Investing in Happiness:

An Analysis of the Contributing Factors to the Positive Professional Work Environment

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Presented to the Faculty

Liberty University

School of Communication Studies

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Masters of Arts In Communication Studies

By

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May 2012

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Acknowledgements

To my family, thank you for consistently believing in me and offering support. You have all played a great role in this process as a sounding board for my ideas and a welcoming crew when I needed to come home for a break. I would like to offer special thanks to my mother, Linda Wright. You received many panicked phone calls and always knew how to calm my nerves in love and wisdom. To my father, Ronnie Naff, thank you for believing in me. You have always demonstrated unwavering trust that I would succeed and your confidence has encouraged me in times of doubt. To my stepmother, Regina, thank you for your sound advice and practical approach. I know that I can trust your opinion and you are always so willing to help. I cherish each of you and the unique support you have provided.

To the members of my committee, I cannot express how much your wisdom and patience has meant to me. To my chair, Dr. Stuart Schwartz, thank you for consistently supporting my work and for carefully guiding me step-by-step through this process. Your expertise and assurance have been a precious help. To Dr. Darlene Graves, I will always cherish your ability to challenge me to think in the abstract. It has truly impacted the way I perceive any work, and your contribution to this project is greatly appreciated. To Dr. Randall Pruitt, I thank you for offering an invaluable perspective from organizational experience and your extended kindness throughout this process.

Lastly, to those with whom I've spent nearly every day in this process, my friends and coworkers in the graduate program, thank you. Thank you for all the answered questions, late nights full of laughter, and words of affirmation. I will always remember and treasure your companionship in this process.

Abstract

The professional workplace is an environment prone to both jubilation and disdain. Research indicates that employees in a more positive work environment are more productive and satisfied in their work. Understanding the contributing factors to a positive work environment is the first step to creating a more satisfying workplace for employees. These contributing factors may be material or relational and hold different levels of influence. Guided by the theory of structuration, this study employed a three-phased Q-methodology, including a Q-sort questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and a cluster analysis. Participants included the employees of the Southeastern region financial institution, BB&T. Two research questions guided the study to find the contributing factors of a positive work environment in the offices of a financial institution, and the positive contributing factors that employees prefer. Results indicated an affinity for relational contributions, with material contributions being viewed as a bonus to an already existent positive work environment. A typology of the contributor to the positive work environment was developed to include four clusters of contributors to the positive work environment.

Key words: BB&T, boss relationships, celebration of events, co-worker relationships, décor, food, gift giving, humor, positive work environment, theory of structuration, Q-methodology.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

How many professional employees have chanted with pure sincerity in their hearts, "I don't want to work, I just want to bang on the drum all day"? When Todd Rundgren composed and produced the song "Bang the Drum All Day" in 1983, he concisely summed up the feelings of many people in the professional working class. Further, consider the following self-help book titles, *Why Work Sucks and How to Fix it, 48 Days to the Work You Love, Work Like Your Dog,* and *There is No Place Like Work.* To go on, take a look at these recent seminar titles, "Building Better Work Relationships", "Fairness at Work", "Creating a Positive, High-Energy, Workplace". It is clear that making the workplace a more positive environment is a highly desirable goal and people have been making real efforts to reach it for years.

Work is typically highly demanding, stressful, challenging, under-compensating and frustrating. There may be times that work is rewarding, but as a general rule, most would not describe their job as the best part of their day. Attempts by the organization to make the workplace a more positive environment for employees would be a strong start to revolutionizing the way employees view work. For this reason the present study will set out to determine the contributing factors to a positive work environment.

The employees of financial institutions are not exempt from the hardship involved in workplace monotony. According to a study of bank employees by Michailidis and Georgiou (2005), "Bank employees cannot afford the time to relax and 'wind down' when they are faced with work variety, discrimination, favoritism, delegation and conflicting tasks" (p. 123). In fact, work for employees of financial institutions may become increasingly difficult as negative industry trends emerge. On a large scale, Emerick, Pucella, Loengard, and Lopez (2010) in the article "U.S. Bank Asset Quality: Negative Trends Slow Down, But the Pain Isn't Over" noted,

"The global economic downturn has resulted in significant asset quality deterioration at U.S.

banks" (p. 6).

Facing these industry trends on the frontlines are employees of the Southeast region bank,

Branch Banking and Trust, more commonly known as BB&T. Since formation shortly after the

Civil War, BB&T has grown to operate approximately 1,800 financial centers along the East

coast (*BB&T News Media Kit*, 2011). Unlike other financial institutions, BB&T functions as a

group of community banks, each with a regional president. This keeps decision-making local and

close to the customer.

Fortunately the mission of the organization branches beyond concern for customers and

includes the well-being of employees. According to *BB&T News Media Kit* (2011), their mission

includes, "Creating a place where employees can learn, grow, and be fulfilled in their work"

(p.3). These practices have awarded them recognition in *Fortune* Magazine as one of America's

"Most Admired Companies" (p.2). An organizational desire to provide a positive workplace for

employees is only the start of something beneficial for employees. In an effort to understand the

factors that contribute to a positive professional work environment, the present study will

investigate the roles of rules and resources in the lives of BB&T employees, revealing larger

themes of what really makes work enjoyable.

Statement of the Problem

The components of a positive professional work environment have been studied to some

degree, yet research does not indicate as to whether various characteristics of a work

environment could be manipulated to yield more favorable conditions for workers. In fact, Karl

and Peluchette (2006b) note, "While recommendations and anecdotal evidence for creating fun

work environments abound, there has been very little empirical work examining what makes a

work environment fun" (p. 3). While each individual has a different perception of "fun", there are some things that undoubtedly make working more enjoyable.

Often a work environment is considered positive because of the "fun" workers have while doing their jobs. For this reason, a definition of fun in the workplace is necessary. In her article from Employee Benefit News, Cathy Leibow (2010) describes fun in the workplace as "a shared sense of community and ability to relax and enjoy time with friends and co-workers" (p. 54). The experience of "fun" in the workplace is commonly linked to the feeling that a workplace is a positive environment in general. For this reason, the terms "fun" and "positive work environment" will be synonymous in this study. In order to further understand this phenomenon of a positive work environment, this study examines the main contributing factors to a positive work environment.

The general conception of work as dissatisfying and unpleasant presents a significant problem for organizations seeking optimum productivity. The crisis in the financial world today creates additional stress for the employees of financial institutions. An annual study conducted by accounting firm Crowe Horwath LLP., studied 280 US financial institutions. As noted in the article "Banks Refocusing Efforts on Employees", "Now in its 30th year, the survey found the top human resource priorities for the year are retaining employees, developing employees, and motivating better performance. Containing costs dropped in priority, falling three spots from last year's survey" (p.2). The article highlights several opportunities financial institutions are missing, including failure to motivate employees with pay and neglecting workforce optimization.

With knowledge of the contributing factors to a positive work environment, office workplace positivity could be effectively manipulated to return greater worker productivity. In

this case, organizations would turn more profits, create greater global impact and make differences in the lives of their employees. Businesses are often so concerned with their target markets, percentages, and increases that employees take on the dirty work with little recognition or reward. Through communication research, employees can be supported and the conditions in which they work can be improved.

Studies Addressing The Problem

Research of the office of a professional workplace has highlighted a trend, indicating that employee mood changes along with changes in subjective work experience (Teuchmann, Totterdell and Parker, 1999). Teuchmann, Totterdell, and Parker (1999) conducted a study of ten employees of the financial accounts department of a chemical processing company. The study proved consistent with other research, showing that, "time pressure was directly linked with negative mood and that time pressure was directly linked and indirectly linked to emotional exhaustion" (Teuchmann, Totterdell, Parker, 1999, p. 50). This research implies that there may be a great need for break time or additional motivational factors to prevent employee burnout.

Today some of the most successful organizations, including Pixar and Google are fostering an employee-based work environment. In the book *The Way They Do Things Around There: An Analysis of the 'Pixar Culture',* author Matthais Nuoffer notes "Finally, there is one value that seems to be omnipresent – the main rationale defining Pixar: work has to be fun and must allow time for recreation" (p. 10). This text describes the contributions of friendship relationships, learning, relaxation and even toys to the joy of a work environment. Another book discovering the positive work environment is *Organizational Behavior: Text and Cases* by Kavita Singh who conducted an interview with director of HR at Google India, Manjo Varghese. Singh (2009), quotes Varghese saying,

> We keep employees central to whatever we do. There is enough flexibility in the
>
> system to focus on driving solutions keeping the individual and his need in
>
> perspective. We believe in fun at work – we have some exciting and interesting
>
> celebrations all the time like Pajama Day, also a few conventional events that give
>
> Googlers a chance to kick back and hang out, get to know each other socially, and
>
> have fun. Quarterly and annual off-sites, winter holiday party, summer picnic
>
> (accompanied by our now-classic 'Google Idol' competition), and Diwali and
>
> Christmas celebrations are among the various festivities and fun activities that keep
>
> Googlers enthusiastic all the time (p. 4).

Clearly these strategies are working for these two incredibly successful companies. Typical

organizations could undoubtedly learn a lesson from the human resource techniques of

Pixar and Google.

Therefore the question for everyday organizations still remains: what truly makes a

workplace enjoyable for employees? Answering this question could revolutionize the ways

companies do business. Using the Theory of Structuration by Anthony Giddens as a framework,

the role of individuals and the rules and resources they bring to a work environment have been

analyzed as contributions to a positive work environment. According to Littlejohn and Foss

(2008),

> The theory of structuration states that human action is a process of producing and
>
> reproducing various social systems… Structures range from large social and cultural
>
> institutions to smaller individual relationships. Structures like relational expectations,
>
> group roles and norms, communication networks, and societal institutions both affect and

are affected by social action. These structures provide individuals with rules that guide

their actions, but their actions in turn create new rules and reproduce old ones (p.236).

Contributions such as celebration of events, décor, food, joking and humor are discussed

with professional workplace employees and defined as contributing factors or deterrents with

regard to workplace positivity.

In several independent studies, a positive work environment has been said to include

many factors. Characteristics of the positive work environment include welcoming décor

("Office Décor", 2000, para. 2), available food (Thomson & Hassenkamp, 2008), opportunity for

naps (Doyle, 2008, para. 6), and proper incorporation of humor (Plester & Orams, 2008, p.275).

In his study of workplace "fun", Simon Chan (2010) categorized positive work environments

according to different types of "fun" including staff-oriented, supervisor-oriented, social-oriented

and strategy-oriented workplace fun. In addition Ford, Newstrom and Mclaughlin (2004)

conducted a large study among company managers who indicated that a positive workplace is

greatly desired. Ford, Newstrom and Mclaughlin (2004) directed attention to the positive

workplace noting that contributions to a positive work environment can include celebrations of

personal events, professional milestones, social events, humor, games and competitions,

community involvement and boss involvement.

Methodology

A Q-Analysis of employee participation and satisfaction was conducted among

professional employees of BB&T, a large financial institution. Contributions to the work

environment were evaluated in light of structuration theory, which notes that members of a

system adhere to rules and contribute resources to their environment. Two research questions

have been addressed within the content of this study, including:

RQ_1 What factors of a positive work environment are displayed in the Southwest regional

offices of a BB&T financial institution?

RQ_2 Which factors of a positive work environment are preferred among employees?

To begin, chapter two intends to overview the available literature on this topic. Studies

concerning positive work environments and structuration theory have been evaluated. The third

chapter describes in detail the methodology to be employed in light of structuration theory.

Chapter four will take a look at the unique results determined by the Q-sort study and content

analysis utilized for data analysis. Lastly, chapter five will conclude with a detailed description

of the limitations of the present study, and recommendations for future research on the subject.

Before continuation of this study, previous studies on this topic and theory should be examined

and understood.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

A fair amount of research has been done on the role of a positive work environment. According to Chan, Gee and Steiner (2000), a "fun" work environment is proving to be one of the factors distinguishing superior performers from others. Yet what exactly constitutes, "fun"? Are work teams more successful or satisfied because of the positive nature of their work environment? If so, what are the specific factors that contribute to a positive work environment? This review seeks to explain the factors that create a positive workplace and the application of structuration theory in the development of a positive work environment. Studies focusing on the positive work environment, the material positive workplace, the relational positive workplace, and the theory of structuration will be discussed.

A Positive Work Environment

As aforementioned, several studies define the positive workplace as "fun". Fun in the workplace tends to be characterized by a specific culture. In a study of workplace fun, Peter Fleming (2005) notes, "Fun cultures are not necessarily fun in and of themselves but aim to establish a context in which fun experiences are more likely to occur" (p.287). A description of fun in the workplace yields the idea that workers engage in experiences that are not typical of the work setting, but rather typical of life outside work with family and friends.

Author Simon Chan evaluated the components of workplace fun. Interviews were conducted with ten hotel human resource practitioners in the People's Republic of China. Results indicated that there are four types of workplace fun: staff-oriented workplace fun, supervisor-oriented workplace fun, social-oriented workplace fun, and strategy-oriented workplace fun. Staff-oriented fun is described as the type of activities and events that are perceived as fun (Chan, 2010). Celebrations of birthdays and other personal events would qualify

as staff-oriented fun. Supervisor-oriented fun is the type of activities and events created by the direct supervisor at work (Chan, 2010). This would include lunch days with the supervisor or gatherings after work with the supervisor. Social-oriented fun includes the social gatherings in organizations such as annual dinners (Chan, 2010). Organizational gatherings such as company barbeques and Christmas parties are events recognized as social-oriented fun. Lastly, strategy-oriented fun is the actual policy of an organization designed to create workplace fun such as management practices of outstanding performance, casual dress days, or organizationally provided food and refreshments (Chan, 2010).

