Checking Email in the Bathroom: Monitoring Email Responsiveness Behavior in the Workplace

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The proliferation of email as a standard method of business communication necessitates research to understand effects on managers and their employees. This research investigates the phenomena of "email responsiveness," defined as the extent to which individuals in the workplace perceive that they must prioritize how quickly they act in response to receiving an email, and "importance of connectedness," defined as the priority individuals place on being connected to the organization. We present testable propositions that the social exchange mechanisms of leader-member exchange (LMX) and perceived organizational support (POS) are moderated by connectedness and thereby influence job attitudinal outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

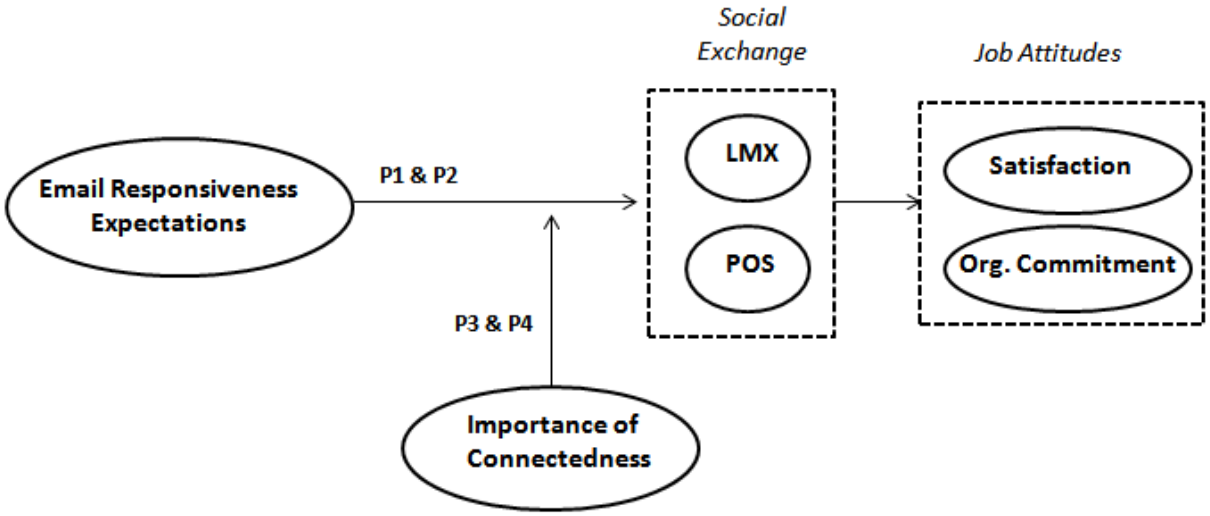
The proliferation and changing nature of electronic communications (e.g., email, texting, instant messaging, Skype, etc.) as a necessary resource for knowledge requires continuing research in order to understand how these technologies affect relationships among managers and their employees. Individuals may feel compelled to engage in behaviors that will conform with organizational "response expectations," defined as the extent to which individuals in the workplace perceive that they must prioritize how quickly they act in response to receiving an electronic communication (Bottom, Gibson, Daniels & Murnighan, 2002; Middleton & Cukier, 2006; Renaud, Ramsay & Hair, 2006). Managing the response expectations of managers and coworkers can take priority over optimal productivity in an effort to maintain relationships or demonstrate proficiency (Tyler & Tang, 2003; Weber, 2004).

A high level of importance on remaining connected to their organizations can induce behaviors that demonstrate a virtual obsession with constantly checking for new email communications (Marulanda-Carter & Jackson, 2012; Turel & Serenko, 2010; Turel, Serenko & Bontis, 2011; Young, 1998). For example, a study conducted by Matusik and Mickel (2011) found that several interviewees felt such a strong urge to remain connected that they readily admitted to reading their work-related email messages while in the bathroom. Nevertheless, little research has investigated how this behavior, which has become commonplace in organizations, influences important organizational outcomes (Renaud et al., 2006; Weber, 2004).

