Connectedness and Communication:

Does the communication received from a supervisor increase

feelings of belonging to an organization?

By

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Disclaimer

I hereby affirm that this Master's Capstone represents my own written work and that I have used no sources and aids other than those indicated. All passages quoted from publications or paraphrased from these sources are properly cited and attributed.

This Capstone was not submitted in the same or in a substantially similar version, not even partially, to another examination board and was not published elsewhere.

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Abstract

The feeling of belonging is vital to a person's livelihood, even at work. Social identity theory proposes that a person's sense of who they are depends on the groups to which they belong. An individual does not just have a personal selfhood, but multiple selves and identities associated with their affiliated groups, one of course being who they work for. Equivalently, the amount of communication within an organization is also fundamental to its success. However, there is minimal literature associating the amount and type of communication within an organization to how connected employees feel. Therefore, this study details a survey given to employees within the City of Camrose and then by uses a cross-sectional study design to determine if there is a positive correlation between the amounts and types of communication from a supervisor to their employee and how connected to the organization the employee feels. Survey questions will identify amounts and types of communication as well as possible ways that employees feel connected to their workplace. By considering the possible connection between communication and belonging, my findings will provide insight on how we can learn to create an all-around better and more efficient workplace while simultaneously creating well-being in employees.

Keywords: communication, connectedness, municipality, employee satisfaction, Social Identity Theory, communicating effectively, communicating across generations, Media Richness Theory

Introduction

Good communication is essential in achieving productivity and maintaining strong, lasting working relationships within an organization. Supervisors who invest time and energy into delivering effective communication build trust amongst employees which enhances, employees' sense of belonging which, in turn, contributes to increased productivity

Working as the Communications Coordinator for the City of Camrose, I have heard from a variety of staff about the disconnect they feel with their supervisors and with the organization, which they believe is caused by a lack of effective communication. For example, they feel like they do not know what is going on with projects around the city and feel embarrassed when asked by members of the public and do not have a response. Another example is that many staff feel no one in management will listen to them. However, when I sit with supervisors, I hear about the need to have our employees feel a sense of belonging to the City of Camrose as a way to improve our customer service. It is from these interactions where I developed my interest in exploring if there is a relation the amount and type of communication an employee receives from their supervisor versus how connected that employee feels to their employer, the City of Camrose.

Employee satisfaction is essential to the success of any organization. As Gregory (2011) writes:

"A high rate of employee contentedness is directly related to a lower turnover rate. Thus, keeping employees' satisfied with their careers should be a major priority for every employer," (p. 1).

As many have suggested, communication is one of the keys to employee satisfaction and sense of belonging, even though it has historically been overlooked (Folkman, 2013). "Bad communication leaves employees feeling disconnected from the organization…This employee becomes unsure of his or her position within the company, and wonders what his or her purpose is within the workplace," (Gregory, 2011).

There have also been studies (e.g. Bulgarella, 2005; Jean & Choi, 2012) that show the positive relationship between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction. Employees that are satisfied with their job are more likely to provide better customer service than those who are not satisfied in their job.

In this paper, I will study the relationship between the amount and type of communication an employee receives from their supervisor and the relationship to the employee's sense of belonging within the organization. This is a first step towards a more complete investigation into the role of communication and sense of belonging has to play in creating a successful organizational culture in which its community (administration and staff) will flourish.

The following literature review outlines research on sources that explore communication and employee satisfaction, Social Identity Theory, Media Richness Theory, communicating effectively, and communicating across generations (as they relate to the City of Camrose employee demographic). Findings are outlined under the following major headings: ***(a) Literature Review Methodology, (b) Discussion of the Literature, (c) Conclusion.***

Following the literature review, I will ~~then~~ discuss the research design and methodology detailing why certain strategies were used, and then conclude with data analysis and evaluation

and what proposed next steps are. With this knowledge, companies and organizations will then also know how to increase a sense of belonging through specific types of communication within their organization. And as a result of increased employee satisfaction and ambassadorship, better customer service will be delivered and customers will tend to be more satisfied.

Literature Review Methodology

To begin my search, I brainstormed several terms based on the goals of the City of Camrose's management team and their synonyms in order to get a comprehensive list and understanding of what exactly I was looking for. Using Boolean logic, I searched my terms in Google Scholar and the Wiley Online Library through the University of Alberta Library. Search terms included communication, brand, connectedness, municipality, city, belonging, well-being, organization, Social Identity Theory, Media Richness Theory, and employee satisfaction.

Search Considerations

In reviewing the literature around my research topic, I set numerous boundaries to conduct my search, as described in the following checklist:

- Is the literature from a reputable source? (If yes, then continue. If no, then do not use.)

- Is the literature relevant to the research question?

- Is the source less than 10 years old? If it is older, is it a "classic" piece of literature that is imperative to the research?

- Is the literature peer-reviewed? (Check Ulrichsweb.com)

- Has the article been cited by others? (Google Scholar displays this with search results)

- Does the literature appear to be strongly biased in some way lending to possible skewed results?

- Does the argument make sense (even if it competes with my findings)?

- Did the method used for research make sense in its context?

- Where does the literature fit in the literature review?

Ideally, a piece of literature would check off each of these criteria as they are all important. However, I was a little more lenient on if the literature has been peer-reviewed (because it could be a reliable "grey" source) and if it has been cited by others (because it could be a new piece of literature or could be a very specific topic it touches on).

