienced scholars to facilitate small group discussions among participants with shared interests in workplace relationships. We believe this approach will encourage dialogue that bridges perspectives, addresses research challenges, and generates novel ideas. Finally, this PDW contributes to community building within the OB Division, specifically by strengthening the Positive Relationships at Work Microcommunity, whose members often identify the OB division as their primary "home" within the Academy.

Other potential sponsors (MOC). Work relationships play a key role in how individuals socially construct and make sense of their work and their personal identities, making this PDW a natural fit with the **Managerial and Organizational Cognition (MOC) Division**. In addition, the breadth of research on workplace relationships lends itself to addressing the "dichotomies that stand in the way of producing actionable knowledge to address pressing challenges for individuals, organizations, society, and our own profession (AAT call for submissions)." From this perspective, our session may also be a good fit for the **All-Academy Theme (AAT)**.

WORKSHOP FORMAT

The proposed PDW is designed to facilitate several outcomes. These include addressing research challenges, linking new directions of inquiry with novel approaches, and bridging issues of theoretical and practical relevance. More broadly, our session will facilitate rich and valuable conversations among scholars conducting research in the field of positive relationships at work.

PDW Structure

We will begin the workshop with a welcome and overview of both the Positive Relationships at Work Microcommunity (the organizing group) and the agenda for the day. We will continue with an exercise to help participants connect with each other. Following this exercise, participants will have 5 minutes to reflect individually on their research related to positive relationships at work. We will prompt participants to use this time to develop a research idea or to articulate a question based on a challenge they are currently facing in their work, and which they would like to discuss at a table with others. Since our second primary goal is to move individuals' work on the topic of relationships at work forward, we will spend the next 60 minutes "workshopping" these ideas and questions. We will have 2 rounds of conversation at tables with 3-5 people each (what we are terming "help me help you" discussions). At the conclusion of the second round, we will facilitate a Research Reciprocity Ring (Grant, 2014). This exercise enables participants to articulate something on which they still need help – maybe they'd like a coauthor to further develop their idea from the workshop portion of our session or maybe they'd like methodological help on their project – and then to actually find a person (or people) who can fulfill that need. We will conclude with a discussion of final reflections, thank our facilitators, and provide information on how to stay connected with the Positive Relationships at Work Microcommunity. We include a more detailed schedule in Appendix A.

OVERVIEW OF WORKSHOP

Positive relationships at work represent a burgeoning area of research within organizational behavior (Ashforth, Schinoff, & Rogers, 2016; Creary, Caza, & Roberts, 2015; Eberly, Holley, Johnson, & Mitchell, 2011; Feldman & Kahn, 2019; Humberd & Rouse, 2016; Leavitt & Sluss, 2015; Ollier-Malateere, Rothbard, & Berg, 2013). As this literature stream matures, it is critical to continue to foster a scholarly community and to create opportunities for feedback and collaboration. These are the two primary goals of our proposed session: to allow positive relationships scholars to connect with one another and to provide relevant and knowledgeable feedback on new and ongoing research projects from both experts who have published extensively in this domain and peers who are equally interested in the topic.

The recent interest in positive relationships at work is spurred in part because of the value that positive relationships provide to both individual employees and the broader organizations in which they are embedded (Colbert, Bono, & Puranova, 2016; Dutton & Ragins, 2007). The literature on positive relationships at work can be traced back to early studies on mentoring (e.g., Kram, 1985) as well as scholars' own reflections on how and why workplace relationships alter the work experience for individuals (Gersick, Bartunek, & Dutton, 2000). Since Gersick and colleagues' seminal work, understanding what positive relationships are and how they shape the workplace has taken many different forms, including high quality connections (Dutton, 2003; Dutton & Heaphy, 2003), relational coordination (Gittell, 2001; Gittell & Douglass, 2012), and relational identity and identification (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007; Sluss & Ashforth, 2008).