In a study of enthusiasm, satisfaction, creativity, and communications, Ford Newstrom and Mclaughlin (2004) also found overwhelming support for developing a positive workplace. Several legitimate types of fun in the workplace were outlined, including personal events, professional milestones, social events, humor, games and competitions, community involvement, and boss involvement. As noted by Ford Newstrom and Mclaughlin (2004) workers shape their lives with their immediate colleagues and customers to get the job done while having fun along the way. This leads to the following examination of the weight and influence of relationships on the work environment.

While some view the workplace as a place susceptible to fun, some argue that the standard workplace is not a naturally fun environment. Robin Grenier (2010) describes adult "play" through an observational study, concluding that play includes collaboration, fantasy and role-play, and experimentation which are not generally emphasized in the workplace. Turner (1974) notes that play space must be free from normative structures, thus allowing individuals the freedom to explore cultural and communal practices. These indications would omit the workplace as a place of play. Furthermore Mainemelis and Ronson (2006) note that play

transforms the nature of an individual's work tasks. This does have potential to be detrimental in the workplace.

The Material Positive Workplace

Resources contributing to a positive work environment are often material in nature. These resources may include but are not limited to celebration of events, décor, food, gift giving. Joking and humor are also considered.

Celebration of Events

The benefits of a positive work environment and fun in the workplace are shown to be numerous. Studies prove that experiencing fun in the workplace can lessen the negative impact of emotional exhaustion on job satisfaction (Karl & Peluchette, 2006a). A study by Nel and Spies (2006) involved a unique type of corporate exercise called "play therapy". These entertaining sessions allowed corporate employees to use clay, drawing, relaxation and dramatized play. Nel and Spies (2006) state, "There are many different aspects within the work situation that can cause stress among the employees" (p. 41). However, results of the play therapy study showed that all the participants were positive about the use of play therapy mediums during stress management training (Nel & Spies, 2006).

In a specific case with Virginia Commerce Bank, employees split into teams and participated in a 12-week fitness challenge. Employees logged steps taken in a day and were awarded prizes for reaching certain goals. According to an article in *Health and Beauty Close-up* (2012), "During the three-month Stepitup initiative, VCB's employees walked over 162,160,000 steps, with the winning team collecting nearly twelve million steps among its five members". Rounding out the competition, a ceremony took place on to honor the top team. Events like this

one not only promote team building but also fitness awareness and can contribute positive

associations to work.

In the text titled, *Corporate Celebration: Play, Purpose and Profit at Work,* authors Deal

and Key (1998) describe the role of celebrations at work. They explain that celebrations can be a

very significant experience for employees stating,

> Celebration is vital to the human psyche. All of us have an emotional craving, a deep-
> seated need to participate in ritual and ceremony. When we do, each of us experiences
> extraordinary intrapsychic feelings. Most everyone can recall a celebration where he or
> she is truly significant, important, full of emotion and meaning (p. 21).

The book goes on to explain that events can ignite this excitement within employees and

stimulate energetic contribution to work tasks (Deal & Key, 1998, p.103).

Decor

Advancements in color psychology and interior design indicate that décor plays a great

part in attitudes across a workspace. Elsbach (2004) found that personal office décor influences

co-worker interpretation of personality. Furthermore, there is a trend toward making office

décor more welcoming and comfortable ("Office Décor," 2000, para. 2). This trend may not only

create a more comfortable environment, but a more productive one as well. Studies from the

University of Exter note that, "Employees who have control over the design and layout of their

workspace are not only happier and healthier—they're also up to 32% more productive"

("Designing Your Own Workspace", 2010, p.6).

In her article, "Desk Décor", Annie Flanzriach (2007) makes the claim that décor at work

is very important. She notes, "Every detail can provide an insight – or distressing revelation –

into work ethic and ambition" (p.1). Meredith Wells, professor at Eastern Kentucky University,

conducted a study among 338 workers and found that employees who are permitted to

personalize their workspace are more satisfied on the job (Flazriach, 2007). Popular and

appropriate décor for the workspace might include books, awards and certificates, and photos. At

any rate support exists for the use of professional décor in personal workspaces.

Food

Positive work environments are often characterized and supplemented by shared

experiences involving food. As instruments in sustaining continuity and a strong sense of

harmony (Thomson & Hassenkamp, 2008), meals and snacks can create cohesion for a group.

Often food is regarded as a morale-booster, a key ingredient to mark departures and a powerful

component of break time (Thomson & Hassenkamp, 2008, p.1775).

In an article in the Spokesman Review, author Paul Turner described the role of snacks in

the workplace. He explains that in the professional work environment, workers will have their

own secret stash of snacks (Turner, 2001, p.1). These snacks are sometimes shared, but a

majority of the time they are strictly guarded. Turner (2001) states, "Jeanette Radmer, who

works at a credit union, enjoys sharing food at work. But she likes to exercise a modicum of

control about the distribution of her treats" (p.2). This involvement of food in the workplace is

bound to promote both unity and dissention.

Desires for out of the ordinary commodities are typical of office workers who seek a

more appealing work environment. In fact, in a study by Blumburg Office Properties, employees

described that they would like to have better artwork, a nap area and free snacks and coffee

during the week (Doyle, 2008, para. 6). In another case, employees at the company Worlds

Apart were able to test compact, inflatable beds during small breaks and lunch hour. Results

indicated that naps are an option that improves the mood and atmosphere in an office ("A 20-minute Nap," 2009).

Gift Giving

A study of gift giving in the workplace by Brenda Sunoo lends evidence that gifts make employees happy. Sunoo (1995) quotes director of global compensation at Mary Kay Cosmetics saying, "Good people are hard to find. So when you find them, it's important to make every effort to keep them. High morale is a significant factor in increasing productivity and employee retention" (p. 149). Incentives given to employees at Mary Kay include birthday cards, holiday bonuses, gifts for duration of employment, a Thanksgiving turkey, and so on (Sunoo, 1995, p.149). However, gift giving in the workplace is not limited to gifts given by the organization to employees.

A contribution to the positive work environment may include gifts that employees purchase for one another. Author Julie Ruth of Rutgers University conducted a study of gift giving among co-workers. Her conclusions resulted in several different social relations between giver and recipient. Ruth (2004) states,

> The six social roles include givers who are *Pleasers* that seek to make the recipient happy, *Providers* of what the recipient needs, *Acknowledgers* of nonclose recipients, *Compensators* for something the recipient has lost or does not have, *Socializers* who seek to place certain values or knowledge with the recipient, and *Avoiders* who communicate symbolically through the absence of a gift (p.182).

Gift giving can, in fact, profoundly affect the organization and employees perceptions of the organization and co-workers (Ruth, 2004, p. 205).

Joking and Humor

Fun in any setting is frequently characterized by the presence of humor. A proper integration of humor in the workplace is an additional factor that contributes to an overall positive environment. Plester and Orams (2008) conducted a study of jokers in the workplace. They concluded that, "The joker role is negotiated within a work group (community of practice) and the joker utilizes the shared history and group practices to reinforce his role and add to the repertoire of the community, which in turn develops the organizational culture" (Plester & Orams, 2008, p. 277). Jokers will often provide a relief function at work by offering a break from business pressure and stress by creating fun and laughter (Plester & Orams, 2008, p.275).

In a case study of two organizations: a professional hotel kitchen and a middle school of a boarding and day Prep school, Lynch (2005) identified five distinct types of humor. These include cooperative, conformity, cyclic, distance, and insurgent humor (Lynch, 2005). Cooperative humor is described as "when an external system person enters into the internal system's system by using his/her humor to force the internal members to adopt the external production value" (Lynch, 2005, p. 95). Conformity humor is said to occur "when internal system members use internal system humor to change behavior of internal system members" (Lynch, 2005, p. 98). Cyclic humor lightens the intense nature of a stark comment by "reifying the tensions between the external and internal systems" (Lynch, 2005, p. 101). Distance humor serves "when the humor of the internal system is used to resist the external system by creating identification with internal system and differentiation of the external system" (Lynch, 2005, p. 103). A specific example of this occurrence may be when employees distance themselves from management by coming up with a nickname for their boss. Lastly, insurgent humor is said to be "a medium in which the internal system voices objection and resists the perceived external

system constraints" (Lynch, 2005, p. 105). This allows employees to disagree with management in a less attacking manner. While these types of humor can spawn connectivity between coworkers in the professional workplace, they also have the power to become a detriment.

Avtgis and Taber (2006) determined that self-defeating humor contributes to employee burnout, job stress and satisfaction. Self-defeating humor correlates with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and aggressive humor is associated with job stress and lower job satisfaction (Avtgis & Taber, 2006, p. 16). Additional research shows that humor may not be easily manipulated in the workplace. According to Collinson (2002), joking can at times be ambiguous and uneasily forced in the workplace. This could easily result in uncomfortable and dissatisfying interactions among employees.

The Relational Positive Workplace

Presently a review of studies concerning material contributions to a positive work environment has been evaluated. However, the workplace environment is built on both material influences as well as relational influences. Co-worker relationships and managerial styles make up a large portion of one's perception of work. Stoetzer et al. (2009) describe, "Interpersonal relationships at work seem to be to be important for several outcomes such as efficiency, job satisfaction, and health" (p. 425).

In their study of relationships at work, Stoetzer et al. surveyed 4049 persons over a period of three years. Special attention was given to the evaluation of stressors such as serious conflict at work, exclusion by superiors or exclusion by co-workers. Each of these factors could be powerfully detrimental to the positive work environment. Results of the study indicated that high demands were significantly related to serious conflict at work and that financial difficulties were related to exclusion by superiors (Stoetzer, 2009, p. 431). Relationships with co-workers and

supervisors at work are a delicate part of the workplace environment. However, not all worker

relationships are prone to negativity.

A study by Estlund (2005) suggested that employees are compelled to get along to create

a positive work environment. She states,

> Co-workers routinely cooperate in doing their jobs. They socialize throughout the
>
> workday, during breaks, in locker rooms and restrooms, and at the proverbial water
>
> cooler. They talk about the work itself and about the terms and conditions of work that
>
> they share with each other, as well as about current events, sports, popular culture,
>
> family, and other stuff of daily life. Adults talk about things that are important to them
>
> more often with co-workers than with anyone else outside of their families (p. 82).

This research offers an interesting perspective of workplace relationships and the potential outlet

for positive emotion.

Relationships at work are inevitable but when fostered appropriately, can lead to very

satisfied employees. According to Rawlins (1992) friendship is not defined by economic

contracts as in the case with work or professional relationships but can compete with,

complement, substitute for or fuse these types of social bonds (p. 9).

A study of workplace friendships by Kram and Isabella (1985) focused on peer

relationships at early, middle and late career stages. Fifteen employees of a large, northeastern

manufacturing company were interviewed and data was analyzed to determine three different

types of peers in the workplace. These include the information peer, collegial peer and the

special peer. The information peer is said to "benefit from the exchange of information about

their work and the organization" (Kram & Isabella, 1985, p. 119). These relationships are more

formal and exhibit less intimacy. The collegial peer is "typified by a moderate level of trust and

self-disclosure" (Kram & Isabella, 1985, p. 119). Lastly the special peer is the most intimate

form of peer relationship. According to Kram and Isabella (1985), "Becoming a special peer

often involves revealing central ambivalences and personal dilemmas in work and family

realms" (p. 121). These tiers of friendship are exemplary of the levels of friendship that can be

expected among employees of typical organizations.

Author Tom Rath drew on more than five million interviews in his text *Vital Friends:*

The People You Can't Afford to Live Without. He describes the intense benefits of friendships at

work. Kannry (2006) describes Rath's findings stating, "People who have a 'best friend' at work

are *seven times* more likely to be engaged in their work" (p. 1). Kannry (2006) also notes,

"People with at least three close friends at work were 46% more likely to be extremely satisfied

with their job and 88% more likely to be satisfied with their life" (p.1). These findings yield

undeniable support for the cultivation and importance of friendships at work.

Yet these friendships do not extend only to co-workers, but also boss-worker

relationships. According to Rath's findings in Kannry's (2006) article, "Spending time with your

boss was rated the least pleasurable time of the day. However, when employees do have close

relationships with their boss, they are more than twice as likely to be satisfied with their jobs"

(p.2). In a study focusing on a jungian analysis of leadership reliability in corporate social

responsibility, author Tarja Ketola (2006) states, "Fortunately, subordinates are very adaptable.

They learn to live with almost any kind of superiors, some with even those who divide and rule

by messing up people's minds through constantly changing their values, words and actions" (p.

12). Ketola (2006) goes on to note that while employees are fairly flexible, leaders who keep

their promises and believe in what they do are the leaders that live in harmony and accept others,

despite imperfections, making them reliable and easy to work with (p.12). A workplace with

harmony between boss and subordinate is known to be a more positive professional environment.

The work environment is also influenced by relationships with managers, and existing

managerial styles. According to Marshall (2010), "Unfortunately, many managers and leaders

rely on external motivators to get people to do things… Since these management approaches are

manipulative, the results are never as effective as cultivating in the employee the thought process

of internal motivation" (p. 10). This research would suggest that a managerial style incorporating

choice and reflection would stimulate a more positive work environment. The input of managers,

co-workers and employees all contribute to the overall structure of a work environment, which

can be clearly evaluated through the theory of structuration.

Structuration Theory

While many theories of communication provide support that humans are directed and

manipulated by outside forces alone, the theory of structuration argues that people themselves

can willingly influence human interaction.   Yet though they have the power to create change,

they are still bound by external forces, internal group structures and other members' behavior.