Organizing and Categorizing the Data

As I was conducting my research, I was simultaneously developing my annotated bibliography which I originally started organizing into sections per keywords and phrases searched. If the document was relevant and passed my search parameters, I would make a subsection off from my categories, by titling it the name of the article, and then reference sections into my document that were pertinent to me. I was open minded to what my categories and themes would be, and after several readings I would start to notice some themes. I would re-evaluate my categories every so often and then determined my final categories of:

- employee satisfaction (this was consistently linked with how employees become ambassadors),

- Social Identity Theory (a theory that details how groups give us a sense of belonging),

- Media Richness Theory (referring to a medium's capacity to facilitate shared meaning and understanding),

- communicating effectively (a goal of the City of Camrose's management team),

- communicating across generations (a factor that wasn't originally considered but deemed to be vital due to the wide range of demographics of city employees), and

- employees as ambassadors (another goal of the City of Camrose management team).

Discussion of the Literature

Social Identity Theory

In Saul McLeod's 2008 essay, he provides a very helpful breakdown of Henri Tajfel's Social Identity Theory (SIT). In it he explains that Tajfel proposed that the groups which people belonged to were an important source of pride and self-esteem. Groups give us a sense of social identity: a sense of belonging to the social world. There are three stages of SIT: categorization (assigning people to a category), social identification (adopt the identity of the group we have categorized ourselves as belonging to), and social comparison (compare our group to other groups).

"Organizational psychologists have found Social Identity Theory quite useful in explaining a number of relevant variables. One area of substantial influence concerns the insights this theory provides to work on what is commonly called organizational identification," (Scott, 2007, p. 1). There are different types of organizational identification and its related communication: Salience of Dual/Multiple Identifications (employees identifying with multiple companies related to the company they work for), Computer-Mediated Communication and Virtual Work (ability to communicate in anonymous ways where employees can "reveal" their true selves), Relationally Focused Identities (interpersonal relationships), Organizational Identities (qualities of the organization itself), and Disidentification and its Related Forms (negatively identifying with the organization). As we can see, there are a variety of ways that employees can identify with an organization, (Scott, 2007).

In several ways, issues of identity and identification are fundamentally communicative ones. Indeed, it is through communication with others that we express our belongingness (or lack thereof). "The integration of SIT and communication in identification learning promises a better understanding of vital issues related to identification and organization, opportunities for more innovative research in this area, and greater consideration of how to even measure and to assess related constructs," (Scott, 2007, p. 12).

Media Richness Theory

While Social Media Theory discusses how groups and communication within groups give us a sense of belonging, Media Richness Theory is a theory that dictates that the different types of mediums of that communication have different levels of richness; that is, some media are "richer" for communicating and understanding than others. "Media richness theory proposes that media differ in the ability to facilitate changes in understanding among communicators. For example, face-to-face communication is richer (can better facilitate changes in understanding) than written memos because it enables immediate feedback and the conveyance of cues such as facial expressions," (Kahai and Cooper, 2003).

Sun and Cheng (2007) go on to explain that "media richness refers to its capacity to facilitate shared meaning and understanding." The richness of the media is based upon the following four criteria: the ability for immediate feedback, the ability to transmit multiple cues, variety of language to be used, and the ability for the medium to be personalized.

According to the above four traits of communication media, Sun and Cheng (2007) classify the communication media used in daily life as, in order of decreasing richness, face-to-face, telephone, personal documents (e.g., letters or memos), impersonal unaddressed documents (e.g., reports, bulletins, etc.), and numeric reports (e.g., spreadsheets).

"Face-to-face is considered the richest medium because it provides immediate feedback. Face-to-face also provides multiple cues via body language and tone of voice, and message content is expressed in natural language. Telephone conversations rank below face-to-face as it allows verbal cues such as words, intonation, and silence, but cannot convey gestures and other visual cues. Personal documents are above impersonal unaddressed documents, while no-statement numerical reports rank as the leanest medium."

"Media richness theory suggests that managers will be more effective and efficient when richer media are used for equivocal tasks and leaner media are used for less equivocal tasks" (Kahai and Cooper, 2003), therefore it can be inferred that manager communication via rich media will be understood and accepted more wholly by staff than if the message was communicate via a "lean" media.

Media richness theory will specifically be useful in my research design when developing my questions. For example, the categories of "types of communication" will be as defined by the theory – face-to-face, telephone, and email conversations. And then when developing my coding scheme to determine if there is a correlation between amount and type of communication and the feeling of connectedness to the organization, media rich communication will receive a higher value and leaner media will receive a lower value.

Communicating Effectively

Significant changes in communication technologies have contributed to the transformation of both work and organizational structure, making this one of the main reasons that communication practices have become more important (Baker, 2002) so that employees can receive the amount and type of communication that works best for them.

Working as a Team. First and foremost, it should be discussed that there are two factors that will help drive improved team communication: a shared vision and shared sense of responsibility. First, the team should share a vision and know how to achieve that vision. Secondly, if team members feel that responsibility is equally shared and everyone is contributing, they will be able to work together towards a common goal, (Carberry, 2013). All members of an organization, especially management, needs to be on the same page when it comes to the goals of the organization's communication for their efforts to work effectively.

Communicating What Employees Want the Way They Want It. Internal communications are a way of keeping employees informed about the various initiatives happening across your business and explain the "why" behind decisions and business strategies. This helps in all areas whether it is boosting efficiency, or dealing with organizational changes such as mergers, downsizing or new management, ("Creating Effective Internal Communications", n.d.). However, regardless of the amount of information that employees currently receive, it may not be the information that they want.