In order to address this gap in the literature, we seek to address two interrelated research questions. First, we will investigate what mechanisms influence how managers and employees prioritize their

responsiveness to electronic communications. Next, we will seek to understand how the perceived importance of connectivity to the organization influences the magnitude of responsiveness expectations on attitudes of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and stress. The overall conceptual framework describing these influences is set forth in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1
RESEARCH MODEL



In this paper, we explore how employees' perception of response expectations affects the levels of social exchange with their managers (i.e., leader-member exchange) and with their coworkers (i.e., perceived organizational support). We propose that at high levels of constructive social exchange, response expectations will increase satisfaction and organizational commitment while reducing intentions to leave the organization. Additionally, we propose that individuals' attribution of the importance of maintaining connectedness with the organization will moderate the impact on job outcomes.

The research model contributes to extant literature in three important ways. First, we diverge from prevailing monitoring literature by focusing on how perceived email response expectations influence employee job outcomes rather than through the use of explicit managerial monitoring activities. Second, we identify the social exchange mechanisms through which these employee behaviors of responsiveness are manifested. Third, we include individual preferences of connectedness enabled by technology that can moderate the impact of these response expectations.

Our paper proceeds as follows: First, we examine existing literature pertaining to (1) the use of electronic communication in organizations, (2) explicit managerial monitoring practices, and (3) the influence of managerial behavior and cultural norms on responsiveness expectations. Second, we discuss how social exchange theory is useful to help understand the influences of email responsiveness expectations. Third, we include the perceived importance of organizational connectedness as a moderator. Next, we develop propositions in accordance with our research model. We then conclude with limitations and practical applications of our research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Electronic Communications in Organizations

Computer mediated communication (CMC) such as email has become virtually indispensable in how organizations remain interconnected (Matzat, 2009; Ou, Davison, Liang & Zhong, 2010; Smith & Tabak, 2009). Despite the capability to enhance productive communication, there can be a propensity for reduced

performance outcomes resulting from failing to achieve responsiveness expectations (Agarwal & Rodhain, 2002). Electronic communication is pervasive in the workplace because of its capability to increase productivity (Orlikowski & Scott, 2008; Ramsay & Renaud, 2011). Nevertheless, communication facilitated by electronic means has generated a host of challenges (Byron, 2008; Flanagin, Pearce & Bondad-Brown, 2009). For example, the ease of use of electronic communications in the workplace has the propensity to cause negative results, including persistent work interruptions (Fonner & Roloff, 2010; Jett & George, 2003) and reduced job satisfaction (Taylor, Fieldman & Altman, 2008).

Employees may also exhibit behaviors associated with the compulsion to constantly check for new email communications. One study that investigated employees' reaction to incoming communications found that 70% of the employees opened the application to read messages within six seconds, and 85% within two minutes of receipt (Jackson, Dawson & Wilson, 2003). These behaviors can lead to work/family conflicts (Anderson, Coffey & Byerly, 2002), overload (Edmunds & Morris, 2000), and stress (Barley, Meyerson & Grodal, 2011). When connectedness importance is at a level where employees determine that it is imperative to read and respond to every organizational communication, employees' behavior will seek to ensure that each message is processed immediately, regardless of when or where received (Gupta, 2007; Weber, 2004). The balance between the positive aspects of electronic communication and the potential for negative outcomes highlights the importance of continuing to investigate the impact of electronic communication activity on individual employees (Matusik & Mickel, 2011; Orlikowski & Scott, 2008; Ramsay & Renaud, 2011; Weber, 2004).

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) suggests that the extent to which employees perceive that technology is useful to enhance the performance of their job functions will influence their attitudinal responses (Davis, 1989; Jarvenpaa & Staples, 2000; Pendharkar & Young, 2004; Yuan, Archer, Connelly & Zheng, 2010). The culture of organizations to use technology to share information, forge relationships, and bridge geographic barriers also influences the use of electronic communication technology (Allen & Shanock, 2012; Jarvenpaa & Staples, 2000; Ramsay & Renaud, 2011; Snyder, 2010; Stanton & Julian, 2002). Accordingly, employees will be likely to utilize electronic communication technology when they perceive that doing so is an engrained component of their work, particularly if this perception is shared throughout the organization.