As developed by Anthony Giddens, structuration theory is the production and reproduction of the

social systems through members' use of rules and resources in interaction (Hirokawa et al., 50).

As Giddens (1979) notes,

> The theory of structuration… is both enabling and constraining, and it is one of the
>
> specific tasks of social theory to study the conditions in the organization of social systems
>
> that govern the interconnections between the two. According to this conception, the same
>
> structural characteristics participate in the subject (the actor) as in the object (society) (p.
>
> 70).

The work environment is a place full of constructed social systems. These structures undoubtedly contribute to worker satisfaction and performance.

According to Pozzebon and Pinsonneault (2005), "Structure is what gives form and shape to social life, but it is not itself the form and shape. Structure exists only in and through the activities of agents" (p. 1356). Agency, then, is the flow or pattern of peoples' actions. Interactions and relationships among members are the framework for structures, on which agents contribute. The workplace is an environment where structuration continually occurs across interactions and relationships between supervisors, colleagues and subordinates.

A focus is placed on the role of the group member, as they use rules and resources to take action within a system and interpret the happenings within the system. Rules and resources are the tools that members use to guide their interactions and build structure. Rules are "guidelines, whether 'official' or learned through experience that guide people's actions" (Hoffman and Cowman, 2010, p.207). As propositions that indicate how something ought to be done or what is good or bad, rules play a large part in structuration in the workplace.   Hoffman and Cowan (2010) defined six rules for employees concerning the integration of work and life. These rules (or norms) included weighing the risk of requests for specific accommodations, placing higher importance on family requests, asking only for what one can have, making requests based on organizational interests, treating requests as individual rather than group concerns, and knowing that sometimes the best request is no request at all (Hoffman & Cowan, 2010, p. 212-216).

Also guiding workplace interactions are resources. Resources are materials, possessions, or attributes that can be used to influence or control the actions of the group or its members. Hoffman and Cowan (2010) also outline three primary resources that workers feel they have at their disposal concerning requesting accommodations. These include a societal or organizational

value of family, competence, and knowledge of the organization (p. 217). However, it is also

mentioned that other employee resources might include expert knowledge, official policy,

friendship with the supervisor, or a positive reputation (Hoffman & Cowan, 2010, p. 207).

Supervisor resources have a tendency to be financial incentives or disincentives, legitimate

power, or knowledge of official policy (Hoffman & Cowan, 2010, p. 207).

Set apart from other theories, structuration theory contends that structures are continually

produced and reproduced within a system. Any profession undergoes change dynamics as it

evolves, and in turn individuals shape and are shaped by the production and reproduction of

norms and scripts for the profession (Hotho, 2008, p. 721). Results of a qualitative study by

Hotho (2008) indicate that, "Individual professionals use and rewrite scripts of their profession

but also draw upon new scripts as they engage with local change. To that extent they contribute

from the local level upwards to the changing identity of their profession" (p. 721). Coad and

Herbert (2009) indicate that structural arrangements should be reproduced over time and under

certain circumstances they might change (p. 190).

Not only is structuration theory set apart due to the fact that structures are continually

changing, but also that members do not totally control the process of structuration. There are

many influences on structuration including member characteristics and orientation, external

factors, and structural dynamics. Research by Perlow, Gittell and Katz (2004) indicates that,

"Both value orientations and institutional context may influence behavior" (p. 534).

Member influence on structuration is illustrated by member motivation, characteristic

interaction styles, and members' degree of knowledge and experience. As aforementioned,

intrinsic and extrinsic motivation plays a key role in the office environment, including

structuration. In a study concerning reproduction of the structuration of families, Prentice (2008)

mentions that adjustments to new family members required that norms must be evolved (p. 84).

These norms included amount of interaction, acceptable level of emotional response in

interactions, the topics considered suitable for discussion, different patterns of reserve, and

interaction styles (Prentice, 2008, p. 84). The knowledge of individual members collectively

builds organizational knowledge and influences developed structures. In a study of knowledge

between organizations Gao (2007) notes that, "Organizational knowledge creation is a process of

conceptualizing new perspectives from tactile knowledge shared by its individual composing

members" (p. 105).

Despite the power of the individual in any given structure, external forces still exhibit

influence over the execution of members' activities. External forces are often the nature of

group tasks or goals, the general environment, members' level of competence, talents of

personnel, and effects of larger organizations on the group. Bennis (1966) argues that

organizations will have a complication of goals, conflict and contradiction among diverse

standards of organizational effectiveness, and increased job mobility (p. 58-59). It is also

recognized that organizations face several humanistic problems that serve as external forces in

structuration. These include integrating individual needs with management goals, distributing

power, sources, and authority, managing and resolving conflicts, responding appropriately to

changes in organizational environment, and following the growth and decay of the organization

(Bennis, 1966, p. 56).

Structuration of work groups is also influenced by structural dynamics, or the

relationships between different rules and resources. Understanding the interconnections that

exist across organizational, institutional, and cultural contexts is essential to effectively sustain or

change the interactional patterns in organizations (Perlow, Gittell, & Katz, 2004, p. 534). Two

relationships between structures are mediation and contradiction. Mediation occurs when one

structure influences the operation or interpretation of another. Ongoing activity occurs through

the mediation of system elements and changes in system elements lead to system transformations

(Canary, 2010, p. 29). The relationship of contradiction occurs between structures when

essential structures of a group work against each other. According to Canary (2010),

"Contradictions might include tensions between the social basis of group activity and personal

goals of members, and tensions between taking pragmatic action and making ideal decisions (p.

35).

Structuration is a naturally occurring event that tends to happen while members remain

unaware. However, members can control the forces that influence group interaction if they are

made aware. Individuals in the workplace operate based on the rules and resources defined in

the structure of their office or work. These structures are influenced not only by the members

themselves, but also by external forces and structural dynamics.

The level of positivity in a workplace is part of an organizational structure. Various

positive material contributions in the workplace include humor, recognizing personal events,

professional milestones, social events, games and competitions, community involvement and

boss involvement. Office décor and food have also proven to be influential factors concerning a

pleasant workplace. Positive relational contributions are also essential to the positive work

environment including interpersonal relations with co-workers and supervisors as well as the

managerial styles of administrative personnel.

By understanding the theory of structuration and the development of structures through

rules and resources of work groups, effective change within the workplace can be made.

Employees play an active role in the formation of structures within the workplace.   It is

postulated that these employees can create change in rules and resources to foster a more positive and enjoyable working environment.

The studies mentioned in this chapter are only a fraction of the studies available concerning positive work environments and structuration theory. This survey of literature given shows how effective and beneficial a study of the workplace with relation to structuration theory will be. Following this review of literature, the second chapter explores the quantitative methodology to be employed for this study. Next is a thorough explanation of the selected research design and method, along with the selection of participants and instrument.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study discovers the main contributing factors to a positive professional work environment. Distinguishing both material and relational contributions, an emphasis is placed on the role of individuals within the organization.

Research questions to be considered are:

RQ_1 What are the factors contributing to a positive work environment in the offices of a financial industry organization?

RQ_2 Which factors of a positive work environment are preferred among employees?

These questions establish a stronger understanding of the components of a positive work environment for employees. In order to answer these research questions involving the workplace, the investigator has evaluated worker testimony within the framework of structuration theory.

As noted in the literature review, structuration theory includes rules and resources, which are tools that members use to guide their interactions and build structure. These rules and resources can be seen as negative or positive contributions to the work environment. According to Pozzebon (2005), structuration theory has great potential to be used to explain organizational phenomena, however, applying the theory to scientific study has proven to be difficult (p. 1354-1355). Popular methods of analysis involving structuration theory include grounded, narrative and visual mapping strategies as well as replicating strategies or a combination of the methods (Pozzebon, 2005, p. 1366). A Q-methodological approach was used in this study to assess the relationship between positivity in the workplace and factors contributing to a work environment. The methodological foundations for this study are grounded in Q-analysis and Q-sort methods used in previous studies. A Q-analysis approach uses sorting—either in fact, or analytically

obtained as used in this study—and semi-structured interviews to pull insights from the statistical

process. As part of this, a cluster analysis was conducted following the Q-analysis and

interviews, including an overall evaluation completed to derive themes from results.

Research Method

     Quantitative study seeks to obtain measurable data to derive meaning from phenomena.

However, the use of a Q methodology allows not only a measureable, but uniquely interpretive

look at communication data. Developed in 1935 by William Stephenson, the Q methodology is

"a means of extracting subjective opinion" (Cross, 2005, p. 208). According to Ward (2010), "Q

is neither fully qualitative nor fully quantitative, Q researchers can draw upon components and

values of both". Through this unique blend, this study measured the impact of experienced work

environment on employees of a large organization.

     A Q-sort study "employs a by-person factor analysis in order to identify groups of

participants who make sense of (and who hence Q 'sort') a pool of items in comparable ways"

(Watts & Stenner, 2005, p. 68). In the same way, the Q-sort has gathered a wide scope of

information, including communicated points of view. Dit Dariel, Wharrad and Windle (2010)

stress the importance of valuing the participant's interpretations of statements in a Q-sort (p. 69).

The Q-sort was then followed by semi-structured interviews with select participants to unveil

certain topics or themes.

     According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), "The social and physical setting—schedules,

space, pay, and rewards—and internalized notions of norms, traditions, roles and values are

crucial aspects of an environment." (p. 53). For this reason, the quantitative approach behind this

particular study has approached employees within their work environment rather than testing

them in a laboratory setting.

This study used a three-phase approach, in total a standard Q-methodological approach, , which first gathered data on the opinions of fourteen employees. Then in the second phase, five participants were selected based on voluntary interest, to discuss in more depth the reasoning for opinions of the whole sample group. Following these procedures an evaluation and cluster analysis was conducted to explain relationships between statements and general attitudinal themes. A definition of the situation arose from the initial Q-sort of employees' impressions of the workplace environment and the things that make it pleasurable. Then a more detailed examination of the situation was elicited from semi-structured interviews with select participants. Lastly the study defined effective environmental contributions to the workplace and the role of the employee as a contributor to the workplace through a cluster analysis.

McLean, Hurd and Jensen (2005) effectively used a Q methodology in a study of the professional workplace. In their study of the types of CEOs, a 13 by 13 Q-sort matrix was utilized to unveil three types of CEO, the practical CEO, the structured CEO, and the traditionalist CEO. Each type of CEO was assigned specific characteristics as outlined by the Q-sort statements. Similar to this study, the present study uses a Q-sort method to develop types of contributors to the workplace.

A study of the professional experiences of instructors within steel mill Career Development Programs by Robert Smith (2011) also included an interview approach. Twelve instructors were interviewed independently and three themes were derived from the dialogue. Paralleling these methods, this study includes semi-structured interviews along with the Q-sort in order to develop themes of the contributions to workplace positivity.

As noted by Ward (2010), the quantitative approach allows for the participants to determine what is meaningful, valuable and significant from their own perspectives, rather than

agreeing or disagreeing with the researcher. Through the use of a Q methodology, general

concepts in the workplace can be revealed and narrowed into specific themes. Emerging data of

this study is appropriately numerical and also viable for interpretation.

Procedure

The researcher has used a quantitative procedural design paired with the structuration

theoretical perspective to determine the contributions of a positive work environment. Methods

for completion of this study include three phases. In the first phase, a Likert-type questionnaire

was administered and completed by fourteen employees. According to Stacks (2011), "Likert-

type scales, also known as summated rating scales, are composed of a series of item statements

that are reacted to on a continuum of predestinated responses" (p.56). After the rating of all

statements, unique statements were defined in the analytical Q-sort to be discussed in greater

length with five volunteer employees. In the second phase, semi-structured interviews

concerning the Q-sort were conducted among five voluntary participants. Lastly, in the third

phase, a cluster analysis was conducted to attribute meaning to the statements made and themes

were derived.

With the intent of developing a usable typology of the contributors to the positive work

environment, Q-sorts and interviews have been evaluated. Q-sorts were completed in print and

gathered in person after three weeks. Semi-structured interviews were conducted by phone with

two participants, and via email with three participants. Interviews over the phone were audio

recorded, and kept on file for reference. Email files for interviews conducted via email were

saved to the researcher's personal computer for reference. This data was electronically

transcribed for ease of interpretation and was evaluated for employee descriptions and work

environment themes. A detailed description of the setting and employees was derived from the

data. The data was then analyzed through a cluster analysis for themes concerning elements of the positive work environment. Themes derived created an exemplary model of contributions to a positive work environment.

Evaluation of the data for this study paralleled that of previous studies considering the work environment and structuration theory. A study specific to workplace fun conducted by Simon Chan also utilized a three-phase approach. A pre-test was conducted to insure instrument validity, a focus group was interviewed to identify significant factors of workplace fun, interviews with ten human resource practitioners were conducted, and lastly a semi-structured survey compiled of a set of open-ended questions asked about participants' opinions on workplace fun (Chan, 2010, p. 722). These data were all evaluated through a ground theory approach of indicative reasoning to identify emergent themes. Resulting themes were catalogued into four "S's" of workplace fun, being *Staff*-oriented, *Supervisor*-oriented, *Strategy*-oriented, and *Social*-oriented workplace fun (Chan, 2010, p. 723). Similar themes were derived as a result of the three-phase methodology to be employed in this study.

