Perceptions of Empowerment: A Qualitative Analysis

Melendi Morton
St. John Fisher College

How has open access to Fisher Digital Publications benefited you?

Follow this and additional works at: http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/education_ETD_masters

Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation

Please note that the Recommended Citation provides general citation information and may not be appropriate for your discipline. To receive help in creating a citation based on your discipline, please visit http://libguides.sjfc.edu/citations.

This document is posted at http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/education_ETD_masters/142 and is brought to you for free and open access by Fisher Digital Publications at St. John Fisher College. For more information, please contact fisherpub@sjfc.edu.
Perceptions of Empowerment: A Qualitative Analysis

Abstract
This quantitative study investigated the relationships between perceptions of empowerment and position in a non-profit organization using three widely used empowerment instruments. This study also examined relationships that may or may not exist between the three instruments used in the survey. The primary goals of the study were to examine presumed, but untested, associations between perceptions of empowerment and position in the organization. This study was conducted based on extant data retrieved from a large blood collection organization that was obtained by a consultant in response to a management development effort. The sample in this study was 227 members of this blood collection organization; 20 account managers; 26 administrative personnel; 47 collection supervisors; 97 donor specialists; 21 mobile unit assistants; and 8 members of senior management.

Document Type
Thesis

Degree Name
MS in Human Resource Development

Department
Education

Subject Categories
Education

This thesis is available at Fisher Digital Publications: http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/education_ETD_masters/142
PERCEPTIONS OF EMPOWERMENT: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

By

Melendi Morton

A Master's Project Submitted to the Graduate School
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree
Master of Science
Department of Human Resource Development
St. John Fisher College
Rochester, NY 14628
I would like to express my gratitude to a number of people who have helped me through this masters program. To my final project advisor, Dr. Seth Silver, thank you for your honest feedback as well as your gentle nudging when I needed it. Thank you for keeping me on track, challenging my information, giving me encouragement, and helping me produce a project that I feel proud of. I would also like to thank Dr. Marilynn Butler, for her constant encouragement and feedback throughout the 20 months I spent in the Human Resource Development program. This experience has helped me to grow both personally and professionally, and I am grateful for the experience. I would also like to thank Stas Lotyczewski for providing me with correct, concise information on data analyses techniques and helping me make my project “make sense” statistically.

I would like to thank my colleagues at Hillside Work- Scholarship Connection for encouraging me to complete this degree as well as accommodating me when I needed to divide my time between work and completing this project. I could not ask for a better group of people to work with and I will always be grateful for their support.

To my friends in Cohort Four, I would like to express my thanks for 20 months of support, encouragement and friendship. Having the pleasure of spending many weekends in the company of such wonderful people has been a bonus that was not guaranteed, but I’m glad that’s how it worked out.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their encouragement, support, and love. To my mother, who set the example of constant achievement and improvement, I thank you for all the support you gave me, especially when I moved across country to complete this degree. To my aunts, thank you for always supporting me and believing in me. To my best friend, I would like to thank you for your support over the last 11 years. I couldn’t ask for a better friend.
ABSTRACT

Perceptions of Empowerment: A Quantitative Analysis

This quantitative study investigated the relationships between perceptions of empowerment and position in a non-profit organization using three widely used empowerment instruments. This study also examined relationships that may or may not exist between the three instruments used in the survey. The primary goals of the study were to examine presumed, but untested, associations between perceptions of empowerment and position in the organization. This study was conducted based on extant data retrieved from a large blood collection organization that was obtained by a consultant in response to a management development effort. The sample in this study was 227 members of this blood collection organization; 20 account managers; 26 administrative personnel; 47 collection supervisors; 97 donor specialists; 21 mobile unit assistants; and 8 members of senior management.

The three instruments used in the study were Spreitzer’s psychological empowerment instrument (1995), the Empowerment Barometer (Randolph, 1995), and the Gallup Climate Survey (Buckingham and Coffman, 1999). The reported scores were separated according to job title and relationships between position and reported perceptions were analyzed. The different scales on the three instruments were also compared to each other to determine if any relationships existed between the three instruments using correlation procedures.
A number of significant relationships were found. Account managers, collection supervisors, and administrative personnel consistently reported the highest perceptions of empowerment on all three instruments. Donor specialists and mobile unit assistants consistently reported the lowest perceptions of empowerment on all three instruments. Surprisingly, senior managers also consistently reported low perceptions of empowerment on all three instruments.

Competence from psychological empowerment was found to have no significant relationship to any of the other scales on either organizational empowerment or the climate survey categories. The other scales of psychological empowerment were found to have positive relationships with the scales of organizational empowerment and the climate survey categories. The scales of organizational empowerment and the climate survey categories were found to have significant positive relationships.

These results support the theoretical notion that relationships exist between level and perceptions of empowerment; however, the direction of those relationships is different than previously assumed. Those in the middle of the organization perceive higher levels of empowerment than do those at the top or at the bottom. Implications for management development as well as the contribution the HRD practice are discussed.
CONTENTS

Acknowledgement
Abstract
Table of Contents
Table of Tables/Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction
Overview of the problem  1
Problem statement  2
Purpose of the study  4
Significance of the study  5
Definitions  6
Research design overview  8
Research questions  9

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature
Brief history of management theory and its relation to empowerment  11
Brief review of empowerment concepts  12
Definitions of empowerment  12
Current perspectives on empowerment  13
Psychological empowerment  15
Meaning  16
Competence  17
Self-determination  17
Impact  17
Organizational empowerment  17
Information sharing  19
Creating autonomy through boundaries  20
Replacing hierarchies with self-managed teams  22
Gallup climate study  22
Gaps in Literature  25
Summary  26

Chapter 3: Methodology
Site and sample  27
Data collection methods  28
Instruments and measures  28
Psychological empowerment  29
Organizational empowerment  29
Gallup climate survey  29
Data Collection  32
Surveys  32
Survey response rate 33
Data analysis 33
   Job title analysis 33
   Statistical significance 34
   Correlation analysis 35

Chapter 4: Results
   Overview of study results 37
   Presentation of findings 39
      Research question 1 39
      Research question 2 40
      Research question 3 42
      Research question 4 44
   Summary review of study’s key findings 47

Chapter 5: Implications and Recommendations for further study
   Brief review and purpose of study 49
   Brief summary of key findings and discussion 51
      Research question 1 51
      Research question 2 54
      Research question 3 59
      Research question 4 62
   Conceptual implications from study 64
   Limitations to the generalizability of the study 66
   Implications for HRD practice 67
   Recommendations for future research 68
   Conclusion 69

References 71

Appendix A: Survey
Appendix B: Results of survey for organization
Appendix C: Results of survey by district
TABLE OF TABLES/FIGURES

Tables
Table 1: Mean scores by job title for psychological empowerment 40
Table 2: Mean scores by job title for organizational empowerment 41
Table 3: Mean scores by job title for climate survey 43
Table 4: Interrelations between psychological empowerment and organizational empowerment 44
Table 5: Interrelations between psychological empowerment and the climate Categories 45
Table 6: Interrelations between climate categories and organizational Empowerment 46

Figures
Figure 1: Psychological and organizational empowerment measures and associated definitions 30
Figure 2: Camps and associated questions for Gallup survey 31
Figure 3: Job titles with brief description of function/duties 35
Figure 4: Overview of key findings from the study 38
Figure 5: Overview of key findings from the study 50
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Overview of the Problem

The need for organizations to become and remain competitive in today’s business environment has caused many organizations to attempt to revitalize the way they run their business. Today’s employee must be able to handle not only the daily pressures of work, but they must also be able to deal with ever changing conditions. The development of the global market place, along with innovations in work technologies and an increasing demand for quality and flexibility in products and services, has created a need for an employee who will be ready to handle almost any situation. Downsizing of many traditionally hierarchical organizations has created a need for organizations to demand more of their fewer employees (Randolph, 1995). When attempting to create a situation where both the organization and the employee can be successful, many organizations have turned to empowerment as a business strategy.