The use of electronic communication technology can also have negative effects on individual worker productivity (Kiesler, Siegel & McGuire, 1984; Mazmanian, Yates & Orlikowski, 2006). Redundant communications, information exchange that is not business-related, costs of maintaining the technology to facilitate the communication may have a net result of reduced overall productivity (Duane & Finnegan, 2007; Gupta, 2007; Gupta, Sharda, Greve & Kamath, 2007; Sipior & Ward 1995). The advances of electronic communications have been found to greatly increase the propensity of continuous interruptions throughout a typical workday resulting in high levels of inefficiency (Fonner & Roloff, 2010; Jett & George, 2003; Leonardi, Treem & Jackson, 2010; Mark, Voida & Cardello, 2012). For example, the ability to "reply to all" recipients of email messages can cause unnecessary interruptions and potentially dilute the efficacy of these communications. The inherent limitations of the electronic communication media, compared to face-to-face interaction (Pendharkar & Young, 2004), can result in misperception of emotion or tone that can negatively affect relationships among the communicators (Baruch, 2005; Ducheneaut & Watts, 2005; Ramsay & Renaud, 2011).

Employee Monitoring

One of the primary functions of management is to monitor the behaviors of employees within the organization (Fairweather, 1999; Nebeker & Tatum, 1993; Samaranayake & Gamage, 2011). To a certain extent, employers are compelled to monitor their employees' behavior to mitigate legal risks, including those resulting from hostile work environment, sexual harassment, theft of intellectual property, and security threats that may be exacerbated by the use of electronic communications (Aalberts, Hames & Thistle, 2009; Ball & Wilson, 2000; DeTienne & Flint, 1996; Friedman & Reed 2007; Mulligan, 2003; Nord, McCubbins & Nord, 2006; Panko & Beh, 2002; Riedy & Wen, 2010).

The business purpose of monitoring to encourage productivity, provide resource support, and evaluate performance can also lead to negative responses by employees to managerial oversight activities (Chalykoff & Kochan, 1989; Douthitt & Aiello, 2001; Niehoff & Moorman, 1993; Smith & Tabak, 2009; Stanton & Weiss, 2000). For example, employees may perceive that monitoring of their electronic communications is an invasion of privacy (Alder, Schminke, Noel & Kuenzi, 2008; Alge, Ballinger & Green, 2004; Ambrose & Schminke, 2003; Arnesen & Weis, 2007; Chalykoff & Kochan, 1989; Smith & Tabak, 2009). The mere presence of managerial monitoring has been found to inhibit employees' overall use of electronic communications (D'Urso, 2006; Hodson, Englander & Englander, 1999; Romero, 2009; Sipior & Ward, 1995).

Monitoring activities assisted by information technology has become increasingly prevalent in the modern workplace (Ariss, 2002; Kidwell & Kidwell, 1996; Samaranayake & Gamage, 2011; Stanton, 2000). Therefore, continuing research on how employees react to electronic communication practices is necessary (Chen & Park, 2005; Duane & Finnegan, 2007; Snyder, 2010; Wells, Moorman & Werner, 2007).

A consideration in how individuals react to email response expectations is the extent to which they perceive that their activity is being monitored. However, there has been little research as to how the use of electronic communications among employees and their managers extend to monitoring. Smith & Tabak (2010) suggested that managers' ability to monitor email communications can enhance productivity. For example, employers are finding it more manageable to allow employees to work remotely in order to have more flexibility while maintaining productivity goals (Shellenbarger, 2012). However, monitoring can also have the propensity for negative reactions by employees if the monitoring is perceived to be intrusive or an encroachment on privacy (Toorn & Shu, 2010; Wen & Gershuny, 2005).

Prevailing literature regarding the use of technology by managers to monitor and influence behavior has primarily focused on employee reactions to computer assisted monitoring (see, e.g., Ariss, 2002; Kidwell & Kidwell, 1996; Samaranayake & Gamage, 2011; Stanton, 2000; Urbaczewski & Jessup, 2002). Nevertheless, employee reactions to monitoring may not necessarily be a result from explicit practices, but rather from managerial and organizational expectations of behavior. Accordingly, there is a gap in monitoring literature in understanding how the use of electronic communication technology as a monitoring mechanism and expectations of email responsiveness influence employee job outcomes.

Behavioral Expectations of Email Responsiveness

A critical deficiency in prevailing monitoring literature is that direct monitoring by managers does not necessarily capture how employees interact in the workplace, their use of electronic communication technology, or the resulting impact on job outcomes. Contrary to prevailing literature, we redirect the focus from direct practices and procedures regarding electronic communications and instead evaluate how the *behavior* of managers influences how employees engage in electronic communication. The quality of work that is measured by direct monitoring is assigned a lower level of importance than the sheer quantity of output measured by the volume and responsiveness to electronic communication activities (Stanton & Julian, 2002).