Instrument

The quantitative data instrument for the first phase of this study was questionnaire. It was prefaced with a cover page and preliminary questionnaire. The cover page described the nature of the study, instructions and confidentiality agreement. Participants were required to apply a signature as informed consent to participate in the study. The preliminary questionnaire featured three questions to determine qualification for the study. These questions included inquiries about age, length of employment and job title. After completing these two pages, each participant rated twenty statements relating to their interpretation of a positive work environment. This part of the survey was presented in tunnel format, with a series of similarly organized questions. In rating

these statements they determined which factors contribute to a positive work environment and how they personally contribute to a positive work environment. Each statement was paired with a numerical Likert-type response scale and listed on a worksheet. According to Stacks (2011), "A typical Likert-type scale consists of several items, reacted on a 5-point scale – usually 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'neither disagree nor agree', 'agree', and 'strongly agree'" (p. 56). The present study follows accordingly, with each response being attributed a numerical value, responses including: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral or don't know (3), agree (4), or strongly agree (5). Respondents were asked to determine their level of agreement with each statement, circling one of the five responses.

After the first phase was completed, the researcher sorted statements to determine highest and lowest average scores of agreement. The highest and lowest scoring statements were used to guide and craft questions for the interview in the second phase of the study. Interview questions centered primarily around co-worker and boss relationships as well as social norms, influence of material contributors to the workplace and employees' personal contribution to the positive work environment.

In phase two, the researcher contacted participants who volunteered their further involvement in the study. Participants were contacted individually to schedule interviews as convenient for participants. Due to the scheduling interests of participants, two interviews were conducted over the phone, and three interviews were conducted via email. The researcher inquired about the statements previously categorized based on agreement or disagreement. These statement groups reflected the top agreements and top disagreements of all participants, according to the Q-sort.

The advantages of the Q-sort and moderately interview abound. In moderately structured interviews, researchers adhere to a standard set of questions in a predetermined order but also are allowed the freedom to probe for additional information in a more spontaneous manner (Frey, Botan, Friedman, & Kreps, 1992, p. 127). As information was gathered in the interviews, new questions were spawned and provided direction for the study. After the completion of semi-structured interviews, all data were evaluated in the third phase through a cluster analysis to develop main themes and a usable typology of the contributing factors to a positive work environment and employees' roles as agents in the organization.

According to Aldenderfer and Blashfield (1984), ""'Cluster analysis' is the generic name for a wide variety of procedures that can be used to create a classification. More specifically, a clustering method is a multivariate statistical procedure that starts with a data set containing information about a sample of entities and attempts to reorganize these entities into relatively homogeneous groups" (p.7). In phase three, the responses of participants were the serving entities that were organized by the researcher. These statements and responses to in-depth interviews guided grouping of participants into homogenous groups. The results of this cluster analysis serve as the usable typology of contributors to a positive professional work environment.

Participants

Baker, Thompson and Mannion (2006) note that sample sizes vary based on participant relation with the content (p. 40). Ward (2010) also suggests, "Q studies generally do not need a large sample of participants (as other methodologies require statistical power)". For this reason the target sample contained twenty employees, of which fourteen were obtained. Volunteered

employees completed a Likert scale questionnaire. Following, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five voluntary participants to elaborate on the sorting of Q-sort statements.

Participants included adult employees of BB&T, a large Southeast region financial institution. Eligible participants must have been employed with this organization for no less than one-year. Participants held various positions within the organization. To include various opinions of the contributing factors to a positive work environment, the study was open to participants of both genders. However, only 21.4% (N=3) were male and 78.6% (N=11) were female. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 63, with 7.1% (N=1) between ages 18 and 24, 14.3% (N=2) between ages 25 and 30, 35.7% (N=5) between ages 31 and 36, 35.7% (N=5) between ages 42 and 57, and 7.1% (N=1) between the ages of 57 and 63.

Participant Selection Procedure

A geographical cluster sampling method was used to recruit participants for the study. According to Land and Zheng (2010) in their text *Handbook of Survey Research*, "A cluster sampling design is used when the population can be divided into several relatively homogenous groups or clusters" (p.211). In this case, the population includes employees of BB&T and the clustered sample is geographically specific to banking establishments in the Lynchburg, VA area.

Participants were selected based on their volunteered interest in the study. The researcher contacted the Financial Center Leader (FCL) of BB&T in Lynchburg, VA, to issue a general invitation for employee participation in this study. After agreement to participate as an organization, an employee recruitment process began to accept volunteers for the study. An email was distributed to all employees from the FCL to notify them of the study and seek their participation. Consent forms and questionnaires were hand-delivered to the FCL for distribution

to, and completion by willing employees. At the end of three weeks, the forms were collected and evaluated for fulfillment of participation requirements. After statement of willingness to participate in follow-up interviews, each member of the population of interest was issued a personal invitation in person or via email to participate in an interview. Any questions were discussed via email or by face-to-face meeting.

Participant Anonymity and Confidentiality

This study did not ensure the anonymity of participants. The three-phase nature of this study included not only a questionnaire but also the opportunity to participate in follow-up interviews. Therefore, participants wishing to contribute to the study through a follow-up interview were asked to provide contact information. Upon willingness to participate in the study, employees of BB&T were notified that any contact information they provided would remain confidential. Each questionnaire was assigned a numerical code for evaluation. Those participating in both the questionnaire and follow-up interview maintained the same numerical code for discussion of results. All electronic files were kept secure by password protection on the researcher's personal computer. Print files were stored in a locked cabinet, to which only the primary researcher has keys. After a period of three years, all electronic and print data pertaining to this study will be destroyed.

Ethical Consideration

The primary researcher took careful measures to assure the ethical nature of this study. In accordance with federal law, permission to conduct this study was obtained from Liberty University and the Institutional Review Board (IRB). In both phases of participant involvement, instructions and consent forms were provided for participants. For the questionnaire a brief cover letter detailed instructions for the study and use of sealed envelopes to preserve confidentiality.

The consent form for the questionnaires detailed any risks involved, including recollection of personal relationships and workplace happenings, and provided participants with assurance of help for any psychological disturbances. The consent form also described potential for benefit to BB&T as an organization upon their consent of sharing data. Oral instructions and consent forms were also administered for the interview portion of the study. The consent form for the interview also outlined possible risks and benefits, and ensured confidentiality. As promised, the researcher maintained confidentiality of participants' identity and responses.

In summary, this study evaluated the contributing factors to a positive workplace environment. A three-phased quantitative model of Q-sort, semi-structured interviews, and cluster analysis evaluation for themes was employed. Fourteen employees of BB&T, a large Southeast region financial institution, were tested. Evaluation of data received resulted in the categorization of contributions to a positive work environment. The following chapter expounds on the results and findings of the aforementioned study.

CHAPHTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The phenomenon examined in the current study was evaluated through a three-phase model including a Q-sort, semi-structured interviews and cluster analysis evaluation for themes. Participants included individuals who had been employed with BB&T in the Lynchburg area for over a year and were over eighteen years of age. In this chapter, the findings of the study are discussed in light of the predefined research questions.

Phase One

In Phase One, data was gathered through the process and distribution of questionnaires. Data was calculated by traditional paper-and-pen survey administration. Volunteer response accrued fourteen of the anticipated twenty surveys. The sample included fourteen individuals of Caucasian 92.9% and African American ethnicity 7.1%. The majority of respondents were female 78.6%, with 21.4% being male. All participants were between ages 18 and 63. Job titles of participants varied from certified relationship banker, certified senior teller, financial center leader, investment counselor, mortgage loan officer, relationship banker, senior teller, teller, and teller supervisor.

To understand employees' perception of material and relational contributions to the workplace, they were asked to complete a Q-sort by rating twenty statements from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Questions concerning celebration of events, décor, food, gift giving, joking and humor, co-worker relationships, boss relationships, and the general professional work environment were presented.

Questions concerning celebration of events included the following (in order of appearance on questionnaire):

Celebration of Events

	N	Mean
Some people like to meet for events outside of work – but not me.	14	2
It's much more fun at work when everyone in the office is betting on the Super Bowl or NCAA tournament.	14	1.857
I feel valued by my company when they celebrate my birthday.	14	3.643

In response to the question, "Some people like to meet for events outside of work – but not me", participants indicated a strong disagreement with responses being strongly disagree 28.6% (N=4), disagree 50% (N=7), neutral or unsure 14.3% (N=2) and agree 7.1% (N=1). This indicates that employees do, in fact, enjoy meeting outside of the workplace to socialize. In response to the question, "It's much more fun at work when everyone in the office is betting on the Super Bowl or NCAA tournament", participants displayed a strong disagreement with responses being strongly disagree 50% (N=7), disagree 21.4% (N=3), neutral or unsure 21.4% (N=3) and agree 7.2% (N=1). The last question on celebration of events, "I feel valued by my company when they celebrate my birthday" earned a contrasting response with responses being strongly disagree 7.2% (N=1), neutral or unsure 35.7% (N=5), agree 35.7% (N=5), and strongly agree 21.4% (N=3). These results indicate a positive association with celebration of events as a material contribution to the workplace. Employees indicate they are fond of celebrations at work as well as outside work. However their interest in participating in contests may not be as strong. Questions concerning décor included the following:

Décor

	N	Mean
I try to decorate my personal workspace to lighten the mood.	14	3.571
The way my workplace is decorated influences my satisfaction on the job.	14	2.642

A majority of participants 57.1% (N=8) indicated that they do try to personally contribute

to the positivity of a workspace through décor. Other participants remained neutral or unsure

28.6% (N=4), or did not make an effort to decorate 14.3% (N=2). This indicates a generally

positive association with décor as a positive contributor to the professional work environment.

While employees prefer to decorate their workspace, it does not necessarily influence the

employee's satisfaction with work. In fact, most participants 42.9% (N=6) indicated that décor

has no influence on their satisfaction at work, 35.7% (N=5) were neutral or unsure, and only a

small percentage 21.4% (N=3) agreed.

Questions concerning food included the following:

Food

	N	Mean
Having coffee at work improves my attitude about work.	14	2.786
I try to bring happiness to the workplace by bringing food to share.	14	3.357

Several respondents 35.7% (N=5) indicated that coffee is not necessarily an easy way to

improve attitude at work. Another 35.7% (N=5) were indifferent, neutral or unsure about the

influence of coffee and 28.6% (N=4) agreed that coffee does have the power to improve attitude.

While this suggests food and snacks may not have particular influence over mood at work, this

may merely be distaste for coffee. On average, employees are also fairly indifferent toward

personally bringing food to work to share. In fact, 35.7% (N=5) were neutral or unsure toward

bringing food to work. Another 21.4% (N=3) of respondents expressed that they do not bring

happiness to work by bringing food to share, but 42.9% (N=6) agreed that they do bring food to

work to create a positive atmosphere.

Questions concerning gift giving included:

Gift Giving

	N	Mean
I show my fellow employees I care by giving them small gifts.	14	3.286

Following the trend concerning material contributions to the positive work environment, employees indicated opposing views on gift giving in the workplace. Several participants 21.4% (N=3) signified that they do not show care for employees through gift giving. Many participants 35.7% (N=5) were neutral or unsure about gift giving, but a large number of participants 42.9% (N=6) indicated that they would give gifts in the workplace.

Questions concerning joking and humor included the following:

Joking and Humor

	N	Mean
I like it when people play pranks at work.	14	3.571
Work is not a place for "cutting up".	14	2.929

Joking at work was met with a surprising support from employees. Only 7.1% (N=1) of participants noted that they do not like it when employees play pranks at work. The remainder of participants were either neutral or unsure about pranks at work 28.6% (N=4) or agreed that they enjoyed pranking at work 64.3% (N=9). In agreement with this finding, participants 50% (N=7) generally disagreed with the statement "Work is not a place for 'cutting up'". Other participants were either neutral or unsure 14.3% (N=2), disagreed 14.3% (N=2) or strongly disagreed 21.4% (N=3).

Questions concerning co-worker relationships included the following:

Co-worker Relationships

	N	Mean
Caring and sharing are as much a part of the workplace as home.	14	4.429
It is normal for people at work to socialize throughout the day.	14	4.143
I have good friends at work.	14	4.357
I don't need friendships at work to be an effective worker.	14	2.857

An overwhelming support for co-worker relationships as a positive contributor to the

professional work environment was displayed among the responses to questions on the subject.

Apart from the 7.1% (N=1) neutral or unsure response, a majority of participants 92.9% (N=13)

indicated that caring and sharing are an important part of the professional work environment.

Socializing at work was also supported with only 21.4% (N=3) neutral or unsure responses and

78.6% (N=11) participants agreeing that it is normal for people to socialize while on the job.

Most participants 92.9% (N=13) also indicated that they experience strong friendships at work,

with only 7.1% (N=1) of respondents noting neutral or unsure responses about having good

friends at work. However, despite support for co-worker friendships, employees seemed to

present that co-worker friendships did not necessarily strongly influence effectiveness as a

worker. In response to the statement, "I don't need friendships at work to be an effective

worker", opinions were scattered as 21.4% (N=3) strongly disagreed, 21.4% disagreed (N=3),

21.4% were neutral or unsure (N=3), 21.4% (N=3) agreed, and 14.4% strongly agreed (N=2).

Questions concerning boss relationships included the following:

Boss Relationships

	N	Mean
My boss cares about my feelings toward my work.	14	4.571
My boss makes work miserable for me.	14	1.214
My job would be so much better if my boss acted differently.	14	1.714

The role of the boss was described with great positivity according to response from the

questionnaire. All participants 100% (N=14) agreed or strongly agreed that their boss cares about

their feelings toward work. Similarly, all participants 100% (N=14) disagreed that their boss

makes work miserable for them. Indicating a positive relationship with the boss as a positive

factor in the professional work environment. Lastly, participants indicated that in general, there

is no need for change in boss' actions to make the workplace more positive. Most participants

78.6% (N=11) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "my job would be so much

better if my boss acted differently", only 7.1% (N=1) were neutral and 14.3% (N=2) agreed with

the statement.