Empowerment has been generally viewed as a sub category of management and motivational theories (Maslow, 1943; Lewin, 1947; Follet, 1949; McClelland, 1975). Research on management practice relates empowered employees with enhanced innovation, increased adaptability/flexibility, improved customer relations, as well as increased employee satisfaction (Honold, 1997). Empowerment is a term that is used often in many different organizations. Yet, rarely do people define the word empowerment exactly the same from
organization to organization. Webster's dictionary defines empowerment as "to authorize, commission, or license". William Byham (1988) refers to empowerment as "a feeling of job ownership and commitment brought about through cooperation, sharing, and working together." Peter Block (1987) states that empowerment is a "state of mind as well as a result of position, policies, and practices". And Stephen Covey (1989) states that empowerment becomes possible when four conditions are met: win-win agreements, accountability, self-supervision, and helpful systems and structures.

Not much empirical research has been done to support the theories of empowerment that exist. Most empowerment research focuses on the "giving" of authority and power to subordinates by management. This point of view, while it appears to have merit, implies that employees inherently don't have much power over their actions in the workplace.

Problem Statement

Previous studies of empowerment have focused on empowerment as an outgrowth of participative management (MacGregor, 1960; Likert, 1961) and motivational (Maslow, 1943; Herzberg, 1968; Alderfer, 1969; McClelland, 1975) theories. Those studies seem to have focused on empowerment as a unidirectional set of actions, and assumed that empowerment was something that managers 'passed on' to their employees. More recent studies of empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995; Spreitzer, 1996) focus on the motivational view of empowerment. These studies agree that empowerment is not a one sided
phenomenon. Instead, true empowerment requires involvement by management and employees. A manager cannot “empower” someone who does not wish to be empowered. Likewise, managers cannot take power away from employees. Power is a characteristic all possess (McClelland, 1975). The roles of a manager is to establish systems and help create the environment that allows a person’s inherent power to be released in positive, productive ways (Randolph, 1995; Randolph, 1999).

This study focuses on two forms of empowerment that have been recently researched. Psychological empowerment focuses on the individual’s perception of work-related empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995). It can be measured through four constructs: meaning, impact, self-determination, and competence. The next form of empowerment examined in this study is organizational empowerment. Organizational empowerment focuses on individual or group’s perception of workplace factors that relate to empowerment (Randolph, 1995). Organizational empowerment is comprised of three constructs: sharing information, creating autonomy through boundaries, and supporting self-managed teams.

Research is growing on the concept of empowerment. Many practitioners are promoting empowerment as an important part of most management development efforts. However, the research is limited. Most of the research on empowerment focuses on the individual (Spreitzer, 1995) or the organizational perspective (Randolph, 1995). Most research focuses on middle managers
(Spreitzer, 1995; Randolph, 1995) and fails to address the issue of position in the organization.

Most research is also done in for-profit organizations. There has not been a study that examines perceptions of empowerment in non-profit organizations. Additionally, most studies of empowerment focus on one perspective of empowerment and use a survey instrument that addresses that perspective only. Research has not been conducted that examines empowerment from more than one perspective and uses more than one instrument to examine perceptions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study is to examine the perceptions of empowerment as experienced by members of a large non-profit organization. Specifically, this study examines extant data collected from a survey given to the members of that organization. The survey measured the perceived levels of psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995), organizational empowerment (Randolph, 1995), and the 12 climate questions developed by the Gallup organization (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). This study is designed to address whether or not perceived empowerment is based on the position a person holds in their organization. It is also designed to uncover any relationships that exist between three commonly used empowerment instruments.
Significance of the Study

Traditionally, organizations have had issues surrounding productivity and have tried to implement many programs in an effort to increase those levels in an attempt to remain competitive with other organizations.

This study focuses on perceptions of empowerment in a non-profit organization. Research on the concept of empowerment has generally focused on for-profit organizations (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Randolph, 1995; Spreitzer, 1995). There is not any available literature that focuses on empowerment in non-profit organizations. Due to the uncertainty that exists in non-profit organizations, not to mention scarce resources, employee satisfaction can be low at times. Non-profits, along with many other organizations, are examining concepts such as empowerment as a way to create an environment where employees are likely to stay and are equipped to respond to an ever-changing workplace.

Research has generally focused on one dimension of empowerment; that is, empowerment from the individual perspective (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1995), or from the perspective of the manager/organization (McClelland, 1975; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Burke, 1986; Block, 1987). This study was conducted in an effort to tie together three different perspectives of empowerment to lend credibility to the idea that empowerment is a collaborative effort between the employee and the organization.
Research using psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995) and organizational empowerment (Randolph, 1995) has focused on management as a point of examination. This study was conducted to examine levels of perceived empowerment by all members of an organization regardless of position in an attempt to gather information that can be more easily generalized and to provide a blueprint for future initiatives to increase employee satisfaction. It was also conducted to add to the body of research that empowerment should be a collaborative effort between the individual and the organization of which the individual is a part of. Finally, it was also conducted in an attempt to link different instruments in one survey of empowerment.

The study is designed to add to the body of knowledge for HRD professionals. It is designed to help HRD professionals understand how empowerment will vary by level. It will also provide insight on training and coaching approaches that can be employed by HRD practitioners.

Definitions

The following terms are used in this study. They will be discussed in greater detail in the literature review and methodology sections:

1. **Psychological empowerment** refers to an individual’s work-related intrinsic motivation that can be measured by a person’s beliefs on work-related impact, meaning, self-determination, and competence (Spreitzer, 1995).

2. **Organizational empowerment** refers to the three organizational strategies posited to enable employee empowerment. These strategies are:
widespread sharing of business information; use of boundaries and structure to enhance autonomy; and replacement of hierarchy with self-managing teams (Randolph, 1995).

3. **Climate** is used to define the measures in the Gallup study. Category 1 refers to the “base camp”; category 2 refers to camp 1; category 3 refers to camp 2, and category 3 refers to camp 3 (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999).

4. **Manager** refers to a person who is responsible for directing a business or other enterprise and have people management responsibilities (American Heritage College Dictionary, 1993).

5. **Employee** refers to a person who works for another in return for compensation and who does not manage others (American Heritage College Dictionary, 1993).

6. **Donor specialist** refers to a group of people in a blood collection agency who are responsible for reviewing donor histories and the safe collection and handling of blood products.

7. **Mobile unit assistants** refer to the group of people in a blood collection agency who are responsible for the processing, packaging and transportation of blood after it has been collected.

8. **Administrative personnel** refers to the group of people in an organization who are responsible for the general office duties (e.g., answering phones, filing, typing correspondence, etc.)
9. *Senior level manager* refers to the group of people in the blood collection agency who are accountable for establishing and enforcing company policy, as well as overseeing daily functions of the organization.

10. *Account manager* refers to the group of people in the blood collection organization who are responsible for securing new accounts from which to collect blood.

11. *Collection supervisor* refers to the group of people in the blood collection organization who are responsible for directing the efforts of the donor specialists.

*Research Design Overview*

This study investigated the relationships that exist between the different groups of employees in a non-profit organization. It also examined relationships that exist between the different survey instruments used in the study. This study was conducted using extant data collected from a non-profit organization by an external consultant in response to a request by the management of the organization to measure perceptions of employee empowerment.

The extant data was obtained by the use of a survey instrument (See Appendix A). This instrument is a five-section questionnaire that measures the perceptions of empowerment of the person completing the survey. Specifically, the survey measured the perceived levels of psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995), organizational empowerment (Randolph, 1996), and the 12
climate questions developed by the Gallup organization (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999).