Haas' (2007) discusses that generally, participants reported the greatest desire for more information from top management, their immediate supervisor and other departments and preferred information in a face-to-face setting. Organizations need to understand that more communication is not necessarily better communication and that they need to analyze what the goals of communication campaigns are and then adjust them from there. (Haas, 2007; Rodwell, Kienzle & Shadur, 1998).

Another issue that organizations face is that they generally treat their employees as a single entity. Welch and Jackson (2007) explain that "different techniques and frequencies should be used for different employees." Internal communication must be intentional and should

be divided into different groups based on who communicates to whom, in what way, with what content, and for what purpose.

Finally, communication competence may be achieved by choosing the most appropriate (i.e., socially acceptable) channel, and the one that will be effective (i.e., accomplish one's goal). "The chosen channel may be an effective way to achieve the goal, yet it may not have a required degree of social presence or richness," (Westmyer, DiCioccio, Rubin, 1998, p. 1). Therefore, whoever is communicating, needs to know the employees and which methods of communication they prefer in order to communicate effectively.

Creating a Culture. When we don't feel heard at work, where we usually spend most of our waking hours, we can become incredibly frustrated, judgmental, and apt to misinterpret situations way more often. It can lead to breakdowns and unengaged employees or leaders if they don't feel valued and respected. Bad communication creates tension and a negative dynamic and environment. Ultimately, communication is the key to building trust interpersonally and within a team, and trust is essential to great performance and outcomes, (Keates, 2018).

At the most basic level, employees who don't know what is expected of them seldom perform to their potential. In the article by the Inc. Staff (2010), they recommend creating a culture where all employees can strive to be transparent and straightforward about the challenges of their organization since such candor fosters trust and understanding. Tips on creating that kind of desirable culture are to listen to employees and realize that internal communication should be a two-way street and to take input from employees very seriously considering that the people on the front lines of the company often have the best suggestions for improving it and are often the first to see danger approaching, (Inc. Staff, 2010; Keates, 2018).

Communicating Informally. In accordance with creating a culture where employees feel like they are being listened to and valued, there must be avenues where communication can be done informally. The modern workplace is inherently collaborative, and this collaboration relies on effective communication among co-workers. Informal face-to-face communication has been shown to serve many important functions in organizations, including complex coordination, problem solving, and social learning, (Maina, 2013; Lee, 2010; Westmyer, DiCioccio, & Rubin, 1998).

Organizations also need to be aware of the technological trends and be sure to use them where appropriate. For example, Maina (2013) states that "Instant Messaging (IM) has become of great interest because it is a tool that successfully supports informal communication." Overall, IM boosts business performance by making operations faster, more agile, and more efficient with very little additional cost.

Employee Sense of Belonging through Internal Communications

Communicating effectively lends itself to the fact that nowadays anyone in a supervisory role needs to understand how to care for the organization's most valuable asset—the employee. Argenti and Forman (2004) express that with the cost of hiring and training new employees rising, organizations need to find ways to satisfy, nurture, and educate employees to succeed in this highly competitive global environment. Companies need to use the power of internal communications to differentiate themselves so that they can attract and retain valuable employees (Argenti & Forman, 2004; Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1988).

Research has found that communication from top management has helped reduce employee anxiety, especially during a stressful event, and that a communication climate encouraging employee openness and participation helped employees to better identify with their

organization (Mahajan, Bishop & Scott, 2012; Ugboro & Obeng, 2000). Mallet-Hamer (2005) says that a lack of communication within the organization could decrease productivity, lower morale, and be the cause of other serious workplace issues.

Another notable finding from Mallett-Hamer (2005) explains that although people would tend to complain about a lack of communication prior to taking her survey, after completing her survey, participants realized that it was due to the fact that the employee did not feel that they were being listened to by their supervisor. Argenti and Forman (2004) also discovered the biggest criticism employees have of companies is that they do not encourage upward as well as downward communication.

The best approach for communicating with employees is through informal discussions between employees and supervisors. Needless to say, face-to-face communication seemed to remain the number one style of communicating within organizations. Supervisors should share information with employees whenever possible. One of the most sensitive areas in management involves how much organization information should be shared with employees. When employees feel like supervisors trust them with information about the organization, they will feel like they can trust their supervisors more. It is important that employees feel secure enough in their positions to ask questions and offer advice without fear of reprisals from top management, (Argenti & Forman, 2004; Mallett-Hamer, 2005).

Communicating Across Generations

While communicating internally, one of the biggest challenges in a workplace is dealing with conflict among the generations. Employees of any age may not always appreciate what other generations have to offer and instead approach each other with preconceived notions about how an employee of a certain age behaves. In order for a multigenerational workplace to be an

environment in which people can work effectively and harmoniously, employees (and particularly managers) must strive to set aside any prejudices they have about their coworkers and appreciate all generations for the skills they bring to the office. Otherwise, each interaction will only widen the connectedness gap further, and dampen productivity. Learning how to communicate effectively with different generations will help make them feel like a part of the organization, (Grub, 2016).

A wave of Millennials are now entering professional positions, and Gen Z are right behind them. These generations "have distinctive characteristics that may make interacting with them different from other generations in the workforce, but each generation has arrived in the workplace with its own unique set of qualities," (Myers, & Sadaghiani, 2010). It appears that each successive generation has demanded more transparency, feedback, and collaboration with their employers. Directing focus inward can do wonders since employees are, in essence, the most dedicated brand champions, (Effective Internal Communications in 6 Steps, n.d.). Organizations need to be proactive to the shifts of what employees need in terms of communication and wellness.