Several questions in the questionnaire were geared to determine the atmosphere of the

professional work environment and employees' feelings about the work environment in general.

These questions included:

Environment

	N	Mean
I feel a sense of dread when I walk through the front door of my workplace.	14	1.5
I'm not worried about the security of my job.	14	3.357

An encouraging response was displayed with regard to the environment of the

professional workplace and job security at BB&T. Every participant 100% (N=14), showed that

they do not feel a sense of dread when walking into work each day. When asked about job

security, only 28.6% (N=4) indicated worry, while 28.6% (N=4) were neutral or unsure, and

42.9% (N=6) seemed secure in their position with BB&T.

Research Question One

The first research question presented asks, "What factors of a positive work environment

are displayed in the offices of a financial institution?" This question was directly answered

through the response of participants to the Q-sort instrument in phase one. Upon rating these

statements on a Likert-type scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree, significant averages

and totals indicate the most prominent contributions to a positive work environment. Based

purely on average calculation of responses the most significant contributions to the positive work

environment are relationally based.

Q-Sort Statements

Statement	Mean
3. My boss cares about my feelings toward my work.	4.57
10. Caring and sharing are as much a part of the workplace as home.	4.43
13. I have good friends at work.	4.36
11. It is normal for people at work to socialize throughout the day.	4.14
8. When my co-workers bring food to work to share it makes the day better.	3.71
20. I feel valued by my company when they celebrate my birthday.	3.64
2. I try to decorate my personal workspace to lighten the mood.	3.57
6. I like it when people play pranks at work.	3.57
16. I try to bring happiness to the workplace by bringing food to share.	3.36
18. I'm not worried about the security of my job.	3.36
5. I show my fellow employees I care by giving them small gifts.	3.29
9. Work is not a place for "cutting up".	2.93
19. I don't need friendships at work to be an effective worker.	2.86
1. Having coffee at work improves my attitude about work.	2.79
14. The way my workplace is decorated influences my satisfaction on the job.	2.64
4. Some people like to meet for events outside of work – but not me.	2.00
17. It's much more fun at work when everyone in the office is betting on the Super Bowl or NCAA tournament.	1.86
15. My job would be so much better if my boss acted differently.	1.71
7. I feel a sense of dread when I walk through the front door of my workplace.	1.50
12. My boss makes work miserable for me.	1.21

The most profound statements resulting from the Q-sort are the top five statements and bottom

five statements. The polarization of these statements signifies themes of congeniality and

friendship in the workplace among co-workers and bosses. According to average scores, material

contributions such as food, décor and celebration of events fall into a more neutral category. The

only contribution to the work environment that received overwhelmingly negative response was

celebration of events through employee competition involving the NCAA or Super Bowl.

Therefore it can be assumed that all other contributions, including material contributions such as

other celebration of events, décor, food, gift giving and joking and humor are at least somewhat

present in the professional work environment. In addition, it can be determined that relational

contributions such as co-worker and boss relationships are very important as well. However,

upon a closer look at weighting of scores, it appears that some contributions, both material and

relational are significantly more profound than others. This answers the second research

question.

Research Question Two

The second research question presented was, "Which factors of a positive work

environment are preferred among employees?" The weighting of Q-sort response indicates a

majority response on several statements.

Majority Statements

Statement	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
3. My boss cares about my feelings toward my work.	0	0	14
10. Caring and sharing are as much a part of the workplace as home.	0	4	10
13. I have good friends at work.	0	1	13
11. It is normal for people at work to socialize throughout the day.	0	3	11
8. When my co-workers bring food to work to share it makes the day better.	0	1	13
20. I feel valued by my company when they celebrate my birthday.	1	4	9
2. I try to decorate my personal workspace to lighten the mood.	1	5	8
6. I like it when people play pranks at work.	2	4	8

This data reiterates the finding that relational contributions to the positive work environment are incredibly important. In addition, support is shown for material contributions such as food, celebration of birthdays, décor in the personal workspace and joking at work. This indicates a substantial indication that some material contributions are indeed preferred among employees.

The completion of Q-sort questionnaires was followed by semi-structured interviews with volunteer participants. The following section of results details this process.

Phase Two

In phase two, semi-structured interviews were conducted via phone and email to discover a richer picture of the positive professional work environment. Interview questions were developed based on groupings of statements provided from the Q-sort. The Q-sort provided polarizations of statements with which participants most agreed and most disagreed. The top five statements for agree and disagree were determined based on averages and used to form interview questions for follow-up interviews. These statements were as follows:

Agree

	N	Mean
1. My boss cares about my feelings toward my work.	14	4.57
2. Caring and sharing are as much a part of the workplace as home.	14	3.71
3. I have good friends at work.	14	4.43
4. It is normal for people at work to socialize throughout the day.	14	4.14
5. When my co-workers bring food to work to share it makes the day better.	14	4.36

Disagree

	N	Mean
5. Some people like to meet for events outside of work – but not me.	14	2
4. It's much more fun at work when everyone in the office is betting on the Super Bowl or NCAA tournament.	14	1.86
3. My job would be so much better if my boss acted differently.	14	1.71
2. I feel a sense of dread when I walk through the front door of my workplace.	14	1.5
1. My boss makes work miserable for me.	14	1.21

The interviews were semi-structured. Therefore, seven basic questions were developed and followed with questions adapted to the interviewees' responses. Seven framework questions were established including:

1. *It appears that employees at BB&T are very satisfied with their relationships at work. Can you personally attest to this? Explain.*

2. *Do you think BB&T's training programs and overall mission as on organization contribute to your happiness as an employee? How so or not so?*

3. *What type of influence do you think food, decor and celebration of events have in your workplace? Explain.*

4. *Would you say that having a strong relationship with your boss and co-workers is more important that having food or a visually comfortable working space?*

5. *Do you feel there are social norms at your workplace? For instance, are there particularly normal patterns of behavior people abide by?*

6. *How do you feel you personally contribute to the positivity of your work environment?*

7. *Do you feel you contribute resources, or material things like food, decorations, or party supplies? Or do you feel you contribute more relationally with a positive attitude and friendship?*

The workplace structure formed by employees of BB&T mirrors that of the typical structure described through structuration theory. This is reflected in employees' response to questions concerning rules and resources of the professional work environment existent at BB&T. The contributions to the structure and positivity of this work environment seem to be governed not only by material resources and contributions by individuals but also the interworking of specifically relational rules among employees.

Relationships at Work

An overwhelming support was displayed for the role of positive relationships in the workplace. All interviewees explained an agreement that their personal relationships in the workplace are very strong. In addition they agreed that it seemed relationships between other employees were very positive. Participant 002 noted, "The associates at this branch do have good relationships with each other. Everyone here has come to the realization that the days go much smoother when we have positive attitudes and work together."

It was even described that compatibility with the organizational culture is considered in the hiring process. Participant 006 described, "When a person is interviewed for a job, the

manager looks for someone they feel will fit in with their team." These positive worker

relationships are a formation of structure developed by employees who are willing to help each

other with work tasks. As participant 013 explained, "We're always helping each other out. It

doesn't make any difference whether it's the branch manager, or the teller that has just come on

board, we all work together as a team." Employees hold an understanding of the duties required

from each other and a rule to help in time of need is set to enable an efficient structure that

produces results in each branch. This norm undoubtedly results in the contentment of workers

and their feelings of inclusion.

Co-worker and Boss Relationships

When asked to elaborate on relationships with co-workers and boss figures, all

participants indicated that having positive relationships in the workplace outweighs having any

kind of material incentives. Participant 002 agreed, "Good working relationships are the most

important aspect of the workplace. If co-workers do not get along then the food and décor do no

good." Material contributions to the positive work environment were seen more as a bonus to an

existing positive environment than a prerequisite for satisfaction in the workplace. As described

by participant 009, "For me people are more important than having decorations. That's a bonus,

having coffee, that's a bonus. But relationships with people, that's the priority. With my boss,

my team, my co-workers, that's most important." Agreeing with this idea, participant 008 also

notes, "Having a positive relationship with my boss and co-workers helps me through the work

day, but having a comfortable work space is great too." These responses indicate that relational

contributions to the work environment are a priority, but the material contributions can influence

workplace positivity when acting as a supplement.

BB&T Training and Positivity at Work

As aforementioned, BB&T has developed an organizational strategy described in their media kit as maintaining excellence through their hometown appeal and focusing not only on clients but also employees, the community and shareholders (*BB&T News Media Kit,* 2011, p. 3). The effectiveness of this strategy was confirmed in interviews with employees. Participant 009 praised BB&T stating, "BB&T has one of the best training programs that I have experienced. I highly regard their training program, and it doesn't end there, they do a great job keeping us up to date on different approaches and ways we can help our clients." The structure established by agents within BB&T is proven to trickle down from corporate level strategy to individual banking establishment execution. Participant 008 also describes the organizations goals with regard to employees and clients stating, "I believe their mission is to keep their employees happy, and they'll do whatever it takes to keep someone with BB&T, but at the same time, their missions are to keep clients happy and that is what our training is about." Support for BB&T's training program resounded in all interviews, as employees described their satisfaction with the opportunities provided. Participant 006 described, "They are willing to train you in any aspect of the banking industry that you want to go into. If you don't want to move up the ladder they don't push you, but they offer any kind of advancement programs you might be interested in. They are very, very helpful." This adherence to corporate mission appears to be benefitting BB&T as an organization by creating a sustainably positive work environment for employees.

Rules/ Social Norms

In addition to corporate mission, structures have been created on a smaller scale within individual banking establishments. The theory of structuration rests on the employment of rules and resources by agents to create structure. Rules are "guidelines, whether 'official' or learned

through experience that guide people's actions" (Hoffman and Cowman 207). In an effort to discover rules existent among employees at BB&T and their relationship to the positive professional work environment, employees were asked to describe any social norms or rules that they see or experience in their workplace. Participant 002 described, "There are social norms in the workplace that people follow each day. Common courtesy and manners are used a majority of the time when working with others. We try to leave all outside issues at the door and make the branch a positive work environment." One participant noted the coming together of both rules and resources saying, "We all speak when we arrive, usually chit chat about something and head to the coffee pot." The social norms, rules and patterns of behavior described by participants paralleled their general feelings about relationships as a large factor in the positive work environment. All participants expressed an expectation for co-workers to acknowledge them in friendly conversation; this has apparently become part of the involving structure prevalent in the branches of BB&T banking establishments.

Resources/ Material Contributions

After examining the most significant statements from the Q-sort, there was a distinct insignificance of statements regarding the material contributions to the work environment including celebration of events, décor, food and gift giving. For this reason the researcher sought to inquire about the role of material contributions in the workplace or the lack thereof.

Employees reported that the most significant material contributions to a positive work environment were celebrations of events in the workplace and incentives provided by BB&T as an organization. Participant 009 discussed the unique celebration of events explaining, "In my particular branch, we do celebrate different holidays and birthdays. We spend so much time with our co-workers throughout the year they become part of our family." This participant went on to

discuss a specific example of a baby shower thrown by employees of multiple branches for one particular employee. A participant from a different branch also elaborated, "Whoevers birthday it is for that particular month… we'll bring in covered dishes or something like that. Or bring in a birthday cake for them. That particular person doesn't have to bring in anything but themselves." The celebration of events remained the most distinct material contribution among employees. Also addressed was the significant material contributions made for employees by the organization.

The employees of BB&T seem to enjoy what extends beyond contributions by individuals in the business, and crosses into actual organizational policy. Participant 013 stated, "At times we celebrate a Branch goal reached, Teller Appreciation Week, hard work or just because with lunch or desert. Our staff loves this and I think it boosts morale." Participant 013 described a specific instance, noting, "They rewarded us last Thursday with a presidential award dinner. We were able to go to the civic center and they catered dinner for all of us." Another example of material contributions by BB&T was that of stock sharing. Participant 013 also described, "Depending on how many years you're here of if you're part or full time, you'll get so many dollars worth of shares in BB&T stock." Incentives from BB&T are numerous and participant 009 explained,

> Our corporate office has done a really great job trying to find out what motivates their employees. Last year, they did their own survey on what encourages and motivates us as employees… This year part of our bonus was that we get our birthday off. We don't have to count it as vacation time. It's just an extra day we can take. BB&T is definitely adapting to try to keep employees happy and motivate them, and that creates a loyalty and a better atmosphere for where you work when you know that your company cares.

Several participants indicated that they enjoy the material contributions to the work environment, but they do not believe these contributions directly influence work performance or satisfaction. Participant 008 presented this opinion stating, "Of course it gets us all excited and happy, but at the same time, it doesn't make a difference in how we do our work. Decoration makes our clients more excited than us." An additional participant expressed this view, explaining that material contributions are not a personal preference, but they still hold power. This participant noted, "For me personally, it's not a huge deal, but for other associates, this is very important. Food, décor and celebrations can boost team morale and make everyone feel more appreciated. BB&T does an outstanding job with this by having events throughout the year." Certainly personality types and professional roles in the workplace present variables when examining support for all contributions to a positive work environment. It can be noted based on response from interviews that birthdays and corporate events are among the top material contributions though these contributions are not as influential as relational contributions.

Personal Contributions

After considering the role of relational and material contributions to the positive work environment, it is important to investigate the role of the individual within the workplace structure. Individuals adhere to rules and present resources in the professional workplace structure. Therefore identification of individual contributions both material and relationally is of interest.