The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, as well as discriminant analysis, correlation and regression procedures.

Research Questions

The primary questions addressed by the present study are:

1. Is there a relationship between the perceived levels of empowerment and position held in the organization?

2. What relationships exist between the different constructs in the three empowerment and climate instruments?

The research hypotheses examined in this study are:

1. The employees who feel most psychologically empowered will be those who hold the highest positions in the organization.

   1A. Senior Level managers will have the highest mean scores on levels of perceived psychological empowerment.

   1B. Donor Specialists will have the lowest mean scores on levels of perceived psychological empowerment.

2. The employees who perceive the highest levels of organizational empowerment will be those who hold the highest positions in the company.

   2A. Senior level managers will have the highest mean scores on levels of perceived organizational empowerment.
2B. Donor Specialists will have the lowest mean scores on levels of perceived organizational empowerment.

3. The employees who feel most empowered and score highest on the Gallup questions will be those who are at the highest levels of the company.

3A. Senior level managers will have the highest mean scores on the climate categories.

3B. Donor Specialists will have the lowest mean scores on the categories.

4. Relationships exist between the individual determinants of each instrument used in the survey.

4A. A positive relationship exists between the determinants of psychological empowerment and organizational empowerment.

4B. A positive relationship exists between the determinants of psychological empowerment and the climate categories.

4C. A negative relationship exists between the determinants of organizational empowerment and the climate categories.
CHAPTER 2

Review of Related Literature

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceived levels of empowerment as experienced by members of a non-profit organization. Literature related to the study is included in this chapter and will be presented as follows:

1. Brief history of management theory and its relation to empowerment
2. Brief review of empowerment concepts
3. Review of the measures of psychological empowerment
4. Review of the measures of organizational empowerment
5. Review of the origins of the climate survey and its implications.

*Brief history of management theory and its relation to empowerment*

Early studies of management theory (Taylor, 1915; Mayo, 1945) focused on production. The goal of management was to put systems in place that would allow for more efficient output of goods and services. As the world moved into the 20th century, theories of management evolved into theories of leadership (Follet, 1949; Lewin, 1954; MacGregor, 1960), which focused on what leaders needed to do or have in place to be effective leaders.

The concept of empowerment of employees can also be found in theories of motivation. Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy of needs focused on esteem and social affiliation as part of the journey to self-actualization. Esteem needs, or the need for humans to achieve and be recognized, lead directly to self-actualization, or a person reaching his or her full potential. Alderfer’s (1969) ERG theory, or
existence, relatedness, and growth, focused on similar ideas; that is, a person moving through stages in with an overall goal of being all he or she can be. Herzberg, Manusner and Snydberman (1959) and Herzberg (1968) developed the idea of job enrichment, which focused on the employee having increased control and decision-making ability. Employee empowerment was also addressed in the literature on job autonomy (Herzberg, Mausner, et.al, 1959; Herzberg, 1968; Hackman and Oldham, 1976; Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Menon, 1995).

Leadership that empowers subordinates as a primary component of managerial and organizational effectiveness is also called empowerment (Kanter, 1977; Block, 1987; Bennis, 1989; Kanter, 1989). Yet another aspect has its beginnings in the analysis of internal organizational power and control (Tannenbaum, 1968; McClelland, 1975; Kanter, 1979). This aspect showed that the sharing of power and control increases organizational effectiveness. Other dimensions identify the team aspect of empowerment (Beckhard, 1969; Neilson, 1986). Research on alienation (Seeman, 1959) and discussion of employee participation (Lawler, 1992) are also precursors of the concept of employee empowerment.

**Brief review of empowerment concepts**

**Definitions of empowerment**

It is difficult to determine a specific definition for empowerment. The meaning often varies depending on the person defining the term. Early literature on empowerment (Tannenbaum, 1968; Kanter, 1977; Block, 1987; Bennis, 1989;
Sullivan, 1994; Sullivan and Howell, 1996) focused on the manager’s role in empowering employees. Originally, the definition of empowerment was taken from the dictionary, which referred to empowerment as giving power to another person. Similarly, Kanter (1977) defined empowerment as giving power to people who are at a disadvantaged spot in the organization. Using Kanter’s definition as a reference point, managers considered themselves empowering managers if they were delegating more of the decision making process to those who report to them. In this role, managers functioned less as supervisors and more as coaches who were available to help employees solve problems (Malone, 1997). According to the supporters of this form of empowerment, employees who reported to managers with this style of management were more satisfied with their managers and performed at a higher level than those who were not privy to this style of management (Keller and Dansereau, 1995).

According to Menon (1995), the act of delegating more responsibility to employees is not necessarily empowering them. It is important to not only increase the level of responsibility of employees, but also to provide them with opportunities to develop their sense of self worth as well as giving an employee a voice in the decision making process in order to truly empower an employee (Vogt and Murrell, 1990).

*Current perspectives on empowerment*

Empowerment is a two way street. Vogt and Murrell (1990) define empowerment as an act of building, developing and increasing power by working
with others, and of having the ability to influence one’s own behavior. Vogt and Murrell (1990) identify six dimensions of empowerment: educating, leading, mentoring/supporting, providing, structuring, and one that incorporates all of the above. In this perspective, empowerment comes either from the individual or from an outside force. The role of management in such an organization is to provide a compelling mission, a structure that emphasizes flexibility and autonomy, rewards for participation and a lack of punishment for risk taking, as well as ongoing involvement programs and support for the integration of employees’ work and family lives (Honold, 1997). Therefore, empowerment is not a top down initiative where the managers “give” their direct reports power. If the employee does not accept the power, there is no empowerment.

In a related article, Martin (1994) suggests that personal empowerment demanded self-confidence and strong work ethic and that it was a corporation’s responsibility to provide non-regimented task design and job-specific training. It is also important to give employees positive feedback, information, resources, supportive policies, and a stress-minimized working environment.

Macy, Thompson, and Farais (1995) identified that the major components of high performing organizations are similar to the components found in the literature on empowering organizations. Activities such as multi-skilling, cross training, self-directed work teams, and horizontal design help to create a sense of empowerment with every employee. Mallak and Kurstedt (1996) believe that empowerment is an expansion of the traditional participatory management
concept. They developed a model of empowerment that includes four concepts: Intrinsically motivated behavior and internal justifications for actions combined with management releasing some of its authority and responsibility and developing services that integrate coworkers for problem solving. This model recognizes that the move towards empowerment is a gradual one and that management's role is to provide assistance to individuals as they move through the four developmental phases. The next sections will discuss the concepts of psychological empowerment, organizational empowerment and the Gallup climate study.

*Psychological empowerment*

Theories of participative management focus on the manager's role in empowering employees (Likert, 1961). In order to enhance performance and workplace satisfaction, managers should share the decision making power with their employees. The theories of employee involvement emphasize the flow of power, information, rewards, and training to the lowest level possible within the organization in an attempt to increase worker discretion. Conger and Kanungo (1988) defined empowerment one dimensionally using self-efficacy, or the belief that one possesses the skills and abilities necessary to perform a job or task well (Gist, 1987).

Realizing that current literature surrounding the concept of empowerment suggests that the one-dimensional approaches are not good enough (Honold, 1997) and that effective empowerment must be multi-dimensional, Thomas and
Velthouse (1990) expanded on Conger and Kanungo’s (1988) definition of empowerment as self-efficacy. They defined empowerment not as the sum of one dimension of a person’s emotional makeup; instead, they defined it as a mixture of a person’s experienced psychological states or cognitions. This more complex definition of empowerment focuses on the experience of empowerment; or what an individual needs to experience in order to view him/herself as empowered, rather than focusing on what specific practices management should employ to empower the individual.