It has been suggested that the behavior of supervisors has the propensity to influence employees' activities as opposed to explicit directives (Anderson, et al., 2002; Stanton & Julian, 2002). For example, Anderson et al. (2002) found that despite the explicit organizational policies that were established to enable work-family balance, employees did not engage in these flexible work programs due to concerns of negative perceptions of productivity. However, when managers also participated in the flexible work practices, these perceptions were not found. This suggests that employees take their cues from the behavior of their managers in order to evaluate what behavior will be deemed to be appropriate in the organization.

Arbitrary rules and policies for processing of electronic communications are fraught with difficulty (Ramsay & Renaud, 2011) and have been found to be counterproductive to enabling employees to conform to shifting temporal requirements of their work (Forsyth & Jenkins, 2011). As such, employees are often unlikely to follow these policies at all (Paschal, Stone & Stone-Romero, 2009). In order to seek

a balance between the productivity enhancements resulting from electronic communications with the potential from negative outcomes, some organizations have instituted practices to limit the use of these technologies, with varying degrees of success. For example, a policy established by the technology company Atos sought to drastically reduce the use of one form of electronic communications (i.e., email), but was circumvented by employees' use of other forms of information technology to facilitate their communication (Kim, 2011). The Volkswagen Company restricted mobile electronic communications to certain times throughout the day, but found this policy to be untenable in the United States due to employee preferences (McMillan, 2011). In order to limit distractions, Intel attempted to instill "no e-mail Fridays," but found that this practice did not effectively limit employees' use of electronic communications (Mullaney, 2011).

We suggest that the perceived expectations of responsiveness by managers and coworkers influences employees' electronic communication behaviors, potentially to a greater extent than the influences of traditional direct monitoring techniques (Allen & Shanock, 2012; Mackenzie, 2010; Matzat, 2009). Patterns of use that are exhibited by managers provide guidance to employees as to how they should act in accordance to this behavior (Mazmanian, et al., 2006; Romm & Pliskin, 1999). Managers who are particularly adept at responding to emails quickly may elicit the same responsiveness levels in their employees (Tyler & Tang, 2003).

Organizational culture reinforces behavior that is of central importance to its members (Erdogan, Liden & Kraimer, 2006; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnytsky, 2002; Pee, Woon & Kankanhalli, 2008). Open communication occurs within the context of accepted organizational norms, where continuing interactions generates expectations that similar activities will be maintained (Ducheneaut & Watts, 2005; Ramsay & Renaud, 2011). Communication behaviors and the associated socialization processes provide insight to employees as to what is the desired behavior within their organization (Allen & Shanock, 2012). Accordingly, the culture of organizations can greatly influence responsiveness expectations and propensity to share information (Constant, Kiesler & Sproull, 1994; Matusik & Mickel, 2011; Middleton, 2007; Shin, 2004).

Employees may adjust their behaviors to conform with responsiveness expectations based on the signals they seek to provide to their managers and their organizations. Impression management of managers and coworkers is therefore a key component of influencing behavior (Gupta et al., 2007). In the context of electronic communications, it has been suggested that individuals adjust their behaviors in order to cultivate a responsiveness image within their organization (Six, 2007; Tyler and Tang 2003). Under relational signaling theory (RST), employees seek to build and maintain relationships with their managers and coworkers by complying with the responsiveness expectations espoused within their organizations (Six & Sorge, 2008; Bottom et al., 2002).

Email Responsiveness Prioritization

Employees will prioritize their responsiveness to electronic communications based on the signals that they seek to give to their managers and employers. These responsiveness signals are based on a variety of reasons: (1) demonstrating proficiency, (2) cultivating relationships, (3) indicating availability, or (4) affective responses to communication activity (Gupta et al., 2007). For example, employees who are seeking to demonstrate proficiency will be inclined to immediately respond to communications from their managers irrespective of the intended priority (Ramsay & Renaud, 2011). Proficiency signals are not relegated to managerial communications, since employees may also seek to demonstrate competence to their co-workers. This is particularly the case when communications occur among those in similar workgroups or team environments (Matusik & Mickel, 2011; Mazmanian, et al., 2006). In these instances, prioritization is based on the level of importance the recipient places on satisfying the perceived responsiveness expectations of the initiator of electronic communications.