A balance between those who contribute relationally and materially was evident through data collected in interviews. Those in higher positions of management (financial center leader, teller supervisor) interestingly described their contributions as more material. Participant 002 explained, "I do recognize associates for doing well, by providing breakfast or lunch, bringing

candy or other snacks." Participant 009 agreed, "Because of my role, I contribute more materially, by doing the leg-work. I organize events and chip in financially." It was described that a careful balance must be achieved between work relationships and professionalism. Therefore, for an employee in a managerial position, it is often simpler to contribute materially.

Otherwise, employees reinforced the idea that relational contributions are stronger in a professional work environment through their personal example. Participant 006 described, "I contribute more with relationships, positive attitude, and friendships. I am a positive person and look for good in everyone. I like to laugh and joke with my co-workers." Participant 013 also noted, "I think I'm more relational… I always try to be a positive role model for everybody else and be an encouragement. I think that seems to rub off on my co-workers and even my bosses here." Respondents described their desire to maintain a positive attitude and influence others in the same direction. Strategies used to maintain this relational positivity included promoting friendly conversation, joking, and demonstrating interest in the lives of co-workers.

The role of gender was also evident in the data provided in interviews. A majority, 80% (N=4) of the voluntary participants for interview were female. The male participant described, "Being the only male in an office of seven other females could be a reason for me not being as big of a cheerleader. I contribute more by providing resources. Again, I think it has to do with me being a male." This would indicate that gender might serve as a significant variable when considering the effectiveness of material versus relational contributions to the work environment.

Research Question One

Interviews of volunteer participants allowed for a unique look at the additional factors involved in the positive professional work environment. This qualitative data supplements the quantitative findings in phase one. Again, research question one asks, "What factors of a positive

work environment are displayed in the Southwest regional offices of a BB&T financial

institution?" Through the involvement of participants in interviews, a new category of incentives

provided by the organization was introduced. Employees described corporate events, payment

incentives, time bonus incentives, and stock options, among other incentives.

Participants 002, 008 and 013 all mentioned a presidential award dinner employees of the

Lynchburg region were able to attend due to excellent performance. Participant 013 stated, "We

were able to go to the civic center and they catered dinner for all of us". In addition, participant

002 described events held by the organization stating, "BB&T does an outstanding job with this

by having events throughout the year such as Teller and Relationship Banker Appreciation

Week, award luncheons and dinners, birthday celebrations, Christmas parties, and other events

called 'celebrate more'". BB&T employees viewed these corporate events very fondly.

In interviews, employees specifically mentioned the celebration of birthdays not only on

the personal level with each branch, but also on the corporate level. Participant 009 noted, "This

year part of our bonus was that we get our birthday off, we don't have to count it as vacation

time. It's just an extra day we can take." Also expressing enthusiasm for this year's incentive

was participant 013 stating, "This year is the 140th birthday of the company, so they're all

employees their birthday off with pay." Understandably, employees met this incentive offer from

BB&T with great acceptance.

Another incentive described by participants was that of stock options. Participant 013

explained, "Depending on how many years you're here, and if you're part time or full time,

you'll get so many dollars worth of shares in BB&T stock." This trend is not only seen at BB&T

but is an emerging method for enhancing motivation and performance among employees in an

increasing number of firms (Kraizberg, Tziner, and Weisberg, 2002, p.384). These findings

outline several new contributions to a positive work environment not considered or discovered in the quantitative data collection.

Research Question Two

A further analysis of data emerging from interviews reveals more keenly the contributions to a positive work environment that employees prefer. This directly answers the second research question, "Which factors of a positive work environment are preferred among employees?" During the interviews, employees were asked "Would you say that having a strong relationship with your boss and co-workers is more important that having food or a visually comfortable working space?" and "How do you feel you personally contribute to the positivity of your work environment?" These questions lend a direct insight to the contributions employees tend to prefer.

In response to the question, "Would you say that having a strong relationship with your boss and co-workers is more important that having food or a visually comfortable working space?" 80% (N=4) of participants indicated that they believed relationships with bosses and co-workers were more important than any influence that could be made materially. Participant 002 explained, "Good working relationships are the most important aspect of the workplace. If co-workers do not get along then the food and décor do no good." This indicates that relational contributions such as friendliness and cooperation are more preferable to employees than material incentives.

When asked, "How do you feel you personally contribute to the positivity of your work environment?" employees responded in a variety of ways, indicating a personal preference of expression in the workplace. The 60% (N=3) majority of participants indicated that they felt they contributed more relationally to their work environment. Participant 006 stated, "I contribute

more with relationships, positive attitude and friendships." Participant 013 also described, "I

think I'm more relational, because I've had several, even clients say that I'm always the

strongest, my faith is the strongest I'll get through anything no matter what obstacle comes my

way." The remaining 40% (N=2) explained that they contributed relationally but felt their

material contributions outweighed the relational. Participant 002 elaborated, "I contribute more

by providing resources. Again, I think it has to do with me being a male. I do feel like I have a

level of friendship with every person in this branch and no one is intimidated by me." Another

participant explained the complex role of a manager, noting that it is easier to maintain a

professional boundary when contributing more materially through bringing food or paying for

decorations for events. This lends an interesting perspective concerning preference for

contributions to the positive work environment.

The material and relational contributions described in the data gathered give a detailed

analysis of what truly makes a professional workplace a positive environment. Through a cluster

analysis, themes have been derived to outline a usable typology of the contributors to the positive

work environment. The following is a description of the third phase of the study: analysis and

findings.

Phase Three

Phase three serves as a trending interpretation of the data gathered. A cluster analysis was

conducted to determine similarities of responses among participants and place participants into

four homogenous groups. Data was analyzed for correlations in answers provided by

participants. Grouping of like-minded respondents resulted in four distinct clusters (see

Appendix F). The primary researcher then developed names for these clusters as identification

for their preference of contributions to the positive work environment. Therefore a usable

typology of the contributors to a positive work environment was developed.

The following is a description and analysis of the four resulting clusters. Each table of top

statements indicates the statements most agreed upon by members of that cluster with (1) being

most agreed and (3) being least agreed. Each table of bottom statements indicates the statements

most disagreed with by members of the cluster with (3) being least disagreed and (1) being most

disagreed. An analysis of these significant statements separates each cluster as a unique entity.

Cluster 1: Caring Confidants

Top Statements

1	Caring and sharing are as much a part of the workplace as home.
2	I have good friends at work.
3	I try to decorate my personal workspace to lighten the mood.
	My boss cares about my feelings toward my work.
	It is normal for people at work to socialize throughout the day.

Bottom Statements

3	Having coffee at work improves my attitude about work.
	It's much more fun at work when everyone in the office is betting on the Super Bowl or NCAA tournament.
2	My job would be so much better if my boss acted differently.
1	My boss makes work miserable for me.
	I feel a sense of dread when I walk through the front door of my workplace.

The *Caring Confidants* are employees within the organization that seek quality friendship

in the workplace. These individuals are not as excited about having food or competitions and

events at work, but more concerned with the daily building of strong relationships with co-

workers. It is likely that these participants would agree with the recurring theme in interviews

that co-workers are like a second family. As participant 013 indicated, "It boils down to a more

family oriented workplace, because these are types of things you would do with your family."

Participant 002 stated, "Your co-workers are truly a 'second family'". Participant 009 added,

"We're like a family. It's definitely more than just a working relationship for all of us." This

demonstrates the desire employees have to show care for fellow employees and offer genuine

friendship. Often this companionship extends to a level comparable to family relationships.

Cluster2: Jubilant Jesters

Top Statements

1	I try to decorate my personal workspace to lighten the mood.
	My boss cares about my feelings toward my work.
	Caring and sharing are as much a part of the workplace as home.
	It is normal for people at work to socialize throughout the day.
2	I like it when people play pranks at work
	I have good friends at work.

Bottom Statements

2	I'm not worried about the security of my job.
	It's much more fun at work when everyone in the office is betting on the Super Bowl or NCAA tournament.
1	Work is not a place for "cutting up".
	I don't need friendships at work to be an effective worker.
	My boss makes work miserable for me.
	Some people like to meet for events outside of work, but not me.

The *Jubilant Jesters* are the employees within the organization that support a climate of

friendship while embracing the fun that can be had at work. These people are not afraid to play

pranks and tell jokes while working. *Jubilant Jesters* may be seen planning events for co-

workers outside of work or printing photos to display in their office space. In this way they

contribute resources to the positive work environment. Though they pay special attention to the

material contributions that can be made to the workplace, they do not neglect the exceptional role

of friendship. These workers are likely to support the common theme found in interviews, that

laughing and joking are an easy way for workers to contribute individually to the positive work

environment. One participant falling into this cluster noted, "I try to keep everyone laughing if

possible." A different participant explained, "I like to laugh and joke with my co-workers".

Maintaining a sense of light-hearted jubilance makes these workers happy and fulfills their desire

to see others having a good time at work.

Cluster 3: Pleasant Partiers

Top Statements

1	I feel valued by my company when they celebrate my birthday.
	It is normal for people at work to socialize throughout the day.
	Caring and sharing are as much a part of the workplace as home.
2	My boss cares about my feelings toward my work.
	I show my fellow employees I care by giving them small gifts.
	When my co-workers bring food to work to share it makes the day better.
	I have good friends at work
	I try to bring happiness to the workplace by bringing food to share.

Bottom Statements

2	I don't need friendships at work to be an effective worker.
	I'm not worried about the security of my job.
	It's much more fun at work when everyone in the office is betting on the Super Bowl or NCAA tournament.
	I feel a sense of dread when I walk through the front door of my workplace.
1	The way my workplace is decorated influences my satisfaction on the job.
	My boss makes work miserable for me.
	Work is not a place for "cutting up".

Pleasant Partiers are those that see the value in celebration of events like birthdays.

Someone in this cluster might place a great emphasis on organizing and attending a birthday

celebration. They may also bring gifts to co-workers "just because" or as a pick-me-up. They see

a path to friendship through the material, often including bringing food to work or enjoying food

brought by others. They are typically happy to be at work and seek friendship and a social

environment while there. Participant 009 described a role as a *Pleasant Partier* explaining, "If I

see someone in need or that they're having a rough time, I want to be sure they have an amazing

birthday. I might bring them a box of chocolates as a pick-me-up. I like to bake, so I may bring

in something like cinnamon rolls. Throughout the year I do those things." All participants

mentioned celebrations in the workplace during interviews and several reported gift-giving and

enjoyment of parties on the questionnaire. However several participants distinctly spoke of their

individual contributions to the workplace in the form of party planning and gift giving, thus

placing them in the *Pleasant Partiers* cluster.

Cluster 4: Meaningful Managers

Top Statements

1	My boss cares about my feelings toward my work.
	I have good friends at work.
2	I like it when people play pranks at work.
	Caring and sharing are as much a part of the workplace as home.
	I feel valued by my company when they celebrate my birthday.

Bottom Statements

3	It's much more fun at work when everyone in the office is betting on the Super Bowl or NCAA tournament.
	I feel a sense of dread when I walk through the front door of my workplace.
2	Some people like to meet for events outside of work -- but not me.
	My job would be so much better if my boss acted differently.
1	My boss makes work miserable for me.

Those that fall into the *Meaningful Managers* cluster place a great emphasis on the role

of management in the workplace. While celebrations and pranking are among the things these

people enjoy, relationships with management and co-workers are top priority. These people are

highly attentive to the relationship they have with their boss and co-workers and enjoy spending

time fostering these relationships. One participant described a relationship with a boss, "He's a

great leader and I feel like he values me as an employee and in turn I want to work to be sure that

I am meeting the expectations of me." One participant also mentioned the involvement of

management in the creation of a positive work environment stating, "When a person is

interviewed for a job, the manager looks for someone they feel will fit in with their team." The

relationships with other workers and specifically management are a vital part of the positive

work environment for the *Meaningful Managers.*

Research Question One: What factors of a positive work environment are displayed in the

Southwest regional offices of a BB&T financial institution?

In each cluster, testimony is made to the presence of certain types of contributions to the

work environment. In response to research question one, "What factors of a positive work

environment are displayed in the Southwest regional offices of a BB&T financial institution?"

the role of both material and relational contributions to the work environment are evident.

Caring Confidants Statements

	Mean
7. I feel a sense of dread when I walk through the front door of my workplace.	1.3
12. My boss makes work miserable for me.	1.3
15. My job would be so much better if my boss acted differently.	1.7
1. Having coffee at work improves my attitude about work.	2.0
17. It's much more fun at work when everyone in the office is betting on the Super Bowl or NCAA tournament.	2.0
4. Some people like to meet for events outside of work – but not me.	2.7
20. I feel valued by my company when they celebrate my birthday.	2.7
6. I like it when people play pranks at work.	3.0
16. I try to bring happiness to the workplace by bringing food to share.	3.0
5. I show my fellow employees I care by giving them small gifts.	3.3
14. The way my workplace is decorated influences my satisfaction on the job.	3.3
18. I'm not worried about the security of my job.	3.3
19. I don't need friendships at work to be an effective worker.	3.3
8. When my co-workers bring food to work to share it makes the day better.	3.7
9. Work is not a place for "cutting up".	3.7
2. I try to decorate my personal workspace to lighten the mood.	4.0
3. My boss cares about my feelings toward my work.	4.0
11. It is normal for people at work to socialize throughout the day.	4.0
13. I have good friends at work.	4.3
10. Caring and sharing are as much a part of the workplace as home.	4.7

Based on an analysis of the quantitative data, the participants of cluster one, the *Caring Confidants,* are not necessarily interested in coffee or betting on sports. In addition they are indifferent toward pranking, gift giving, food in the workplace, and décor. These contributions are the less significant factors for members of the *Caring Confidants* cluster, as their focus remains on the relational aspects involved in the positive work environment.