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) developed the concept of psychological empowerment. It describes empowerment as an interaction of four different cognitions: a sense of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. These four categories are not to be thought of as an outcome of empowerment; rather, the four categories are the essence of psychological empowerment. Spreitzer (1995) further developed and validated this multi-dimensional measure of psychological empowerment by surveying a group of managers.

**Meaning**

Meaning is defined as the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual’s own ideals or standards (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). It also involves a fit between the requirements of a work role and beliefs, values, and behaviors (Hackman & Oldham, 1980).
Competence

Competence is an individual’s belief in his or her capability to perform activities with skill (Gist, 1987). Competence is also referred to self-efficacy, the dimension explored in the study by Conger and Kanungo in 1988. High levels of competence are associated with initiating behaviors, high effort, and persistence in the face of obstacles and its end result is personal mastery (Bandura, 1977; 1989).

Self-Determination

Competence is defined as a sense of personal mastery, while self-determination refers to an individual’s sense of having choice in initiating and regulating actions (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989). Choice is the central experience in self-determination (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Perceived choice tends to produce higher levels of flexibility, creativity, initiative, resiliency, and self-regulation. Self-determination is reflected by having autonomy in the initiation and continuation of work behaviors and processes and is manifested in an employee’s decision about work methods, pace, and effort (Spector, 1986; Bell & Staw, 1989).

Impact

Impact is the degree to which an individual can influence strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes at work (Ashforth, 1989). It is referred to the degree to which behavior is seen as “making a difference” in terms of accomplishing the purpose of the task (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).
To sum up, psychological empowerment is defined as a motivational construct comprised of four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. These four cognitions represent an active orientation to a work role (Spreitzer, 1995). The four dimensions work collaboratively to create an overall sense of empowerment in an individual. If one of the dimensions is lacking, the general feeling of empowerment will be at a decreased level, but it would not completely eliminate the total feeling of empowerment. Thus, the four dimensions specify a “nearly complete or sufficient set of cognitions” for understanding psychological empowerment (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

*Organizational Empowerment*

According to Randolph (1995), empowerment is not just “giving people the power to make decisions”; people already have the power to make the decisions needed to help the company become more successful. Blanchard, Carlos, & Randolph (1995) believe empowerment is a combination of personal freedom and a sense of responsibility for results. Randolph (1995) realizes true empowerment involves recognizing and releasing into the organization the inherent power people already have in their wealth of useful knowledge and internal motivation. Randolph states that many managers believe that publicly announcing a desire for an empowered workforce will make it happen. He also acknowledges that some managers recognize that empowerment is a process, but that they often become discouraged by the magnitude of the change
required, especially in their own behavior, to effectively implement such a change. Many managers find it difficult to navigate the empowerment process. A manageable pathway towards organizational empowerment was developed which detailed three keys for organizations to use to realize the move towards empowerment (Blanchard, Carlos, & Randolph, 1995; Randolph, 1995):

1. Information sharing
2. Creating autonomy through boundaries
3. Replacing old hierarchies with self-managed teams.

*Information Sharing*

Information sharing is an often-misunderstood key to effective organizational empowerment. To implement the concept of organizational empowerment, the first step is to let employees know how they and the company are doing, and if their actions are making a difference (Randolph, 1995). Once employees have this information, they tend to have an understanding of the current situation in clear terms. Traditional hierarchical thinking among all members of the organization is minimized. This facilitates the building of trust throughout the organization. Sufficient levels of trust throughout the organization helps people behave more responsibly and to think and act like owners of the organization (Blanchard, Carlos, & Randolph, 1995).

Randolph (1995) suggests three additional issues that relate and possibly inhibit the information sharing process. First, he speaks of the way companies deal with mistakes. Randolph suggests that the organization that asks “who did
it?” when a mistake is made is not an empowered organization because it is only sharing information to assess blame, not to solve problems. Second, the question of where goals fit into the empowerment process must be examined. Randolph suggests that goals should be viewed within an informational context. He believes goals should be viewed as milestones of progress and that once they are achieved, higher, more challenging goals should be set. The sharing of information drives this process. Finally, Randolph mentions that this step can often be bogged down within the organization. There are managers who will fear the loss of control by sharing information, so they will withhold parts. When this happens, Randolph refers to the managers speaking the language of empowerment, but not putting any action behind it.

Creating Autonomy through Boundaries

The second key is to create autonomy through boundaries. This admittedly sounds like a paradox (Randolph, 1995; Blanchard, Carlos, & Randolph, 1995). The overall goal of empowerment is to minimize structures so that employees can operate autonomously (Randolph, 1995). However, for this to be effective, managers must first lay out the ground rules for the employees. Creating autonomy through boundaries builds on information sharing. It clarifies the vision with input from everyone involved. It aids in the translation of the vision into roles and goals. Structure defines the values and rules that underlie desired actions, which assists in the decision making process. Structure also provides the
basis for employees to operate independently, and reminds employees that they are on a journey, not a race (Blanchard, Carlos, & Randolph, 1995).

Randolph (1995) offers suggestions to help provide structure to employees. First, he advocates the use of a vision statement that is a collaborative effort of the entire organization. A clear vision enable every member of the organization to see how the vision relates directly to his or her job, and enables the members to feel empowered to help achieve the vision.

Randolph also recommends setting goals. He suggests they be milestones of progress between the informed employee and manager and should be specific, measurable, realistic, and be related to the vision of the company.

Another step in creating structure is establishing rules for decision-making (Randolph, 1995). Often, employees see empowerment as an opportunity to make all the decisions, but tend to step away when they realize that they will be held accountable for those decisions. A clear sense of an employee’s decision-making power will enable him or her to make more decisions as well as to be accountable for them.

A final step in creating autonomy through structure is found in the performance appraisal process. Randolph (1995) suggests that the appraisal process be restructured into a performance management process that is more focused toward collaboration and continuous improvement. Finally, Randolph recommends constant training on learning the new skill of empowerment. This is done to help unlearn the hierarchical habits they have picked up along the way.
Replacing old hierarchies with self-managed teams

At the same time a company lays out new rules and structures to create autonomy, it needs to reduce dependence on the hierarchy (Randolph, 1995). Randolph believes empowered teams are different from participative teams, quality circles, or semi-autonomous teams. Empowered teams are directly involved in the decision-making and implementation process. They are also held accountable for the decisions made. Empowered teams are usually able to accomplish more than empowered individuals. However, the ability to work in a self-directed team is not an innate characteristic. It must be learned; everyone in the organization must have continuous training on developing team skills. Everyone in the organization must also buy in to the idea of having self-directed teams. Commitment and support must come from the top of the organization.

To sum up, organizational empowerment is a process by which an organization can release the power inherent in an individual. This can be accomplished through the organization sharing information with its employees, by creating autonomy through the establishment of boundaries for each employee, and by replacing the traditional hierarchies with self-managed teams (Randolph, 1995).

Gallup Climate Survey

The Gallup Organization developed a model (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999) that describes the path between the individual contribution of every employee and the ultimate business outcome of any company – an increase in
overall organizational value. The model includes the following dimensions: 1) identify strengths; 2) the right fit; 3) great managers; 4) engaged employees; 5) loyal customers; 6) sustainable growth; 7) real profit increase; and 8) stock increase.

The role of a great manager is to identify the employee’s individual strengths. A strength is defined as a person’s recurring patterns of thought, feeling, or behavior – his or her talents – and less to learned skills and acquired knowledge (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). The next step in the process is to position people within the organization based on their talents. According to Buckingham and Coffman (1999), many organizations waste time focusing on what their employees don’t have, when they should be focused on building on the natural strengths of their employees and placing them in appropriate roles in the organization.

The next step in the process is to engage the talented employees. There are many ways this can be accomplished – increased pay, more generous benefit packages – but Buckingham and Coffman (1999) refer to these as low-character solutions. The only way to effectively engage employees is to select great managers and then provide them with a climate friendly to the Four Keys. The Four Keys of great managers are: selecting for talent, defining the right outcomes, focusing on strengths, and finding the right fit.