Motivating Employees

As difficult as it may be to cater to different generations, it is a leader's responsibility to motivate and engage their employees in their work – something that can be accomplished through empowering their employees. Ba (2015) reveals that there is a correlation in workers' opinion of their supervisor and their perceived level of empowerment. With these findings, significant insight can be provided to leaders as it emphasizes the importance of including employees in decision-making processes and establishing clear, honest and open communication with their followers.

Mayfield and Mayfield (2002) present the Motivating Language Model which is the understanding that using the right kind of motivating language can be instrumental to building employee connectedness with the organization.

There are several findings regarding managerial communication style, namely openness, feedback, and listening affects, that have been proven to improve employee behaviours. Specifically, Mazzei and Quaratino (2017) say that companies need to implement a managerial style that involves two-way communication, continuous listening systems based on periodical surveys, open door policies, grievance procedures, organizational ombudspersons, policies for upward communication, internal reporting systems, and whistleblowing procedures.

Group Affiliations and Belief Systems. Belonging to a work organization is arguable one of the most important group affiliations a person has because it that is where the person spends a majority of their time and their livelihood is dependent on how well the organization does. Commitment is not only related to a person's job, but it is related to the beliefs of the individual. Commitment does not only exist in work place, but it is inside the person, (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Dabir & Azarpira, 2017).

Employees become autonomously motivated when they feel satisfied in their basic psychological needs for autonomy and competence. Organizations are increasingly relying on teamwork to grow productiveness and therefore colleagues are beginning to play a major role in stimulating employee engagement because individuals adopt group norms as models that govern their perception, attitudes, feelings, and behaviour, (Jungert, Van den Broeck, Schreurs, & Osterman, 2018; Hogg, & Reid, 2006).

Communication and Empowerment. There is no best, single approach or strategy or communication channel for empowering people. Communication for empowerment is an ever-developing process rather than a structured technique. Bad communication leaves employees feeling disconnected from the organization which ends up being detrimental to the wellbeing of the company because when an employee feels neglected, he or she will tend to perform at a lower level, (Gregory, 2011). However you often see effective internal communication at successful organizations whose employees embody their brands.

An organization with effective internal communication takes into consideration the opinions of the employees; if ignored it can end up in lack of motivation, resignation, and eventually in leaving the organization in favour of the competition, (Constantin & Baias, 2015; Putti, J. M., Aryee, S., & Phua, J. (1990). The effectiveness of the employee voice depends on effective information sharing. Well informed employee voice will certainly increase the level of employee engagement and confidence in management can lead to increased employee commitment. For example, when talking about Singapore Airlines, Chong (2007) affirms that internal communication and training can help transform key employees such as cabin crew into "walking embodiments" of the core values, and key touch points into opportunities for fulfilling the brand promise.

Despite these findings, many organizations still face the issue of communicating in a management-centric way rather than using an employee-centric approach. This is where internal communication assessment is currently focused on channels used, or volume of information generated (the what) rather than the content of the communication itself, how well it is provided, or understanding, (Ruck, & Welch, 2012). It is imperative to communicate how and what employees want to know.

Sense of Belonging and its Relation to Job Satisfaction. People are the most important asset of an organization and its success or failure depends on their qualifications and performance. The employees are the repository of knowledge, skills and abilities that can't be imitated by the competitors. In order to create empowered employees, clear communication channels are required. In addition, it will require that management honestly evaluate the communication styles and methods that are being used in the organization to ensure the most efficient processes possible, (DeWall, Deckman, Pond Jr., & Bonser, 2011; Elnaga, & Imran, 2014).

It is essential for employees to feel like they belong within an organization that they work for, because then in turn, happy and satisfied employees will be more productive, (Elnaga, & Imran, 2014). "People are more likely to become committed to an organization when they feel that the organization is committed to them," (Fuller, Barnett, Hester, & Relyea, 2003). Also, "empowered employees improve performance largely by finding innovative ways of correcting errors in service delivery and redesigning work processes," (Kimolo, 2013).

Analysis of the Literature

There is no shortage of information when it comes to the overarching themes about the importance of employee sense of belonging to an organization and communicating effectively with employees.

In summation, my literature review gives evidence of the application of the Social Identity Theory in understanding the need of belonging that people feel and how it relates to their working groups as well as the importance of knowing the distinction between rich and weak media and when to use one over the other. Also, my literature review details the importance of

communicating effectively through working as a team, communicating what employees want and in the way they want, creating a culture in the workplace where all employees feel comfortable to communicate informally with one another and their supervisors.

Other topics that the literature review touch on include an employees' sense of belonging through the use of effective and adaptable internal communication as well as the usefulness of understanding the communicative needs of different generations and how to cater to each group. Finally, the last area the literature discusses is the efficacy of the supervisor/employee relationship and the way that the supervisor communicates, the groups and belief systems that the employee associates themselves with, and effective internal communication that leads to empowerment.

The major gap that I discovered in the literature review was a thorough analysis of different types and frequencies of communication and what combinations were the most effective. My study is intended to contribute to an understanding of the factors that contribute to the gap and suggested techniques and strategies for closing it.

Research Question

The feeling of belonging is vital to a person's livelihood, even at work. Social identity theory proposes that a person's sense of who they are depends on the groups to which they belong. An individual does not just have a personal selfhood, but multiple selves and identities associated with their affiliated groups, one of course being who they work for. Conversely, the amount of communication within an organization is also fundamental to its success. By considering the possible connection between communication and belonging, we can learn how to

create an all-around better and more efficient workplace while simultaneously creating well-being in employees.