The means by which these responsiveness perceptions are formed can result from the experiences that the employees have had in prior communications. For example, if one employee consistently responds immediately to all communications, then another employee may feel compelled to reciprocate with similar levels of responsiveness (Ramsay & Renaud, 2011). Another influence on responsiveness can

result from the individualized relationships that employees have with each other. That is, employees may be inclined to respond quickly to those with whom they enjoy collegial relationships, and ignore communications from others that have not forged positive relationships or mutual respect (Ramsay & Renaud, 2011). These interpersonal bonds are particularly salient regarding the use of electronic communications since emotional intentions are so readily misperceived, which can exacerbate strained relationships (Byron, 2008).

Irrespective of the initiator of the communication, content-based influences may also be a contributing factor in responsiveness behaviors. For example, employees may prioritize communications that are specifically indicated as important by the person initiating the contact, are accompanied by additional information (e.g., attachments), contextual clues that indicate importance, continuation of conversations (e.g., multiple "threads"), or explicitly stated that responses is not immediately expected (Mazmanian, et al., 2006). However, any of these communication-specific indicators may be ignored if the recipient chooses to use more compelling criteria of signaling proficiency and/or relationship importance as a basis to satisfy responsiveness expectations. These criteria for prioritizing email responsiveness is set forth in Table 1.

TABLE 1
EMAIL RESPONSE PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA

Influences	**Indicators**
Relationship	1) Supervisor sent email.
	2) Supervisor copied on email.
	3) History of quick communication
	4) In the same work group.
	5) Long-term working relationship (even if not in same work group).
Content	1) Importance/urgency stated in email text.
	2) Marked as "important".
	3) Number of threads/iterations/respondents.
	4) Contains detailed data, internet links, and/or attached documents.
	5) Requires a deliverable.
Time Sensitivity	1) Time response is required by sender and/or recipient.
	2) Communicating with people in different time zones.
Availability	1) Away from the office (e.g., at home/travelling).
	2) Job role of the recipient (e.g., required during traditional workday).
	3) Availability of the technology that can be used to respond.
Reduced Priority	1) Anticipate it may cause additional work.
	2) Anticipate it may lead to a confrontation.
	3) Procrastination.
	4) General apprehension when sending/receiving email.

Responsiveness expectations are therefore incumbent upon the relationships among the communicators to a greater extent than the content of the specific communication. That is, the "sender" of the communication is ascribed greater importance than what is sent. Employees adjusting behaviors based on signaling compliance with responsiveness expectations can result in important messages being ignored, and thereby causing suboptimal outcomes to electronic communication activities (Ramsay & Renaud, 2011; Weber, 2004). Accordingly, it is important to take into consideration these behaviors, and the mechanisms that drive them, in order to understand the overall effects on employees within their organizations (Smith & Tabak, 2009).

Social Exchange and Electronic Communication

The nature of electronic communication methods in organizations is that it inherently requires at least two individuals (i.e., the send and the recipient), and facilitates the inclusion of multiple parties to a conversation more readily than other forms of written or verbal communication (Gupta, 2007; Renaud, et al., 2006). Interactive sharing of information engenders trusting relationships and expectations of reciprocity for behaviors that are favorable to all who participate in the interaction (Jarvenpaa & Staples, 2000; Six, 2007; Tyler & Tang, 2003). Social exchange theory provides insight for identifying the mechanisms that drive these perceived reciprocal response expectations (MacKinnon, Fairchild & Fritz, 2007; Wayne, Shore & Liden, 1997).

Leader Member Exchange (LMX) refers to the relationship between employees and their managers where obligations and experiences create an expectation of reciprocal responses to behaviors in order to achieve desired outcomes (Ballinger & Schoorman, 2007; Scandura & Pellegrini, 2008; Tekleab, Takeuchi & Taylor, 2005; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Both parties in the interactions are motivated not only by the benefits that are sought, but also in signaling the value of a trusting relationship (Agrifoglio & Metallo, 2010; Scandura, 1999; Straiter, 2005; Yukl, O'Donnell & Taber, 2009). Relations-oriented behaviors increase levels of trust that is manifested in high-quality communication behaviors, which in turn promote higher levels of LMX (Connell, Ferres & Travaglione, 2003; Schriesheim, Castro & Cogliser, 1999; Timmerman & Harrison, 2005), and influence the overall relationship between employees and their leaders. However, there has been limited research as to how task-oriented behaviors, such as that which is required to facilitate electronic communications, are antecedents of LMX (Yukl et al., 2009).