Based on this research, the Gallup organization set out to determine what makes organizations successful. In the process of developing a set of questions
that would answer that question, more than a million people were interviewed. To determine the specific questions that needed to be answered to form the twelve questions, focus groups were conducted. The focus group included employees from each company's most productive departments. Members of the Gallup organization administered open-ended questions, and using the results of the focus groups, surveys were developed. Once the surveys were administered to the million employees, analyses were done to identify factors within the data.

Five factors consistently emerged:

1. *Work/Environment Procedures* – issues related to the physical work environment such as benefits, safety, cleanliness, pay, benefits, and policies.

2. *Immediate Supervisor* – issues related to the behavior of the employees' immediate supervisor such as trust, recognition, development, understanding and discipline.

3. *Team/Co-workers* – issues related to the employees' perceptions of team members such as cooperation, shared goals, and communication.

4. *Overall Company/Senior Management* – issues related to company initiatives and leaders such as faith in the company's mission and strategy or in the competence of the leaders themselves.

5. *Individual Commitment/Service Intention* – issues related to the employees' sense of their own commitment to the company and its customers such as pride in the company, likelihood to recommend the
company to friends as a place to work, likelihood to stay with the company for their whole career, and desire to provide excellent customer service to customers.

The most compelling factor of the five listed above is the immediate supervisor factor. It explains an extremely large percentage of the variance in the data. Once all the data was analyzed, a set of twelve questions was developed to test the strength of an organization based on the immediate supervisor factor.

**Gaps in the Literature**

Current research focuses on organizations that are in business to make money (Spreitzer, 1995; Randolph, 1995; Buckingham and Coffman, 1999). There is not much research that has examined the question of empowerment in non-profit organizations, which often face the same issues as those experienced by for-profit organizations.

Research on empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995; Randolph, 1995) has also focused on perceptions of empowerment from a managerial perspective only. Empirical research does not appear to take into consideration the perceptions of empowerment throughout the levels of an organization. It also fails to address the question of which level would perceive the highest levels of empowerment.

Empowerment is viewed by many as the amount of power a person possesses (McClelland, 1975). Because of this, it appears logical to assume that people who hold higher positions (i.e., managers) would perceive higher levels of empowerment. It also appears logical to assume that those at lower levels (i.e.,
employees) would perceive lower levels of empowerment. However, empirical research to examine this often-assumed idea does not exist.

Most research (Spreitzer, 1995; Randolph, 1995; Buckingham and Coffman, 1999) focuses on one measure of empowerment. Empirical research that examines the use of more than one widely recognized instrument in an individual study does not appear to exist. This study is also designed to address the use of more than one instrument in a survey in an attempt to obtain information from more than one perspective.

Summary

This chapter reviewed management theory and its relation to empowerment. It then discussed concepts of empowerment, including past and current definitions. Psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995) and organizational empowerment (Randolph, 1995) were also discussed. Finally, the Gallup climate survey and its origins were discussed.

In reviewing the literature, three important gaps in the body of literature were uncovered. There were not any studies found which identified empowerment based on a person’s position in an organization. Also, most studies conducted focus on for-profit organizations as opposed to non-profits. Finally, most studies on empowerment focus on the use of one instrument to gauge perceptions of empowerment. This study will examine each of the above questions in an attempt to fill the gaps found in the literature.
CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to examine extant data on empowerment collected via survey from a non-profit organization in an attempt to understand better the relationship between perceptions of empowerment and organizational level; and the cross relationships between empowerment measures. This chapter details information regarding the study, the instrument used to collect the data, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures.

Site and sample

Site

This study examined the perceived levels of empowerment by the members of a blood collection organization in upstate New York. This organization employs approximately 500 employees in this division of its business. The organization is highly regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and there is some degree of competition with the services this organization offers. A target population is defined as the entire collection of entities of interest to the researcher (Passmore, 2001). The target population for the survey used to analyze this data was the employees at various levels of a blood collecting organization. This study can also be considered a census study because the survey was given to everyone in the organization.

Sample
A sample is defined as part of a population (Passmore, 2001). The sample used in the data analysis is the 227 members of the blood collection organization who completed and returned the survey to be analyzed.

**Data collection methods**

The data was collected through the use of a survey that was assembled by the consultant hired by the organization. The organization's managers at team meetings distributed the survey. The research was initiated by the senior management team in the organization as part of an effort to improve managerial and organizational practices throughout the organization.

**Limitations**

Limitations of the study include: 1) the lack of demographical information available; 2) same source bias; and 3) organizational structure and nature of the business.

**Delimitations**

The research sample is composed only of members of this blood collection agency. The study focused only on the issue of position in relation to perceptions of empowerment.

**Instruments and Measures**

The survey consisted of 3 parts: items measuring levels of psychological empowerment, items measuring levels of organizational empowerment, and questions from the Gallup climate survey. A copy of the survey used can be found in Appendix A. First, the initial data was compiled and analyzed for mean
scores on each scale for each instrument. Psychological empowerment was measured using a seven point Likert scale, with 1 lowest and 7 highest; Organizational empowerment was measured using a six point Likert scale, with 1 lowest and 6 highest; the climate categories was measured using a 5 point Likert scale, with 1 lowest and 5 highest.

Psychological Empowerment

The perception of psychological empowerment was measured with Spreitzer’s (1995) empowerment instrument. The instrument has four scales: impact, meaning, self-determination, and competence. The measure with associated definitions of each measure is listed in Figure 1.

Organizational Empowerment

The Empowerment Barometer (Randolph, 1996) was used to measure organizational empowerment. The instrument measures three scales: information sharing, structure, and self-managed teams. The measure with associated definitions of each measure is also listed in Figure 1.

Gallup climate poll

Gallup used its 12 climate questions to measure the work environment. The instrument focuses on “four camps”, or dimensions of the work environment: base camp, or “what do I get?”; camp 1, or “what do I give?”; camp 2, or “do I belong here?”; and camp 3, or “how can we all grow?”. The questions from the survey along with the camps each question is associated with is listed in Figure 2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT MEASURES</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>The value of a work goal, judged in relation to an individual's own ideals and standards; the fit of the work to the beliefs and values of the individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>The degree to which an individual can influence strategic, administrative or operating outcomes at work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-determination</td>
<td>The extent to which an individual has choice in initiation and regulating outcomes; the extent of work-related decision autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>The individual's strength of belief in his/her capability to perform work-related activities with skill; work-related self efficacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATIONAL EMPOWERMENT MEASURES</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharing Information</td>
<td>The extent to which critical financial and business information is shared with employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear Boundaries</td>
<td>The extent to which goals, visions, decision boundaries and structures are clarified so as to enable employee self-management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Self-Managing Teams</td>
<td>The extent to which self-directed teams are supported and managers let go of control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1. Psychological and Organizational Empowerment Measures and associated definitions*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Camp</th>
<th>Questions associated with camp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Base Camp: What do I get?</td>
<td>1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camp 1: what do I give?</td>
<td>3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for doing good work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Does my supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about me as a person?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camp 2: do I belong here?</td>
<td>7. At work, do my opinions seem to count?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Does the mission/purpose of my company make me feel my job is important?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Are my co-workers committed to doing quality work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Do I have a best friend at work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camp 3: how can we all grow?</td>
<td>11. In the last six months, has someone talked to me about my progress?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. This last year, have I had opportunities at work to learn and grow?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2. Camps and associated questions for Gallup survey*
Data Collection

The senior management of this organization requested the assistance of a management consultant regarding issues related to employee morale and motivation. The consultant entered the organization and upon the request of senior management, provided an empowerment and climate survey.