Research Question: Does the amount and type of communication from City of Camrose managers to their staff correlate with feelings of belonging and connectedness to the organization among staff?

Research Design & Methodology

Research Design

Merrigan et. al (2012) said that "Tests of relationships such as correlation…can indicate the magnitude and strength of the variance shared by two variables." Therefore, to address my research question I will use a quantitative methods and cross-sectional study to understand if there is a correlation between the amount and type of communication from City of Camrose managers to their staff and the staff's feelings of belonging and connectedness to the organization.

Data Gathering Strategies

Surveys. Survey questions went through one round of testing with the Management Team to ensure that the survey follows Merrigan et al. (2012) "Guidelines for Questionnaire Construction" (p. 118) such as confirming that the survey is not too long, the instructions and questions are clear, the order of the questions make sense, etc. Surveys were developed online and then the link was emailed out. Printed copies were also delivered during toolbox meetings to staff without access to a computer. (Staff were given the option to anonymously return the printed survey to me via interoffice mail.) When the employee is required to answer which

department they work in, the choices will be broad so that they will not feel that their answers may be traced back to them.

Surveys were chosen because staff may feel more comfortable saying how they feel about work when it is confidential. For example, if I used another technique, such as interviews, I may get less honest answers as people may not feel comfortable telling me how they really feel because it would not be completely anonymous. The surveys were delivered in a paper format and available online so that will allow participants to complete it at their leisure. And finally, the data from the online surveys will already be collected in a format ready for analysis.

Data analysis technique. After I had retrieved my data subsets, I tested the correlations through using the Pearson's r statistics methods. First, I used that calculation to determine if there was a positive correlation, using the "Guidelines for Interpreting Correlation Magnitudes" as explained by Merrigan et.al (2012, p. 280), between the group that have a "High Feeling of Connectedness" and a "High Amount and Type of Communication" as well as the group that had a "Low Feeling of Connectedness" and "Low Amount and Type of Communication. After that, I did the same with the feelings of connectedness and the "type of communication" data.

The Likert scale in Question 2 (in Appendix B) was used to determine the level of feeling of belongingness to the City of Camrose. The questions were worded this way instead of a simple "yes or no" because an employee's response may not be that black and white and will therefore need "levels" of belongingness. The values to the responses are as follows: "Never" will be given a value of "1," "Rarely" will be given a value of "2," "Sometimes" will be given a value of "3," and "Frequently" will be given a value of "4." There was not an option for the respondent to not give a response because this answer was imperative to the study.

Question 3 (in Appendix B) determined the amount of communication from a supervisor to their employee and the type of communication. Question 3 was scaled differently since the questions were divided into a descending order of most "personal" amount of communication to least "personal" based on the "richness" of the media as defined previously from the "Rich Media Theory."
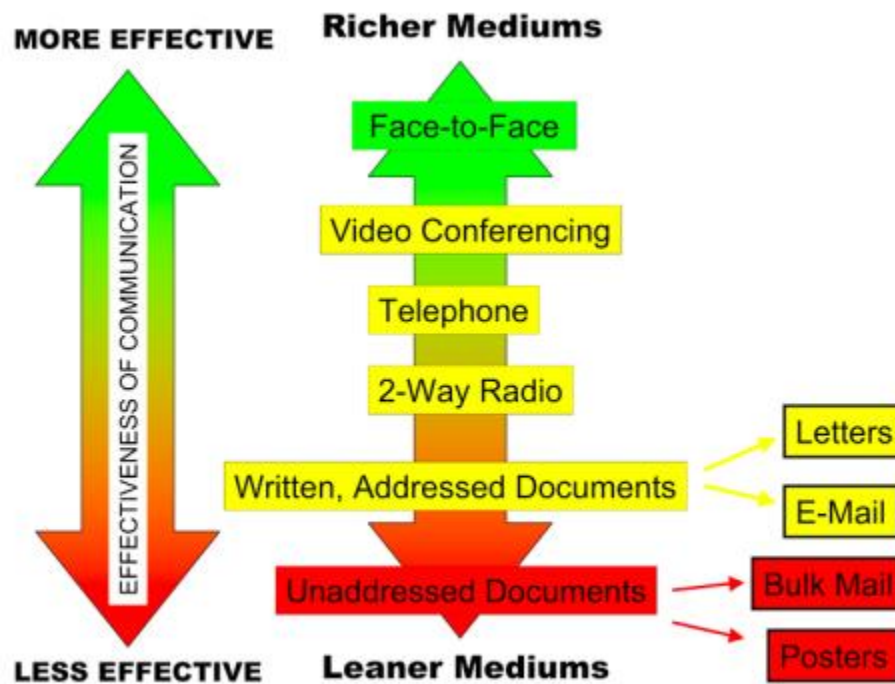

Figure 1. Media Richness Theory. Retrieved from http://campus-adr.net/ODRModule/media_richness_theory.html

Therefore, richer media, such as face-to-face communication, had a higher value than leaner media, such as email. Frequency also affected the coding which will be as follows (response/value given):

Leanest Media																		Richest Media
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Lowest Frequency																		Highest Frequency

Figure 2

- Multiple times per day face-to-face one on one – 20

- Once per day face-to-face one on one - 19

- Multiple times per week face-to-face one on one - 18

- Once per week face-to-face one on one - 17

- Once per month face-to-face one on one - 16

- Multiple times per day face-to-face in a group – 15

- Once per day face-to-face in a group - 14

- Multiple times per week face-to-face in a group - 13

- Once per week face-to-face in a group - 12

- Once per month face-to-face in a group - 11

- Multiple times per day over the phone – 10

- Once per day over the phone - 9

- Multiple times per week over the phone - 8

- Once per week over the phone - 7

- Once per month over the phone - 6

- Multiple times per day via email – 5

- Once per day via email - 4

- Multiple times per week via email - 3

- Once per week via email - 2

- Once per month via email - 1

Questions 4 and 5 (in Appendix B) will not be discussed in this paper as an attempt to minimize scope creep and for the simple fact that they are not specifically asked in my research question. Rather, these questions are for professional informational purposes.