Jubilant Jesters Statements

	Mean
4. Some people like to meet for events outside of work – but not me.	1.5
9. Work is not a place for "cutting up".	1.5
12. My boss makes work miserable for me.	1.5
19. I don't need friendships at work to be an effective worker.	1.5
1. Having coffee at work improves my attitude about work.	2.0
7. I feel a sense of dread when I walk through the front door of my workplace.	2.0
17. It's much more fun at work when everyone in the office is betting on the Super Bowl or NCAA tournament.	2.0
18. I'm not worried about the security of my job.	2.0
5. I show my fellow employees I care by giving them small gifts.	2.5
15. My job would be so much better if my boss acted differently.	2.5
20. I feel valued by my company when they celebrate my birthday.	3.0
8. When my co-workers bring food to work to share it makes the day better.	3.5
14. The way my workplace is decorated influences my satisfaction on the job.	3.5
16. I try to bring happiness to the workplace by bringing food to share.	3.5
6. I like it when people play pranks at work.	4.0
13. I have good friends at work.	4.0
2. I try to decorate my personal workspace to lighten the mood.	4.5
3. My boss cares about my feelings toward my work.	4.5
10. Caring and sharing are as much a part of the workplace as home.	4.5
11. It is normal for people at work to socialize throughout the day.	4.5

The *Jubilant Jesters* demonstrate their satisfaction in having time to joke at work. In addition they signify relationships as being important and show an inclination for decorating and enjoying food at work. Less significant to the *Jubilant Jesters* are the acts of gift giving and celebration of birthdays.

Pleasant Partiers Statements

	Mean
9. Work is not a place for "cutting up".	1.5
12. My boss makes work miserable for me.	1.5
14. The way my workplace is decorated influences my satisfaction on the job.	1.5
7. I feel a sense of dread when I walk through the front door of my workplace.	2.0
17. It's much more fun at work when everyone in the office is betting on the Super Bowl or NCAA tournament.	2.0
18. I'm not worried about the security of my job.	2.0
19. I don't need friendships at work to be an effective worker.	2.0
2. I try to decorate my personal workspace to lighten the mood.	2.5
4. Some people like to meet for events outside of work – but not me.	2.5
15. My job would be so much better if my boss acted differently.	3.0
1. Having coffee at work improves my attitude about work.	3.5
6. I like it when people play pranks at work.	3.5
3. My boss cares about my feelings toward my work.	4.0
5. I show my fellow employees I care by giving them small gifts.	4.0
8. When my co-workers bring food to work to share it makes the day better.	4.0
13. I have good friends at work.	4.0
16. I try to bring happiness to the workplace by bringing food to share.	4.0
10. Caring and sharing are as much a part of the workplace as home.	4.5
11. It is normal for people at work to socialize throughout the day.	4.5
20. I feel valued by my company when they celebrate my birthday.	4.5

The *Pleasant Partiers* do not demonstrate neutrality on many statements. For this reason it would appear that all contributions to the positive work environment, whether material or relational, are evident to the participants in this cluster. The *Pleasant Partiers* show greatest satisfaction in celebration of birthdays, maintaining friendships, and having food at work. Much less influence is placed on the role of décor in the work environment for the *Pleasant Partiers*.

Meaningful Managers Statements

	Mean
12. My boss makes work miserable for me.	1.0
15. My job would be so much better if my boss acted differently.	1.0
4. Some people like to meet for events outside of work – but not me.	1.5
7. I feel a sense of dread when I walk through the front door of my workplace.	1.5
17. It's much more fun at work when everyone in the office is betting on the Super Bowl or NCAA tournament.	2.0
19. I don't need friendships at work to be an effective worker.	2.5
16. I try to bring happiness to the workplace by bringing food to share.	3.0
5. I show my fellow employees I care by giving them small gifts.	3.5
11. It is normal for people at work to socialize throughout the day.	3.5
14. The way my workplace is decorated influences my satisfaction on the job.	3.5
1. Having coffee at work improves my attitude about work.	4.0
2. I try to decorate my personal workspace to lighten the mood.	4.0
8. When my co-workers bring food to work to share it makes the day better.	4.0
9. Work is not a place for "cutting up".	4.0
18. I'm not worried about the security of my job.	4.0
6. I like it when people play pranks at work.	4.5
10. Caring and sharing are as much a part of the workplace as home.	4.5
20. I feel valued by my company when they celebrate my birthday.	4.5
3. My boss cares about my feelings toward my work.	5.0
13. I have good friends at work.	5.0

For the *Meaningful Managers,* the greatest influence in the positive work environment is shown to be the role of management. In addition these employees tend to enjoy most material contributions to the work environment, including having food at work, use of décor, joking and pranking, and celebration of events. The testimony of the *Meaningful Manager* indicates the presence of both material and relational contributions in the positive professional work environment.

Research Question Two: Which Factors Of A Positive Work Environment Are Preferred Among Employees?

Despite the general presence of both material and relational contributions, the cluster analysis in phase three sought to home in on differences among participants based on their preference for contributions to the work environment. Research question two asks, "Which factors of a positive work environment are preferred among employees?" The following is the response to research question two, which elaborates on the preferences of employees in each cluster.

The *Caring Confidants* display strongest agreement with statements reflecting relational contributions between co-workers and bosses. Their strongest disagreement with statements then also reflect their support for relational contributions, but it should be noted that they also disagree that coffee and betting on sports events (both material contributions) have a personal influence on their satisfaction on work.

The *Jubilant Jesters* are similar to the *Caring Confidants* in their support for relational contributions to the work environment. However, their distinct agreement with statements regarding pranks and joking at work sets them apart and makes an argument for the role of joking and humor in the workplace. Results from the study of *Jubilant Jesters* also indicates an interesting perspective on events, where meeting outside of work is met with affinity but events such as the NCAA or Super Bowl seem to have little influence. The most noteworthy characteristic among the *Jubilant Jesters* is their general desire to embrace laughter and joking at work.

Pleasant Partiers

An analysis of the agreements and disagreements provided by the *Pleasant Partiers* again reinforces the overall desire for friendships and socializing in the professional workplace. Yet this specific cluster of individuals desires to enjoy and contribute to the professional work environment materially in the forms of food and gifts. The members of the *Pleasant Partiers* cluster also express the tendency to accept joking in the work environment and a disliking for work events involving the NCAA or Super Bowl. The *Pleasant Partiers* are partial to celebration of events and the things that perhaps enhance these events such as food and gifts, making them a unique set of employees in the professional work environment.

Meaningful Managers

The last identifiable cluster in this study demonstrates a general concern for the influence of management. The *Meaningful Managers* exhibit a balance of material and relational contributions. They place interest in the role of their bosses, and desire friendship at work, but they also enjoy the material contributions such as celebration of birthdays, events outside of work, and playing pranks at work. It is important to note that their distinct polarization of statements regarding the boss in their workplace indicates their interest in the role of management as a contribution to the positive work environment.

The utilization of the three-phase methodology in this study has allowed for a unique blend of quantitative and qualitative results. It can be determined that overall, employees see relational contributions to the positive work environment as more influential than the material contributions. In addition several unforeseen contributions to the work environment have been suggested and a usable typology of the contributor to the positive work environment has been

developed. Following this discussion of results is a conclusion of the overall project, including

limitations of the present study and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Limitations

Though the Q-analysis methodology is uniquely crafted to result in quality data with fewer participants, a small sample may be considered a limitation of this study, although well within the accepted practices for Q-methodological inquiry. A study of more participants would lend a stronger foundation of various perspectives. In addition, a more diverse range of ethnicity would be desirable to introduce cultural factors to the study. The acquisition of more participants may have also opened opportunity for perspectives from different academic, social or economic backgrounds.

The small sample size was due in part to the sampling technique used. A geographically clustered sampling method yielded participants only from the Lynchburg, VA area. Though the cluster sampling method has been found to be a credible recruitment method, it hinders the data collection process as each branch of BB&T in the Lynchburg area has a limited number of employees.

A large majority of participants were female. Females who completed the questionnaires composed 78.6% (N=11) of participants and 80% (N=4) of the interviews were conducted among female participants. General study in psychology notes that females are more relational beings, and this may have an influence on the overall support for positive relationships as a strong contributing factor to a positive work environment.

No incentives were used in this study and employees had to take time out of their personal schedules to participate. This proved to be a large limitation in the recruitment and follow-up with employees. In a study of 45 published research articles on the use of incentives, Condly, Clark, and Stolovitch (2008) found support for claims that incentives can significantly

increase work performance when they are carefully implemented. In addition, a study of participation response rate to formal study by Biner and Kidd (1994) found that, "Equity-salient appeal produced a significantly higher response rate than the standard appeal" (p. 483). This evidence indicates that the use of an incentive would likely have had an effect on response rate with participants for this study.

Due to scheduling conflicts, the data collection process for the present study was time consuming and therefore extended the length of time for collection. For this same reason, employees were keen to interview through email or by phone rather than in-person. To sustain their volunteered interest, the study was adapted to meet this desire. Frey, Botan, Friedman and Kreps (1992) commend the use of face-to-face interviews listing numerous advantages. They allow interviewers to note respondents' physical characteristics, nonverbal response and provide greater opportunity to establish rapport between interviewers and respondents (Frey, Botan, Friedman, & Kreps, 1992, p. 128). More importantly, "Face-to-face interviews allow researchers to ask questions about visual stimuli, such as pictures" (Frey, Botan, Friedman, & Kreps, 1992, p. 128). This study aimed to gauge participant opinions of office décor among other factors. The ability to mention surroundings in an interview would have been advantageous for this study. Unfortunately this goal was unattained.

Data gathered for this study was entirely self-reported by the participants. Self-reported data is often the easiest to acquire. However, reliability of self-reported data is always questionable to some degree as participants may not be able to accurately recall past interactions. Due to the delicate nature of the content within this study, participants may also have been hesitant to share their full opinions of negative influence in the organization. Most questions presented about a boss having a negative attitude at work were disagreed with. This suggests

strong worker-boss relationships, but could be skewed based on nervousness that participants'

responses would be revealed to co-workers. The highest measures were taken to preserve

confidentiality of data, but participants may still have felt cognitive dissonance on the matter.

Recommendations for Future Research

Despite these limitations, the present study contributed to research on the development of

a positive work environment and supports future research on the subject. Further research may

seek to obtain data from employees of numerous professional organizations rather than

narrowing the scope to one specific company. Having opinions presented from workers within

varying organizations could provide an interesting perspective on the goals, productivity, and

relationships of employees in different work environments.

An ethnographic study would be highly appropriate for this subject. A highly researcher-

involved approach, an ethnographic study could allow observation of contributions to a positive

work environment in action. This particular study was centered on the theory of structuration,

which would be very well paired with an ethnographic approach. According to Keyton (2010)

ethnographic results are detailed analyses of how symbolic practices are expressed in a particular

social structure. For this reason an ethnographic study of the culture of a group of employees

could yield great indications of the components of the theory of structuration, including the rules

and resources contributed by individuals within a structure.

While the theory of structuration did serve as a solid foundation for the study of

contributions to a positive work environment, multiple other theories could be well paired with

the topic in future research. The narrative paradigm could lend very rich data through the use of

stories told by employees about both material and relational contributions. According to Baxter

and Braithwaite (2008), "Narrative employment helps individuals organize lived events into

manageable packages that make sense in the context of their lives and relationships" (p. 242). The lived work experience could then be translated into stories, which describe the factors that make work enjoyable.

The cultural approach to organizational communication may also be appropriately applied in the context of contributions to a positive work environment. Moran and Volkwein (1992) noted that the cultural approach "introduces the role played by an organization's culture in producing a consensually-validated system of beliefs which emerges through interaction among members and which influences individual behavior" (p. 19). Contributions to the positive work environment can be seen as a culture produced by individuals, which influences the behaviors of these individuals.

Another closely appropriate theory for this study would be the social exchange theory. It could also serve as a theory on which to base the study of positive contributions to the work environment. According to Heath (1976) social exchange theory revolves around the idea that "any behavior that is motivated by an expected return or response falls under the heading of exchange" (p. 2). A study using social exchange theory would likely focus on the desires of individuals and the process by which they select material or relational contributions to best benefit themselves.

Future research might seek to employ an alternate sampling method or conduct an easily accessible online survey or other recruitment method to accrue more responses. A researcher with access to a larger sample of convenience within an organization could likely also earn more participants. In addition a random sampling method rather than a voluntary sampling method may be more effective in the recruitment of participants. However, if a Q-methodology is again utilized for the study a large sample size is not a requirement for authentic data.

Conclusion

Employee satisfaction at work is an increasingly studied topic, earning the attention of organizations seeking to not only keep employees on staff, but also keep them achieving their potential in creativity and efficiency. According to a recent Gallup study, "Successful organizations are discovering new strategy for gaining emotional, financial, and competitive advantage: employee wellbeing" ("Wellbeing", 2012, p.1). The things that can make work most enjoyable fall into two general categories: the material and the relational. The material contributions are those things that employees can experience tangibly, such as food, decorations, or parties. The relational contributions to the workplace are the relationships made up at work whether between co-workers or between bosses and subordinates.