Surveys

The consultant compiled the surveys for this study. After discussion with the consultant about the purpose of the study, managers administered it to the employees. The survey participants were instructed to complete the survey and then turn it in to a designated member of the team. This designated member was then responsible for placing the surveys in an envelope and forwarding the results via US mail to the consultant.

The members of the organization were instructed in the cover letter not to place their name anywhere on the survey, as the results would be held in the strictest confidence. No demographic information was collected on any of the participants for this reason. The cover letter explained that the information was being collected for feedback to be used in a future management development program that would take place in two months. The survey information also explained that the survey results were intended to help the managers work more effectively with employees at all levels, and to enhance the organization’s overall satisfaction and productivity. Different colored surveys were coded for specific
job titles (e.g., green for donor specialists, yellow for mobile unit assistants, blue for administrative personnel, etc).

*Survey response rates.* Data collection took place between August and September 2001. The survey response rates were as follows: 350 surveys distributed to group; 227 surveys received by the consultant (65% response rate).

*Data Analysis*

The data collected through the surveys was analyzed using several data analysis methods. Once the surveys were received, each score on each measure was added and a mean score calculated for each scale for the organization based on the Likert scale for each instrument (see Appendix B). The scales include the four determinants of psychological empowerment: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. It also includes the three measures of organizational empowerment: information, structures and boundaries, and self-management; finally, it included the four categories of the climate survey. Once the mean scores were calculated, they were put into chart form based on district (see Appendix C).

*Job title analysis*

The data was organized by the job titles of the employees who participated in the study. Six job titles were represented in the survey results: account managers, administrative, collection supervisors, donor specialists, mobile unit assistants, and senior management. Two of the categories, senior
management and account managers are salaried, or exempt positions. The other four positions, administrative, collection supervisors, donor specialists, and mobile unit assistants, are hourly, or non-exempt. A brief outline of the general functions and duties of each position can be found in Figure 3.

Using the original data, mean scores were separated according to job title for each scale of the three measures. The mean scores for each scale were then averaged to present an average score by job title for each instrument (i.e., psychological empowerment, organizational empowerment, and climate) used in the survey. Data was then tested for statistical significance at the .05 level between the scores on the measures in an attempt to ascertain whether or not the differences found between mean scores on each measure were actually statistically significant.

*Statistical significance*

Once the data was aggregated according to job title, tests for statistical significance were performed to analyze differences between mean scores of different job titles using ANOVA.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Management</td>
<td>Administrative and managerial personnel, who set broad policies, exercise overall responsibility for execution of these policies, and direct individual departments or special phases of a firm's operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Account Managers</td>
<td>Engaged wholly or primarily in direct selling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Staff</td>
<td>Administrative support occupations where the activities are predominantly non-manual through some manual work not directly involved with altering or transporting the products is included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection Supervisors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donor Specialists Mobile Unit Assistants</td>
<td>Requires a combination of basic scientific knowledge and manual skill which can be obtained through 2 years of post high school education, such as is offered in many technical institutes and junior colleges, or through on the job training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3 Job titles with brief description of function/duties*

**Correlation analyses**

The data was also analyzed with Pearson correlation procedures. Pearson correlation analysis describes the extent to which two variables are related. Correlation coefficients can be either positive, where both variables increase or decrease together, or negative, where one increases as the other decreases, or vice versa. Correlation statistics are important because they permit a researcher to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between variables.
It is important for to note that correlation does not equal causation. Often, there is a third factor that causes the relationship to exist between the two variables. Hence, researchers should be careful not to imply cause when using correlation studies as a research method.

In this study, the researcher performed correlations among all the measures of the study. For example, the meaning component of the psychological empowerment measure was compared to each of the other components of psychological empowerment, as well as each of the components of the organizational empowerment and climate survey.
CHAPTER 4

Results

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis from the study. Relationships among the following constructs were investigated: perceived levels of psychological empowerment and position in the organization, perceived levels of organizational empowerment and position in the organization, perceptions of climate and position in the organization, and the relationships that exist between the three instruments used in the initial survey. This chapter begins with a summary of the key findings, then presents these findings in detail, and then presents again a summary of the main findings. Specifically, the sections are: 1) overview of study results; 2) presentation of findings for each of the nine hypotheses (see pg. 9 for list of all hypotheses), followed by a brief summary for each hypothesis; 3) summary review of study’s key findings.

Overview of study results

As can be seen in Figure 4, the key findings from this study are presented.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding #</th>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1A</td>
<td>Account managers report the highest overall mean scores on perceived psychological empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1B</td>
<td>Donor specialists report the lowest overall mean scores on perceived psychological empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2A</td>
<td>Account managers report the highest overall mean scores on perceived organizational empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2B</td>
<td>Mobile unit assistants report the lowest overall mean scores on perceived organizational empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3A</td>
<td>Administrative staff report highest overall mean score on the climate survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3B</td>
<td>Mobile unit assistants report lowest overall mean score on the climate survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4A</td>
<td>Positive relationships exist between all measures of psychological empowerment and organizational empowerment, with the exception of competence, where no relationships exist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4B</td>
<td>No significant relationship exists between competence (psychological empowerment) and the climate categories or the organizational empowerment scales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>4C</td>
<td>Positive significant relationships exist between all measures of organizational empowerment and the climate categories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4. Overview of key findings from the study*
Presentation of findings for each of the nine hypotheses

Research question 1

Is there a relationship between higher levels of perceived psychological empowerment and position in the organization? The following hypotheses were associated with this question:

Hypothesis 1A: Senior level managers will perceive highest levels of psychological empowerment.

Hypothesis 1B: Donor specialists will perceive lowest levels of psychological empowerment.

Findings on 1A and 1B. Mean scores on each determinant of psychological empowerment were sorted according to job title to examine the relationship between position and perceptions of psychological empowerment. This data was collected from all returned surveys.

Table 1 presents the mean scores aggregated by job title for psychological empowerment. As seen in Table 1, senior level managers do not possess the highest perceived levels of psychological empowerment. Instead, account managers report the highest levels of perceived levels of psychological empowerment, followed by members of the administrative staff. Senior management reported the fifth highest scores. Donor specialists, however, do report the lowest levels of perceived psychological empowerment.
Mean Scores by Job Title for Psychological Empowerment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Account Managers (n=20)</th>
<th>Administrative (n=26)</th>
<th>Collection Supervisors (n=47)</th>
<th>Donor Specialists / BCTs (n=97)</th>
<th>Mobile Unit Assistants (n=21)</th>
<th>Senior Management (n=8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>6.57</td>
<td>6.38</td>
<td>6.57</td>
<td>6.46</td>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>6.52</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>6.29</td>
<td>6.74</td>
<td>6.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Determination</td>
<td>6.03</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>5.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean Score</strong></td>
<td><strong>6.01</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.79</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.52</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.20</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.65</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.49</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research question 2

Is there a relationship between higher levels of perceived organizational empowerment and position in the organization? The following hypotheses were associated with this question:

Hypothesis 2A: Senior level managers will perceive highest levels of organizational empowerment.

Hypothesis 2B: Donor specialists will perceive lowest levels of organizational empowerment.

Findings on 2A and 2B. Mean scores on each determinant of organizational empowerment were sorted according to job title to examine the relationship between position and perceptions of organizational empowerment. The mean
scores of each determinant were then averaged to uncover an average score for each job title.