After testing my data I compared the correlations to see if I would find that high levels of connectedness to the employer would correlate with high amounts of communication and type of communication as well as low levels of connectedness correlate with low amounts of communication and type of communication, I can assert that the more communication and the better quality of communication an employee receives, the more connected they feel to the organization. (The methodology does not account for personal individual performance in relation to the reason for communication. For example, a manager may frequently communicate with an employee through rich mediums but it may be negative feedback all of the time therefore the employee might not feel a sense of belonging.)

Population

The survey (in Appendix A) was distributed to all 142 full-time and part-time staff either via email or by handing out paper surveys at toolbox meetings. Seasonal employees will not be included because they will have only just been recently hired by the time this survey will distributed in and they will have not been employed long enough (longer than two months) to provide accurate responses.

Data Analysis and Evaluation
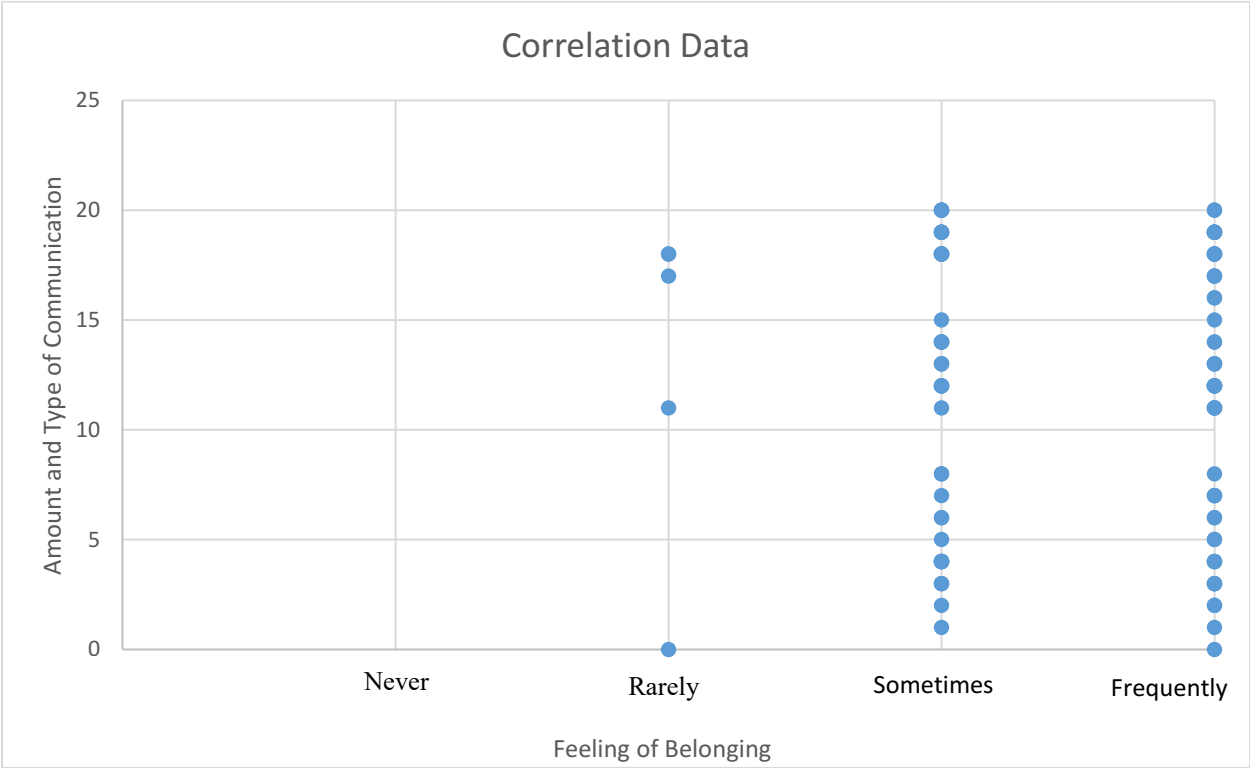
Results

Correlation Data

Figure 3

This study was done to determine if there is a correlation between the amount and type of communication from City of Camrose managers to their staff correlate with feelings of belonging to the organization, therefore this will be the first result to analyze. Using my coding strategy described earlier, the above table (Figure 3) was developed and a Pearson Correlation formula was completed. Never was given a value of 1, Rarely was given a value of 2, Sometimes was given a value of 3, and Frequently was given a value of 4. The resulting value of R is -0.0329. However, although technically a negative correlation, the relationship between the variables is so weak that it could be said that there is almost no correlation. This means that by considering as one variable increases, the other variable does not tend to either increase or