More recently, scholars have addressed positive workplace relationships through a variety of lenses and across contexts. This work highlights how dyadic relationships function and interact within a constellation of multiple relationships (Methot, Lepine, Podsakoff, & Christian,

2016), including those that serve developmental functions (Dobrow, Chandler, Murphy, & Kram, 2012; Feldman & Kahn, 2019; Murphy & Kram, 2014), how positive relationships shift and change over time as individuals engage in self-disclosure (Gibson, 2018), and how individuals form positive relationships at work when they are not collocated (Schinoff, Ashforth, & Corley, 2020; Heaphy, Byron, Ballinger, Gittell, Leana, & Sluss, 2018).

However, much work remains to be done. For example, we still lack consensus on how to best measure workplace relationships. We also lack a holistic theory of how relationships are developed and maintained. Additionally, we have little insight into the necessary relational work that positive relationships demand, including the various forms, functions, and outcomes that such work may take. Consequently, the proposed PDW aims to meet the following goals:

1. Provide useful and informed feedback to participants on new and ongoing research projects from scholars with expertise in positive relationships at work.
2. Provide opportunities for new collaborations to emerge among participants in order to further develop our understanding of positive relationships at work.
3. Continue to foster and grow a thriving community of scholars who address positive relationships at work in their research.

Organizers (in alphabetical order):

Melissa Chamberlin
Assistant Professor
Iowa State University
Ivy College of Business
Ames, IA 50011
Email: mc6@iastate.edu

Lyndon Garrett
Assistant Professor
Boston College
Carroll School of Management
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467
Email: lyndon.garrett@bc.edu

Gabby Cunningham
DPhil Candidate
University of Oxford
Said Business School
Oxford OX1 1 HP
Email: gabrielle.cunningham@sbs.ox.ac.uk

Beth Schinoff
Assistant Professor
Boston College
Carroll School of Management
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467
Email: beth.schinoff@bc.edu

Elana Feldman
Assistant Professor
UMass-Lowell
Manning School of Business
Lowell, MA 01854
Email: Elana_Feldman@uml.edu

Expert Table Facilitators (in alphabetical order):

Amy Colbert
Professor and Department Executive Officer
Leonard A. Hadley Chair in Leadership
University of Iowa

Jason Kanov
Professor of Management
Western Washington University

Kevin Rockmann
Professor of Management
George Mason University

Kyle Ehrhardt
Assistant Professor of Management
University of Colorado Denver

Angela Passarelli
Assistant Professor of Management
College of Charleston

John Paul Stephens
Associate Professor Organizational Behavior
Case Western University

ORGANIZERS' DECLARATION

We, Melissa Chamberlin, Gabby Cunningham, Elana Feldman, Lyndon Garrett, and Beth Schinoff, certify that all organizers and facilitators have stated that they agree to participate in this workshop if it is accepted, and that they are not in violation of the *Rule of Three + Three.* We understand that if this submission is accepted, all of the listed participants must be registered for the meeting to take part in the session. We understand that the scheduling and audio-visual requests are requests only. If our proposal is accepted, the PDW chair will let us know whether our requests are approved.

REFERENCES

Ashforth, B. E., Schinoff, B. S., & Rogers, K. M. 2016. "I Identify with Her,"I Identify with Him": Unpacking the Dynamics of Personal Identification in Organizations. ***Academy of Management Review***, 41: 28-60.

Colbert, A. E., Bono, J. E., & Puranova, R. K. 2016. Flourishing via workplace relationships: Moving beyond instrumental support. ***Academy of Management Journal***, 59: 1199-1223.

Creary, S. J., Caza, B. B., & Roberts, L. M. 2015. Out of the Box? How Managing a Subordinate's Multiple Identities Affects the Quality of a Manager-Subordinate Relationship. ***Academy of Management Review***, 40: 538-562.

Dobrow, S. R., Chandler, D. E., Murphy, W. M., & Kram, K. E. 2012. A review of developmental networks incorporating a mutuality perspective. ***Journal of Management***, 38*:* 210-242.