The intangible aspects of electronic communication are particularly salient for the facilitation of high levels of LMX (Erdogan, et al., 2006). For example, managers who lead by example of meeting response expectations will set standards of their employees' behavior who seek to embrace similar values and standards (Huang, 2002; Yukl et al., 2009). High levels of LMX encourage communication, since a trusting relationship allows employees to seek more information without concerns of negative management response (Harris, 2003). Therefore, the use of electronic communication among leaders and their subordinates is contingent upon the levels of social exchange encompassed in LMX, and shapes the responsiveness expectations that managers help create. When managerial actions and expectations encourage imitation throughout the organization, these expectations evolve into organizational norms among employees as well (Mazmanian, et al., 2006).

The level of perceived organizational support (POS) will be enhanced when employees are rewarded for their desire to emulate behaviors that conform to the norms of their organization (Bagraim & Hime, 2008; Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch & Rhoades, 2001; Lynch, Eisenberger & Armeli, 1999; Serva, Fuller & Mayer, 2005). Further, the belief that the organization (and its management) values its employees and supports their success is another important determinant of POS. The degree to which compliance with norms of responsiveness behavior correspond with how employees are perceived by their organization is a measure of POS (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Matzat, 2009; Zweig & Webster, 2002). For example, employees who signal a willingness to respond to electronic communications at a level of immediacy commensurate with organizational norms will result in high levels of POS (Aubé, Rousseau & Morin, 2007; Tekleab, et al., 2005). Conversely, failing to achieve responsiveness norms resulting from inefficient use of electronic communication among employees will inhibit POS (Whittaker & Sidner, 1996).

Propositions

In that organizational norms of responsiveness expectations can be generated by managerial behavior, and these norms become pervasive throughout an organization, it is important to understand the influence of the social exchange mechanisms of both LMX and POS (Fonner & Roloff, 2010; Taylor, et al., 2008). Where the responsiveness expectations of managers diverge from that of the normative expectations of fellow employees, job outcomes can be influenced at differing levels (Wayne, et al., 1997).

Expectations of immediate responsiveness to electronic communications can negatively influence employees' job outcomes. Electronic communication practices have been found to decrease levels of job satisfaction resulting from stress in the workplace (Barley, et al., 2011; Taylor, et al., 2008). For example, an empirical study conducted by Renaud et al., (2006) in a university setting, the perception that immediate responses to electronic communications resulted in an increase in the perceived levels of stress. Additionally, studies have found that job satisfaction suffers when response expectations frequently result in excessive interruptions (Gupta, 2007), sacrifices that create work/family conflict (Anderson et al., 2002), and overall reduction in the ability to signal productivity or efficiency (Ramsay & Renaud, 2011; Taylor et al., 2008; Tyler and Tang 2003).

The findings of research by Friedman and Currall (2003) suggested that delayed response times negatively influenced organizational commitment because disputes within the organization remained unresolved. Conversely, consistently high levels of timely communication among employees enhance organizational knowledge that can increase employees' commitment to the organization (Edmunds & Morris, 2000). Additionally, where the responsiveness expectations of managers and the norms of an organization are at odds with employees' capabilities, there is a heightened propensity for overall stress in the workplace (Allen & Shanock, 2012; Anderson, et al., 2002).

The sheer volume of electronic communications that are dispersed throughout organizations can collectively result in decreased satisfaction, organizational commitment, and increase the likelihood that employees will leave their jobs (Pendharkar & Young 2004; Ramsay & Renaud, 2011). Enormous amounts of information contained in electronic communications, often unsolicited, results in "information overload" (Barley, et al., 2011; Edmunds & Morris, 2000). Demands of managers and normative expectations throughout the organization to achieve responsiveness expectations can outstrip abilities, resulting in high levels of strain and reduced productivity (Zeldes, Sward & Louchheim, 2007). Despite this information overload that is so prevalent in workplaces and university settings (Ward, 2004), there has been little direct research into its implications (Forsyth & Jenkins, 2011; Gwizdka, 2004.).