decrease. Therefore as the amount and type of communication from a manager to their employee increases, the feeling of belonging that the employee feels towards the organization, does not appear to increase nor decrease.
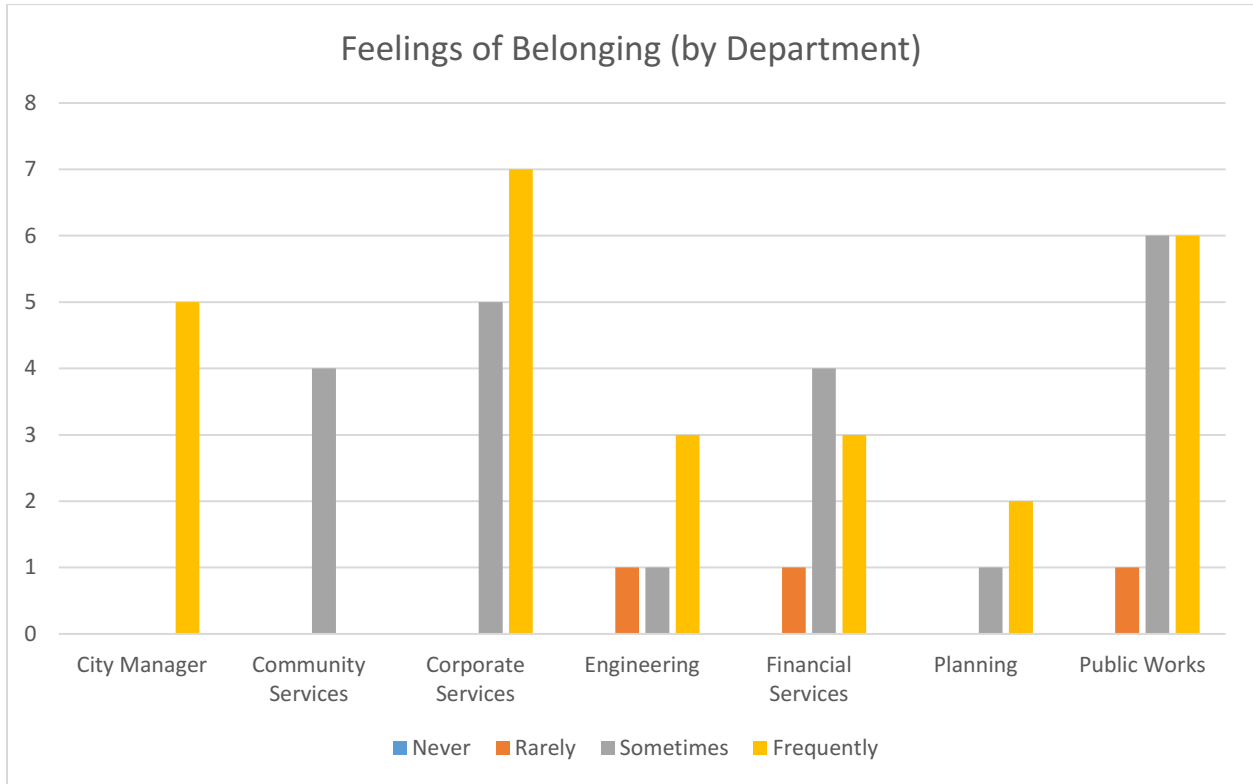

Figure 4

Department	Sense of Belonging Never	Sense of Belonging Rarely	Sense of Belonging Sometimes	Sense of Belonging Frequently	Total
City Manager	0	0	0	5	5
Community Services	0	0	4	0	4
Corporate Services	0	0	5	7	12
Engineering	0	1	1	3	5
Financial Services	0	1	4	3	8
Planning	0	0	1	2	3
Public Works	0	1	6	6	13
Total	0	3	21	26	50

Figure 5

In Figure 4 and Figure 5, we can see which staff from various departments responded "Never," "Rarely," "Sometimes" or "Frequently" when asked about if they feel a sense of belonging. Almost all staff that responded said that they have somewhat of a sense of belonging with their work at the City of Camrose. (Those responses that did not include which department they were from were not included in Figure 4 and Figure 5.)

Ethical Considerations and Limitations

Fifty-three out of the 142 eligible City of Camrose employees completed the survey, which is only 37% of the population who responded.

As mentioned before, almost all staff that completed the survey said that they felt a sense of belonging to the organization. However, it is likely that if an employee did not have a sense of belonging, they would not do the survey.

Another consideration is that results may be skewed due to the different organizational cultures in different departments. For example, the culture of employees that work in City Hall (employees who may tend to generally understand the importance of participating in surveys and may also enjoy participating in them), will most likely participate. However, employees at City Hall (approximately 60) would not accurately represent all the 142 eligible employees of the City. Other employees in different departments may be unwilling to complete the survey for the simple reason that it causes them extra work (which may be due to the fact that they do not have a work email or access to a computer).

Next Steps

There are two major next steps that can follow the research done by this paper. First of all, the project can be expanded to include a larger population such as all of the municipalities in

the province.   The data could then be analyzed based on department because it would be interesting to see the variances. For example, how do the employees in Public Works departments across the province like to be communicated with versus employees in a Finance department?

Secondly, the findings collected from this study can be applied to the City of Camrose communication strategy. The top two actions would first of all, include choosing the right medium. It is important to figure out what to say, and why, and to choose the right medium. Take time to decide if an email, telephone call, or face to face is the best way to get a message across. Furthermore, understanding what staff want communication about and how they are saying they want it is crucial.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed how the feeling of belonging is vital to a person's livelihood, even at work. Social Identity Theory gives evidence that a person's sense of who they are depends on the groups to which they belong. Media Richness Theory shows the distinction between rich and weak media and when to use one over the other. Among other things, the literature review detailed the importance of communicating effectively as well as communicating what employees want and in the way they want.