This study sought to consider both material and relational contributions and discover which contributions were most valuable to employees in the professional work environment. Fourteen employees of BB&T, a large Southeast region financial institution were studied. The study consisted of three phases, including a Q-sort questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and a cluster analysis to derive themes. Five volunteer participants shared their opinions in semi-structured interviews. The data gathered was considered through the lens of the theory of structuration, which presents that social structures are formed along guidelines established by individuals. These guidelines include rules, or common modes of behavior, and resources that are contributions made by the agents or individuals in the structure. In this study, material and relational contributions are seen as the resources which employees contribute to foster a positive professional work environment.

Results from the study revealed a general liking for dominantly relational contributions to the positive work environment. Quantitative data gathered in phase one indicates this preference

for relational contributions. However despite a preference for relational contributions, material

contributions were also favored as a "bonus" in the workplace. This idea was revealed in phase

two of the study during qualitative interviews. It was also discovered that relationships at work

tend to parallel relationships at home, lending the workplace to be a place where employees

interact with a "second family". Employees described their feelings that BB&T's corporate

mission is effective in reinforcing positive attitudes at work. It was found that rules in the

professional work environment at BB&T exist in the form of social norms, contributing to the

overall positive structure of the workplace. According to the qualitative data gathered in phase

two of the study, employees view additional material contributions to the positive work

environment as a "bonus" to the relational contributions that exist. In addition to preconceived

material contributions, employees described contributions by the organization as incentives and

material contributors. These material contributions are found to include corporate events,

payment incentives, time bonus incentives, and stock options, among others.

Findings also defined the roles of individuals, or agents, in the structure of BB&T as an

organization. Employees presented various views on their personal contributions to the work

environment, some explaining that they contributed more relationally and others believing they

contribute more materially. It was found that material contributions might be preferable to males

or those in higher management positions.

Personal contributions to the workplace were narrowed to four clusters of employees in

the workplace. The *Caring Confidants* are seen as those individuals who are highly relational in

experience and contribution, placing emphasis on friendship. The *Jubilant Jesters* are those in

the workplace that place great value on co-worker and boss relationships, but focus greatly on

joking and pranking at work to create and enjoy a positive work environment. The *Pleasant*

Partiers are the employees that feel valued by celebrations and events and present gifts or food in the workplace to create a positive environment. Lastly, the *Meaningful Managers* are defined as the employees who see relationships as key in the workplace, and place the role of management and the boss at a higher level of influence on the work environment.

The study of communication is greatly devoted to organizational communication. While interpersonal communication is often considered among work groups, it is important to note that the contributions individuals make may not always be purely relational when communication-based. For this reason, the present study lends contribution to study in the field of communication and the structures comprised by employees by including the role of material contributions employees make in the workplace. A unique three-phase design has allowed insight on the subject both quantitatively and qualitatively. This study further examples how communication, specifically communication in the form of rules and resources in a social structure, assist in the understanding of the positive work environment and the individual's role as contributor to a positive work environment.

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Appendix A

Alena Naff
791 Laxton Rd.
Apt. 4
Lynchburg, VA 24502
February 7, 2012

Dear Participant:

Thank you for your agreement to participation in this study on the professional work environment. The included documents contain a rationale and instructions for completion of this study, a preliminary questionnaire and a request for contact information and a signature. Please sign your name above the line that reads "Signature" as this is required for your voluntary participation in this study. Agreement of participation in the questionnaire portion of the study does not include agreement of participation in a follow-up interview. Your participation in a follow-up interview is appreciated if you wish to do so. You will be given the opportunity to express interest in a follow-up interview at the end of the questionnaire.

Please answer each question as accurately and honestly as possible. All responses will remain confidential and will only be used for completion of this study. An envelope is included, please place your completed questionnaire in this envelope, seal it, and place the envelope in Mr. Joel Riley's mailbox. If you work at a location other than 2120 Langhorne Road, please use the provided self-addressed envelope to mail it back when completed. Your timely response is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me via email or telephone.

Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Thank you,

Alena Naff
Liberty University, Graduate Student
abnaff@liberty.edu
540-392-4360

Appendix B

CONSENT FORM
Masters Thesis Study
Alena Naff
Liberty University
Department of Communication Studies

You are invited to be in a research study of contributions to a positive professional work environment. You were selected as a possible participant due to your employment with BB&T for the length of one year or more and your voluntary interest. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Alena Naff, Liberty University, Department of Communication Studies.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this study is to discover the contributing factors to a positive work environment, including both relational and material contributions.

PROCEDURES:

If you agree to act as a participant in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

QUESTIONNAIRE INSTRUMENT:

Read each sentence and indicate the answer choice that best represents your agreement with the statement. There are no right or wrong answers. Remember to circle one response for each statement. The questionnaire is anticipated to take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Information collected will be used to complete this study. All information and responses will remain confidential. No information will be disclosed that links you directly to a particular job, employer, or coworker relationship.

RISKS AND BENEFITS OF BEING IN THE STUDY:

The study has minimal risks:

Please note you will be asked questions that require recollection of personal relationships as well as workplace happenings. Discontinuing the study at any point during the completion of the questionnaire is permissible. You may choose to omit responses to questions that are personal.

Benefits of participation:

The benefits of participation potentially include aiding the Langhorne Road branch of BB&T in an understanding of what pleases their employees, allowing them to model business practices after the findings.

INJURY OR ILLNESS:

You will not be provided medical treatment or financial compensation if you are injured or become ill as a result of participation in this study. This does not waive any of your legal rights nor release any claim you might have based on negligence.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
The records of this study will be kept private. In any publication, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and destroyed after three years. Only the researchers will have access to the records.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY:
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with BB&T. After choosing to participate, you are free to omit any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS
The researcher conducting this study is Alena Naff. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact Alena Naff at (540)-392-4360, abnaff@liberty.edu or Dr. Stuart Schwartz, Department of Communication Studies, Liberty University, at (434)-592-3712, sschwartz@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Fernando Garzon, Chair, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1582, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at fgarzon@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

I have read the above information. I have asked all questions desired and have received answers. I consent to participate in this study.

Signature: _____ Date:_____
Signature of Investigator:_____ Date:_____

Appendix C

Preliminary Questionnaire
1. What is your current age?
   a. 18-24
   b. 25-30
   c. 31-36
   d. 37-42
   e. 42-57
   f. 57-63
   g. 63+
2. How long have you been employed with BB&T?
   a. Less than a year
   b. 1-2 years
   c. 3-5 years
   d. 5-7 years
   e. 8 years + _____ (specify)
3. What is your job title?

_____.

Q Sort

This questionnaire instrument serves as a tool for gathering information for a graduate level master's thesis on the contributing factors to a positive work environment. Criterion for participation in this study includes being at least 18 years of age and consistent employment with BB&T for at least one year.

INSTRUCTIONS: In this instrument, we are measuring your perceptions of various contributions to the professional work environment. For the following statements, please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement by circling the appropriate number. The response scale is as follows:

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Undecided or Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

1. Having coffee at work improves my attitude about work.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   *Strongly Agree*

2. I try to decorate my personal workspace to lighten the mood.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   *Strongly Agree*

3. My boss cares about my feelings toward my work.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   *Strongly Agree*

4. Some people like to meet for events outside of work – but not me.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   *Strongly Agree*

5. I show my fellow employees I care by giving them small gifts.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   *Strongly Agree*

6. I like it when people play pranks at work.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   *Strongly Agree*

7. I feel a sense of dread when I walk through the front door of my workplace.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   *Strongly Agree*

8.   When my co-workers bring food to work to share it makes the day better.
Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   *Strongly Agree*

9.   Work is not a place for "cutting up".

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   *Strongly Agree*

10. Caring and sharing are as much a part of the workplace as home.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   *Strongly Agree*

11. It is normal for people at work to socialize throughout the day.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   *Strongly Agree*

12. My boss makes work miserable for me.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   *Strongly Agree*

13. I have good friends at work.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   *Strongly Agree*

14. The way my workplace is decorated influences my satisfaction on the job.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   *Strongly Agree*

15. My job would be so much better if my boss acted differently.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   *Strongly Agree*

16. I try to bring happiness to the workplace by bringing food to share.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   *Strongly Agree*

17. It's much more fun at work when everyone in the office is betting on the Super Bowl or NCAA tournament.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   *Strongly Agree*

18. I'm not worried about the security of my job.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   *Strongly Agree*

19. I don't need friendships at work to be an effective worker.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   *Strongly Agree*

20. I feel valued by my company when they celebrate my birthday.

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   *Strongly Agree*

21. What is your gender? (Please circle one).
    a. Male
    b. Female
22. What is your ethnicity?
    a. African American
    b. Caucasian
    c. East Asian
    d. European
    e. Latino
    f. Native American
    g. South Asian
23. Your identity will in no way be linked to results from this questionnaire. Therefore, do you consent to allow results from this study to be shared with organizational management at BB&T?
    a. Yes
    b. No
24. Would you be willing to participate in an interview to elaborate on the results of this questionnaire involving contributions to a positive professional work environment?
    a. Yes
    b. No

If so, please provide contact information:

— —

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Telephone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Appendix D

CONSENT FORM
Masters Thesis Study
Alena Naff
Liberty University
Department of Communication Studies

You are invited to be in a research study of contributions to a positive professional work environment. You were selected as a possible participant due to your employment with BB&T for the length of one year or more and your voluntary interest. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Alena Naff, Liberty University, Department of Communication Studies.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this study is to discover the contributing factors to a positive work environment, including both relational and material contributions.

PROCEDURES:

If you agree to act as a participant in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT:

This interview will serve as a method for collecting stories and examples of contributions to a positive work environment. All responses will be audio recorded and used to complete this study. Information and responses will remain confidential. No information will be disclosed that reveals your involvement with a certain job or coworker relationship. The interview process is anticipated to take one hour.

RISKS AND BENEFITS OF BEING IN THE STUDY:

The study has minimal risks:

Please note you will be asked questions that require recollection of personal relationships as well as workplace happenings. There is a small risk that conversation could be overheard from the conference room where this interview will take place. However, all possible measures will be taken to prevent this occurrence. Discontinuing the study at any point during the completion of the questionnaire is permissible. You may choose to omit responses to questions that are personal. In the event that you begin to experience intense emotions or reactions during the interview, the primary researcher will aid you in seeking help from a mental health professional.

Benefits of participation:

The benefits of participation potentially include aiding the Langhorne Road branch of BB&T in an understanding of what pleases their employees, allowing them to model business practices after the findings.

INJURY OR ILLNESS:

You will not be provided medical treatment or financial compensation if you are injured or become ill as a result of participation in this study. This does not waive any of your legal rights nor release any claim you might have based on negligence.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
The records of this study will be kept private. In any publication, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and destroyed after three years. Only the researchers will have access to the records.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY:
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with BB&T. After choosing to participate, you are free to omit any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS
The researcher conducting this study is Alena Naff. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact Alena Naff at (540)-392-4360, abnaff@liberty.edu or Dr. Stuart Schwartz, Department of Communication Studies, Liberty University, at (434)-592-3712, sschwartz@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Fernando Garzon, Chair, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1582, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at fgarzon@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

I have read the above information. I have asked all questions desired and have received answers. I consent to participate in this study.

□ I agree to have my voice recorded throughout the duration of the interview.

Signature: _____ Date:_____
Signature of Investigator:_____ Date:_____

Appendix E

ORAL INSTRUCTIONS:

This interview instrument serves as a tool for gathering information for a graduate level master's thesis on the material and relational contributions to a positive work environment. Criterion for participation in this study includes being at least 18 years of age and consistent employment with BB&T for at least one year.

During this interview you will be asked questions concerning material and relational contributions to the work environment that employees of BB&T have indicated as particularly supportive or destructive to a positive work environment. You will be expected to answer openly and honestly, offering your opinion of the factors that contribute to a work environment. These may include but are not limited to topics such as: décor, food, events, gifts, managerial styles and coworker relationships.

All responses will be audio recorded and will be used to complete this study. Information and responses will remain confidential. No information will be disclosed that reveals your involvement with a certain job or coworker relationship.

Do you have any questions?

Appendix F

Cluster Matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1 investment counselor	1.0000													
2 financial center leader	0.2840	1.0000												
3 mortgage loan officer	0.3180	0.7207	1.0000											
4 relationship banker	0.5951	0.4068	0.3784	1.0000										
5 financial center leader	0.5848	0.2775	0.1415	0.5473	1.0000									
6 teller supervisor	0.3878	0.6141	0.5724	0.4874	0.5567	1.0000								
7 relationship teller	0.5486	0.5357	0.6296	0.3592	0.4833	0.6842	1.0000							
8 teller	0.5058	0.4124	0.4377	0.6834	0.6201	0.5671	0.5572	1.0000						
9 teller supervisor	0.5821	0.5159	0.5432	0.5224	0.5208	0.4902	0.7646	0.6732	1.0000					
10 certified relationship banker	0.4582	0.4234	0.3066	0.5078	0.7352	0.7823	0.5783	0.7283	0.5082	1.0000				
11 financial center leader	0.5225	0.4533	0.4667	0.1563	0.5182	0.5364	0.8022	0.4039	0.5587	0.5513	1.0000			
12 senior teller	0.6919	0.6622	0.4913	0.6704	0.4823	0.6105	0.6433	0.7295	0.7556	0.6664	0.4155	1.0000		
13 certified senior teller	0.6945	0.5376	0.4357	0.7793	0.7939	0.6917	0.5541	0.8320	0.7356	0.7889	0.4356	0.8275	1.0000	
14 teller supervisor	0.3841	0.5005	0.3509	0.4408	0.3999	0.5589	0.5396	0.3000	0.5718	0.5055	0.3881	0.6004	0.4995	1.0000

Cluster 1 2, 4, 5
Cluster 2 3, 6
Cluster 3 7, 11
Cluster 4 10, 12