Several studies have found that LMX facilitated by electronic communications mediates the relationship between job-related tasks and job satisfaction (Golden, 2006; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Harris, 2003; Janssen & Van Yperen, 2004). Further, LMX has been found to be a mediator of communication behaviors and levels of organizational commitment and stress (Agrifoglio & Metallo, 2010; Ballinger & Schoorman, 2007; Morrow, Suzuki, Crum, Ruben & Pautsch, 2005; Wayne, Shore, Bommer & Tetrick, 2002). The perceived responsiveness expectations derived from managerial electronic communication behaviors induces employees to engage in similar behavior in order to enhance levels of LMX.

When there are high levels of a trusting relationship among leaders and their employees, expectations of responsiveness are not as high. For example, managers will be more likely to consider actual productivity rather than the immediate responses to electronic communications as indicators of efficiency. Accordingly, employees may direct their efforts on completing their work rather than suffering continuing interruptions in checking for incoming messages from their managers. Electronic messages are more likely to be perceived as showing support for employees rather than intrusive monitoring. Moreover, communications are more likely to be undertaken in order to reciprocate positive behaviors rather than avoiding negative consequences of failing to reply. In turn, this reciprocation of positive exchange among managers and their employees generates a reinforcing mechanism of a continuing trusting relationship. In short, electronic communications are undertaken because employees determine that it is a benefit rather than a detriment to their performance capabilities. We propose that this positive reinforcement will serve as a mechanism that will enhance job satisfaction and commitment to the organization. In addition,

communications are less likely to become such a burden that they will feel compelled to leave their organization. Accordingly, we expect:

> *Proposition 1: LMX mediates the relationship between responsiveness expectations and employee job satisfaction (P1a) and organizational commitment (P1b).*

Research models that include multiple mediators have been found to more accurately assess overall mediating effects (MacKinnon, et al., 2007). In that social exchange theory incorporates the relationship with leaders (LMX) as well as the relationships among all employees in an organization (POS), it is important to evaluate these potential influences separately.

POS has been consistently found to influence job satisfaction (Tekleab, et al., 2005), organizational commitment (Allen, Shore & Griffeth, 2003; Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979; Randall, Cropanzano, Bormann & Birjulin, 1999; Wayne et al., 1997). In the context of electronic communication in organizations, employees are less likely to interpret delayed responsiveness in a negative light. There will be an inclination to assume that their coworkers are engaged in work that will be mutually beneficial and are unable to respond to communications for legitimate reasons. Ulterior motives will not be presumed. Instead, a mutually trusting culture will enable employees to focus on their work rather than expending effort to manage the expectations of their fellow employees. Accordingly, we propose that the responsiveness expectations perpetuated by organizational culture will influence the social exchange mechanism of POS, with an overall impact on job outcomes. We propose:

> *Proposition 2: POS mediates the relationship between responsiveness expectations and employee job satisfaction (P2a) and organizational commitment (P2b).*

Importance of Connectedness

The importance that employees place on remaining connected to their organizations can amplify the social exchange mechanisms associated with responsiveness expectations. Perceptions of importance of activities within an organization have been noted in research as potential moderators (Caldwell, Herold & Fedor, 2004; Edwards, 1996). The moderating effects of importance on LMX and POS therefore warrant further investigation (Yukl, et al., 2009).

The mobility of information technology can facilitate electronic communications that enables employees to remain perpetually connected to their organizations. Mobile technology has the propensity to create heightened expectations of responsiveness, and the culture of organizations can reinforce these expectations where employees determine that it is important to embrace these capabilities (Mazmanian, et al., 2005; Middleton & Cukier, 2006; Matusik & Mickel, 2011). Further, employees who not only feel that the use of mobile technology is important, but also are comfortable in using this technology, are more likely to have positive attitudes regarding its use to remain connected to their organizations (Ahluwalia, Gimpel & Varshney, 2010; Jarvenpaa & Staples, 2000; Minsky & Marin, 1999).

Employees may feel this connectedness is important to demonstrate efficiency and conformance to organizational responsiveness expectations. Fender (2010) identified the level of connectedness facilitated by mobile technology as "electronic tethering" that employees can determine is a positive influence in reinforcing relationships and enhancing their performance. In particular, employees found that connectivity was important since it allowed expeditious responses to potential problems at work before they escalated into crises (Fender, 2010). In a study conducted by Mazmanian et al., (2005), employees described their use of mobile communication devices over the weekend, while on vacation, or in non-work settings (e.g., golf courses) as monitoring their organization, rather than being monitored by managers or coworkers.