Through the literature review, it was discovered that there is minimal literature linking the amount and type of communication within an organization to how connected employees feel. Therefore, this study detailed a survey given to employees within the City of Camrose and then used a cross-sectional study design to determine if there was a positive correlation between the amounts and types of communication from a supervisor to their employee and how connected to

the organization the employee feels. Although technically a negative correlation was found, the relationship between the variables was so weak that it could be said that there is almost no correlation which one can deduce that as the amount and type of communication from a manager to their employee increases, the feeling of belonging that the employee feels towards the organization, does not appear to increase nor decrease.

In summation, an individual does not just have a personal selfhood, but multiple selves and identities associated with their affiliated groups, one of course being who they work for. Likewise, the amount of communication within an organization is also fundamental to its success. By considering the possible connection between communication and belonging, we can learn how to create an all-around better and more efficient workplace while simultaneously creating well-being in employees.

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

CITY OF Camrose

INFORMATION LETTER and CONSENT FORM Study Title:
Connectedness and Communication Survey

Research Investigator:	**Supervisor:**
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Background:
I'm currently a student at the University of Alberta's Masters of Arts in Communication and Technology (MACT) program. As part of my final project, and to help the Management Team, I am looking to discover if the amount and type of communication from a supervisor to their employee has a relation to how "connected" that employee feels to the City of Camrose.

Study Procedures:
- This survey should take about 5 minutes
- This survey will be offered in an online and printed format. A link to the online survey will be emailed to you if you are eligible to complete the survey. Or if you do not have a "City" email address and are eligible to complete the survey, a printed copy of the survey will be given to you along with an interoffice mail envelope that is addressed to me.
- All permanent City of Camrose employees will be given the chance to complete the survey

Benefits
- You are being asked to participate in this study to strengthen the communications efforts and ambassadorship throughout the City of Camrose. The study's findings will also be used to meet the final project requirements of my graduate capstone project.
- There will be no compensation for participation

Risk
- There are no known risks

Voluntary Participation
- You are under no obligation to participate in this study. The participation is completely voluntary
- You are not obligated to answer any specific questions even if participating in the study
- You can opt out of participating at any time without any sort of penalty by simply ceasing to complete the survey. Data from surveys that are not fully completed will not be used. Paper copies can and will be shredded. Partially completed surveys will not be saved anywhere.

Confidentiality & Anonymity
- Questions have been carefully worded so that no one could be identified by their answers.
- In order to ensure that all information will remain confidential, please do not provide personal identifiers in the open-ended comment sections.
- Data will be kept confidential but will be accessible to the researcher and as well as course project supervisor.
- Data will be kept in a secure place (password protected) for a minimum of five years following completion of research project, and when appropriate destroyed in a way that ensures privacy and confidentiality.
- Printed surveys will be entered into the database and then the paper copies will be shredded immediately.
- Completed online surveys will be kept on our website server provided by Canadian company, eSolutions Group.
- Results will be kept on my private work laptop and on the City of Camrose encrypted organizational servers for a minimum of 5 years following completion of research project. Data kept on my laptop will be deleted permanently from the "Recycle Bin"
- Any printed copies of the survey completed will be destroyed as soon as the data has been entered in the Excel spreadsheet.

Further Information
- The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta (REB ID number: Pro00090332). If you have questions about your rights or how research should be conducted, you can call (780) 492-2615. This office is independent of the researchers.
- If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, you may report (anonymously if you so choose) any complaints to the MACT program at (780) 492-1538 or at mact@ualberta.ca or discuss your concerns with Malcolm Boyd, City Manager, at (780) 672-4426 or mboyd@camrose.ca.

Consent Statement
I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have additional

questions, I have been told whom to contact. I agree to participate in the research study described above. By completing this survey, I am agreeing to these terms.

Appendix B

Survey Questions:

1. Which department do you work in? (City Manager's Office/Community Services/Corporate and Protective Services/Financial Services/Planning and Development/Engineering/Public Works/Prefer not to answer)
2. Overall, do you feel a sense of belonging to the City of Camrose? i.e.) Do you feel like a valuable part of the team and that you have a sense of place?
   a. Never/Rarely/Sometimes/Frequently
3. How does your immediate supervisor communicate with you about your/your team's work?
   - One on one in a face to face setting
     - More than once per day/Daily/More than once per week/Weekly/Monthly
   - With other employees in a face to face setting (meeting)
     - More than once per day/Daily/More than once per week/Weekly/Monthly
   - Over the phone
     - More than once per day/Daily/More than once per week/Weekly/Monthly
   - Through email
     - More than once per day/Daily/More than once per week/Weekly/Monthly
   - Through other technologies
     - More than once per day/Daily/More than once per week/Weekly/Monthly
4. What ways you would *ideally* like your supervisor to communicate your/your team's information with you
   - One on one in a face to face setting
     - More than once per day/Daily/More than once per week/Weekly/Monthly
   - With other employees in a face to face setting (meeting)
     - More than once per day/Daily/More than once per week/Weekly/Monthly
   - Over the phone
     - More than once per day/Daily/More than once per week/Weekly/Monthly
   - Through email
     - More than once per day/Daily/More than once per week/Weekly/Monthly
   - Through other technologies
     - More than once per day/Daily/More than once per week/Weekly/Monthly

5. How do you want to hear about *other initiatives* around the City?
   - One on one in a face to face setting
     - More than once per day/Daily/More than once per week/Weekly/Monthly
   - With other employees in a face to face setting (meeting)
     - More than once per day/Daily/More than once per week/Weekly/Monthly
   - Over the phone
     - More than once per day/Daily/More than once per week/Weekly/Monthly
   - Through email