Table 2 presents the mean scores aggregated by job title for organizational empowerment. A seen in Table 2, senior level managers do not report the highest perceived levels of organizational empowerment. Account managers, followed by the administrative staff, report the highest levels of organizational empowerment. Also, Donor specialists do not report the lowest levels of perceived organizational empowerment. Mobile unit assistants report the lowest levels of perceived organizational empowerment, closely followed by donor specialists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean Scores by Job Title for Organizational Empowerment</th>
<th>Account Managers (n=20)</th>
<th>Administrative (n=26)</th>
<th>Collection Supervisors (n=47)</th>
<th>Donor Specialists / BCTs (n=97)</th>
<th>Mobile Unit Assistants (n=21)</th>
<th>Senior Management (n=8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>4.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure, Boundaries</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Management</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean Score</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.40</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.22</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.14</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.06</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.05</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.12</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research question 3

Is there a relationship between higher reported scores on the Gallup climate survey and position in the organization? The following hypotheses were associated with this question:

Hypothesis 3A: Senior level managers will report highest mean scores on the climate survey.

Hypothesis 3B: Donor specialists will report lowest mean scores on the climate survey.

Findings on 3A and 3B. Mean scores on each of the four categories of the climate survey were sorted according to job title to examine the relationship between position and the climate categories.

Table 3 presents the mean scores aggregated by job title for psychological empowerment. As seen in Table 3, senior level managers do not report the highest scores for the climate survey. Administrative personnel, followed by account managers, report the highest scores on the climate survey. Senior level managers report the fifth highest scores on the climate survey. The table also indicates that Donor specialists do not report the lowest scores for the climate survey. Mobile unit assistants report the lowest mean scores on the climate survey. Donor specialists report the fourth highest scores on the survey.
Table 3

Mean Scores by Job Title for Climate Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Account Managers (n=20)</th>
<th>Administrative (n=26)</th>
<th>Collection Supervisors (n=47)</th>
<th>Donor Specialists / BCTs (n=97)</th>
<th>Mobile Unit Assistants (n=21)</th>
<th>Senior Management (n=8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category 1</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 2</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 3</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 4</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate (average)</td>
<td><strong>4.10</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.19</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.92</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.91</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.88</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.89</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research question 4

Is there a relationship between the three instruments used in the survey?

The following hypotheses were associated with this question:

Hypothesis 4A: A positive relationship exists between the constructs of psychological empowerment and organizational empowerment.

Hypothesis 4B: A positive relationship exists between the constructs of psychological empowerment and the climate measures.

Hypothesis 4C: A negative relationship exists between the constructs of organizational empowerment and the climate measures.

Findings on 4A. Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships that exist between the different measures of psychological
empowerment and organizational empowerment. Each scale of each construct was compared to each scale of the other constructs to determine if any relationships exist.

Table 4 presents the results of the correlation data analysis between psychological empowerment and organizational empowerment. As indicated by the table, positive relationships exist between meaning from psychological empowerment to all measures of organizational empowerment (range .31 to .36); between self-determination and organizational empowerment (range .27 to .35); and between impact and organizational empowerment (range .47 to .53). Competence has no significant relationship to the measures of organizational empowerment (range -.05 to .05). This data was tested at the .05 level of significance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological Empowerment</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Self-Determination</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td><strong>0.31</strong></td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td><strong>0.27</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.48</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure, Boundaries</td>
<td><strong>0.36</strong></td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td><strong>0.33</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.53</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Managed Teams</td>
<td><strong>0.35</strong></td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td><strong>0.35</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.47</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_n=225_  

*Note.* Significant relationships are in bold type and are tested at _p < .05_.

Perceptions of Empowerment  44
Findings on 4B. Pearson correlation was used to analyze the relationships that exist between the different measures of psychological empowerment and organizational empowerment. Each individual determinant of each measure was compared to each determinant on the other instruments to determine if relationships exist.

Table 5 represents the results of the data analysis. As indicated by the table, significant positive relationships exist between meaning and the climate categories (range .16 to .26); between self-determination and climate (range .20 to .38); between impact and climate (range .40 to .48). Competence has no significant relationship to the climate categories (range -.01 to .20).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Climate Categories</th>
<th>Psychological Empowerment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>0.16</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>0.24</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>0.26</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><strong>0.23</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Significant relationships are in bold type and are tested at $p < .05$
Findings on 4C. Pearson correlation was used to analyze the relationships that exist between the different measures of psychological empowerment and organizational empowerment. Each individual determinant of each measure was compared to each determinant on the other instruments to determine if relationships exist.

Table 6 represents the results of the data. As indicated by the table, the three measures of organizational empowerment are positively related to the climate categories. The correlation range is between .45 and .59.

<p>| Table 6 |
| Interrelations between Climate Categories and Organizational Empowerment |
| Climate Categories |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure, Boundaries</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Managed Teams</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=225</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Significant relationships are in bold type and are tested at p < .05
Summary review of study’s key findings

Research Question 1: Psychological empowerment and position

The results of analyses conducted to examine relationships between perceptions of psychological empowerment and position in the organization revealed that relationships exist between the two. Specifically, account managers perceive the highest levels of psychological empowerment; donor specialists report the lowest perceived levels of psychological empowerment; senior managers report nearly the lowest perceived levels of psychological empowerment. Surprisingly, the results for senior managers were contrary to the predictions of psychological empowerment.

Research Question 2: Organizational empowerment and position

The results of analyses conducted to examine relationships between perceptions of organizational empowerment and position in the organization revealed that relationships exist between the two. Specifically, account managers perceive the highest levels of organizational empowerment. Mobile unit assistants perceived the lowest levels of organizational empowerment. Senior managers also perceive nearly the lowest levels of organizational empowerment. Senior managers and mobile unit assistants were both contrary to the predictions of organizational empowerment.

Research Question 3: Climate categories and position

The results of analyses conducted to examine relationships between reported scores in the climate categories and position in the organization
revealed that relationships exist between the two. Specifically, administrative personnel report highest scores on the climate survey. Mobile unit assistants report lowest scores on the climate survey. Senior management reports nearly the lowest scores on the climate survey. All reported data was contrary to the predictions of the climate survey.

*Research Question 4: Relationships between instruments*

The result of analyses conducted to examine relationships that may exist between the instruments used in the survey revealed that some relationships exist. Specifically, psychological empowerment and organizational empowerment all report positive relationships between the scales, with the exception of competence, which reports no significant relationship. Similarly, no significant relationship exists between competence and the scales of the climate survey. However, significant relationships exist between the scales of organizational empowerment and the climate categories.
CHAPTER 5

Implications and Recommendations for future study

This study examined perceptions of empowerment through the use of extant data obtained from a non-profit organization. Specifically, it sought to determine if: 1) higher perceptions of psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995), organizational empowerment (Randolph, 1995) and the Gallup organization's climate categories (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999) were associated with higher positions in the organization; and 2) relationships existed between the measures of the three instruments used in the survey. To provide conclusions and implications from the study, this chapter is presented in the following manner: 1) brief review of the purpose of the study combined with a figure overview of the key findings; 2) summary of the key findings; 3) conceptual implications from the study; 4) limitations to the generalizability of the study; 5) implications for HRD practice; and 6) suggestions for future research.

Brief review and purpose of study

As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of empowerment as experienced by members of a non-profit organization in order to explore current perspectives on empowerment as well as to provide a blueprint for organizations to use in initiatives designed to increase employee satisfaction. Additionally, this study was conducted to contribute to Human Resource Development (HRD) practice. The results and conclusions of
the research are intended to lend support to the notion that empowerment should be viewed from multiple angles in order to receive the full benefits from empowerment initiatives by relating three different approaches to empowerment.