Dutton, J.E. 2003. ***Energize your workplace; how to create and sustain high-quality connections at work***. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Dutton, J. E. & Heaphy, E. 2003. The power of high quality connections. In K. Cameron, J.E. Dutton, & R. Quinn (Eds.), ***Positive organizational scholarship***: 263-278. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Dutton, J. E., & Ragins, B. R. 2007. ***Exploring positive relationships at work***. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Eberly, M. B., Holley, E. C., Johnson, M. D., & Mitchell, T. R. 2011. Beyond internal and external: A dyadic theory of relational attributions. ***Academy of Management Review***, 36: 731-753.

Gersick, C.J., Bartunek, J.M., & Dutton, J.E. 2000. Learning from academia: The importance of relationships in professional life. ***Academy of Management Journal***, 43: 1026-1045.

Gibson, K.R. 2018. Can I tell you something? How disruptive self-disclosure changes who "we" are. ***Academy of Management Review***, 43: 570-589.

Gittell, J.H. 2001. Supervisory span of control, relational coordination and flight departure performance. ***Organization Science,*** 12: 468-483.

Gittell, J.H. & Douglass, A. 2012. Relational bureaucracy: Structuring relationships to support knowledgeable, caring and timely responses. ***Academy of Management Review***, 37: 709-733.

Grant, A. 2014. ***Give and take: Why helping others drives our success***. New York: Penguin Books.

Feldman, E., & Kahn, W. A. 2019. When developers disagree: Divergent advice as a potential catalyst for protégé growth**.** ***Organization Science,*** 30: 509–527.

Heaphy, E. D., Byron, K., Ballinger, G. A., Gittell, J. H., Leana, C., & Sluss, D. M. (2018). Introduction to Special Topic Forum: The Changing Nature of Work Relationships. ***Academy of Management Review***, 43(4), 558-569.

Humberd, B., & Rouse, E. 2016. Seeing you in me and me in you: Personal identification in the phases of mentoring relationships. ***Academy of Management Review***, 41: 435-455.

Kram, K. 1985. ***Mentoring at work: Developmental relationships in organizational life.*** Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman.

Leavitt, K., & Sluss, D. M. 2015. Lying for who we are: An identity-based model of workplace dishonesty. ***Academy of Management Review***, 40: 587-610.

Methot, J. R., Lepine, J. A., Podsakoff, N. P., & Christian, J. S. 2016. Are workplace friendships a mixed blessing? Exploring tradeoffs of multiplex relationships and their associations with job performance. ***Personnel Psychology,*** 69: 311-355.

Murphy, W., & Kram, K. 2014. ***Strategic Relationships at Work: Creating Your Circle of Mentors, Sponsors, and Peers for Success in Business and Life.*** New York: McGraw Hill Professional.

Schinoff, B.S., Ashforth, B.E., & Corley, K.G. 2020. Virtually (In) separable: The Centrality of Relational Cadence in the Formation of Virtual Multiplex Relationships. ***Academy of Management Journal***, In Press.

Sluss, D. M., & Ashforth, B. E. 2007. Relational identity and identification: Defining ourselves through work relationships. ***Academy of Management Review***, 32: 9-32.

Sluss, D. M., & Ashforth, B. E. 2008. How relational and organizational identification converge: Processes and conditions. ***Organization Science***, 19: 807-823.

APPENDIX A

Total workshop duration (2 hours – 120 minutes)

- **Part 1: Welcome and overview of the session (5 minutes)**
- **Part 2: Icebreaker/connecting exercise (10 minutes)**
- **Part 3a: Individual "help me" reflections (5 minutes)** – dedicated time for participants to reflect on their current research on positive relationships at work and formulate a question they need help tackling.
- **Part 3b: Groups of 3-5 "help me help you" discussions (60 minutes; 30 minutes each round)** – individuals will receive help and feedback on their "help me" reflection questions and research ideas.
- **Part 4: Looming questions, Research Reciprocity Ring - (20 minutes)** – an opportunity for participants to ask for continued help and find others who can help with those requests.
- **Part 5: Closing reflections (15 minutes) Part 3: Reflections, large group debrief, and closing**