Employees may determine that organizational connectedness is an invaluable asset for accomplishing tasks, signaling efficiency to managers and coworkers, and maintaining positive collaborative relationships (Mazmanian et al, 2005; Middleton & Cukier, 2006). Conversely, employees may determine that failing to remain connected to their organization would violate the expectations of responsiveness

imposed upon them by their managers or coworkers (Bawden & Robinson, 2009; Gwizdka, 2004). Regardless of the reasons, higher levels of social exchange resulting from the perceived importance of connectivity can exacerbate the impact of communication expectations on job outcomes.

As was suggested earlier in our paper, an environment of high trust and anticipation of reciprocal benefits between employees and their managers will result in higher satisfaction and increased organizational commitment. In an environment where LMX is at high levels, employees are more likely to determine that remaining connected with their managers will facilitate great productivity. In particular, greater responsiveness regardless of when the communications are initiated will enable both managers and their employees to address concerns and perpetuate solutions before crises occur. Moreover, there will be a greater incentive to interact because communications will be anticipated to be a source of support rather than oppression. When connectivity is increased at these high levels of LMX, we propose that there will be a positive effect on job outcomes. Accordingly:

> *Proposition 3: Employees' perceived importance of connectedness will moderate the strength of the mediated relationship between responsiveness expectations and job satisfaction (P3a) and organizational commitment (P3b) outcomes via LMX, such that the relationship will be stronger under high levels of perceived importance than under low levels of perceived importance.*

Employees may have a greater level of connectedness preferences with others in their organization rather than with their managers. This is more likely the case when responsiveness is driven by the desire to conform with organizational norms than with signaling competence to a manager. For example, employees will be inclined to respond to communications from their coworkers as quickly as possible in order to provide mutual support. This may be particularly important when there are shared goals within teams. Failing to respond quickly would potentially detriment the needs of their fellow employees. Higher levels of connectedness at all times may be perceived as necessary to provide resources to help everyone within their organization achieve their work tasks. Where this is the organizational environment, we propose that POS will not only be a more influential mediator, but will also be intensified by the perceived importance of being highly connected with others in their organization. Accordingly, we propose:

> *Proposition 4: Employees' perceived importance of connectedness will moderate the strength of the mediated relationship between responsiveness expectations and job satisfaction (P4a) and organizational commitment (P4b) outcomes via POS, such that the relationship will be stronger under high levels of perceived importance than under low levels of perceived importance*

CONCLUSION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER STUDY

It is critically important to understand how the ubiquity of email communication affects the business environment. Managerial monitoring of email behavior can result in employees seeking to manage response expectations rather than focusing on their work. Doing so often can cause reduced performance, decreased job satisfaction, increased overload and stress and reduced organizational commitment.

The social exchange mechanisms of leader-member exchange (LMX) and perceived organizational support (POS) have the propensity to influence how the responsiveness expectations influence job attitudinal outcomes. Accordingly, we propose that when the level of social exchange is comparatively high, there is a favorable influence on job outcomes.

The importance that individuals place on remaining connected to their organizations amplifies the magnitude of the email responsiveness expectations in the context of social exchange. When employees feel that using email is necessary to manage response expectations, there can be a compulsive need to constantly check email, regardless of when (and where) the messages are received. Conversely, if email

connectedness is not perceived to be important to the individual, expectations of responsiveness will have a reduced influence on the level of social exchange and job attitudes. Other influences on these outcomes will prevail. Therefore, we propose that email connectivity is a significant moderator of the leader-member exchange and perceived organizational mediating mechanisms incumbent in the usage of email communications.

The phenomenon of email usage and responsiveness yields many opportunities for further study. While our proposed research model provides a useful framework to conceptualize email responsiveness in the context of monitoring, it will be instructive to empirically develop the construct of responsiveness expectations. Additional theoretical lenses beyond social exchange may shed additional light on the influences on job outcomes, including response signaling theory, power distance, social networks, trust, and ethical considerations of monitoring behavior. Moreover, a myriad of communication theories offer tremendous opportunities for interdisciplinary research. The importance of email connectedness could be studied using concepts of narcissism, technology acceptance, work interruptions, and addiction.

Responsiveness expectations in the context of monitoring are proposed to influence the social exchange within organizations. The importance that individuals attribute to email contributes to understanding why individuals may read and respond to email messages so compulsively. Accordingly, our proposed research model suggests a useful framework to further the understanding the phenomenon of email usage behavior.

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