At least 9 specific findings can be derived from the present study. These are presented in Figure 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding #</th>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1A</td>
<td>Account managers report the highest overall mean scores on perceived psychological empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1B</td>
<td>Donor specialists report the lowest overall mean scores on perceived psychological empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2A</td>
<td>Account managers report the highest overall mean scores on perceived organizational empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2B</td>
<td>Mobile unit assistants report the lowest overall mean scores on perceived organizational empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3A</td>
<td>Administrative staff report highest overall mean score on the climate survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3B</td>
<td>Mobile unit assistants report lowest overall mean score on the climate survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4A</td>
<td>Positive relationships exist between all measures of psychological empowerment and organizational empowerment, with the exception of competence, where no relationships exist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4B</td>
<td>No significant relationship exists between competence (psychological empowerment) and the climate categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>4C</td>
<td>Positive significant relationships exist between all measures of organizational empowerment and the climate categories or the organizational empowerment scales</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 5. Overview of key findings from the study*
Brief summary of findings and discussion

Research Question 1

Is there a relationship between higher levels of perceived psychological empowerment and position in the organization?

Key Findings

This question was divided into two separate hypotheses. In brief, the key findings from the first research question were: 1) Higher perceptions of psychological empowerment are not associated with higher positions in the organization; 2) Lower perceptions of psychological empowerment are associated with lower positions in the company; and 3) Higher perceptions of psychological empowerment are associated with those in the middle of the organization.

Interpretation and discussion of finding 1 from Research question 1

The finding that senior managers in the organization perceive nearly the lowest level of psychological empowerment is surprising. There is no research that focuses on position and empowerment, but the common belief of most employees and companies is that moving up will provide more power (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). Most organizations bring employees in and drive home the idea that higher is better. Moving up to a higher position not only provides an employee with such rewards as higher salary, more impressive titles, more generous stock options, and a roomier office, but it also considered to
provide an employee with a broader span of decision discretion. Because of this, it seems reasonable to assume that these people would be most empowered.

It is very interesting to see the senior managers feel about as psychologically empowered as the donor specialists do. Senior managers' scores for self-determination and impact were lower than expected. It seems logical to expect that those who establish policy in an organization would experience highest levels of self-determination and impact. However, when one is in such a position, they actually are not the terminal point in the decision making process. Senior management is required to answer to not only a board of directors, but also to many other stakeholders, including the FDA, the national headquarters, the community and employees. A person's relationship with their immediate supervisor is usually the determining factor of high morale and motivation (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999), so perhaps this research suggests that senior management have to answer to supervisors who do not create an empowering environment.

*Interpretation and discussion of finding 2 from Research question 1*

The finding that psychological empowerment is lowest at the lowest levels of the organization is not surprising. Those who are at the lowest levels of the organization usually have work that people want to get out of as soon as possible. People usually take these positions as an entry-level position; these "lowly contributor roles" are designed for a person to gain some expertise and move into a slightly more stretching, slightly less menial individual contributor
role. Then the person is promoted to supervise other individual contributors, and so on. Because of the nature of such roles, with strict rules and procedures, it seems reasonable that people in these lower position roles would feel less psychologically empowered.

People in these roles don’t generally have any idea of where they “fit” into the organization. This is reflected in the reported scores on impact. Even in such an organization where the people who perform in these roles are very visible and are usually the first line of sight to the public, they report very low scores on impact, which is the degree to which the behavior is seen as “making a difference” (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

The donor specialists also reported low scores on self-determination. Choice is the central experience in self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In a highly regulated industry, it would be very difficult for donor specialists, whose primary responsibility centers on the safe collection and handling of blood, to perceive high levels of self-determination. Due to the nature of the job, donor specialists are not allowed much, if any, variation from the FDA standardized procedure of collecting blood.

*Interpretation and discussion of finding 3 from research question 1*

The finding that employees who are in the “middle” of the organization, that is, not entry-level and not senior management, are the most empowered is at first glance, very surprising. But after further examination, it appears to be very logical. Account managers report the highest scores on all four scales.
Meaning is especially high. This could possibly be due to the type of work they perform. An account manager is made very aware of the meaning, or value of a work goal or purpose (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990) of their job. The questions on the instrument that measures meaning relate directly to this idea. (See Appendix A).

Summary comments on Research Question 1

As noted above, both expected and unexpected relationships exist between psychological empowerment and position in the organization. Higher perceived levels of psychological empowerment exist in those members of the organization who are in the “middle” of the organization; that is, those who have jobs that require training, but are generally clear about their role in the organization. These people are able to control the pace and methods of their work (Spreitzer, 1995), and have greater amounts of control over the outcomes of their positions. Those members at the top and bottom of the organization tend to perceive lower levels of psychological empowerment; this research suggests that their job functions are more restrictive in the above areas.

Research question 2

Is there a relationship between higher levels of perceived organizational empowerment and position in the organization?

Key findings
This question was divided into two separate hypotheses. In brief, the key findings from the first research question were: 1) Higher perceptions of organizational empowerment are not associated with higher positions in the organization; 2) Lower perceptions of organizational empowerment are associated with lower positions in the company; and 3) Higher perceptions of organizational empowerment are associated with those in the middle of the organization.

**Interpretation and discussion of finding 1 from research question 2**

The finding that senior managers in the organization perceive nearly the lowest level of organizational empowerment is quite surprising. It seems illogical that those at the top of the organization would report low levels of information sharing and autonomy through boundaries. Organizational empowerment focuses on what the organization has in place to create an empowering environment. The main idea behind the information sharing portion of the survey focuses on whether or not the person completing the survey is aware of how the company is doing and what effect their actions have on the organization (Randolph, 1995). The low scores makes one wonder if senior management is not aware of what’s going on in the company and the effect they have on the outcomes, then who does? The low scores also makes one wonder about the perspective from which the senior managers were answering the questions; if they were the ones guilty of not sharing information with the rest of the
organization due to the hierarchy that exists or if they were using the rest of the senior management team as a basis of comparison?

The low scores on the creating autonomy through boundaries are also interesting. As noted before, in this non-profit organization, the members of senior management have to answer to many different stakeholders, including the national chapter of the organization, the FDA, sponsor organizations, their employees, and the community. Perhaps senior managers feel that being accountable to so many different stakeholders with so many different requirements hinders their ability to have true autonomy. This accountability makes it difficult to structure boundaries around their responsibilities and still satisfy all the parties they need to satisfy.

*Interpretation and discussion of finding 2 from research question 2*

The finding that mobile unit assistants perceive the lowest level of organizational empowerment is not surprising. The overall score is low due to the reported scores on the use of self-managed teams. Because of the nature of their job, there are not many opportunities for team building. Mobile unit assistants generally work alone. Perhaps these employees reported lower scores because they feel somewhat distanced from the rest of the organization because they are so heavily involved in transportation of blood from one site to the next.

Donor specialists report the second lowest score on organizational empowerment. Their scores on the three measures tend to be lower. Donor specialists, because of their position in the organization and due in part to the
hierarchy that exists within the organization, are the 'last to know' with most information. They generally have no idea what's going on with the account managers, though the number of accounts the account managers secure directly affects their jobs.

The donor specialist position is highly regulated. Because of this, there is not much room for autonomy. Any specialists must follow the processes that are in place to the letter to prevent contamination of blood during collection as well as to prevent any misconduct.

*Interpretation and discussion of finding 3 from research question 2*

The finding that account managers perceive the highest levels of organizational empowerment is very interesting. Account managers have a unique role in the organization. Their work revolves around getting out to meet potential clients, making sales pitches, and securing accounts for the organization. This allows them to set their schedules and because the position is largely commission based, they can determine their own salary more than anyone in the organization. With that knowledge, it makes sense that they would report highest scores on perceptions of organizational empowerment.

An account manager has all the information they need to do their job well. There are goals that each account manager has to reach and they are usually aware of how their goals are related to the goals of the team. They are also usually aware how their team goals relate to the goals of the organization. This
relates directly to Randolph’s (1995) information sharing measure on the organizational empowerment scale.

Account managers are responsible for securing and maintaining accounts for the organization. As noted, this is a commission-based position. Because of this, account managers are given the freedom to make decisions that will enable them to reach their goals, provided they operate within prescribed guidelines. This also relates to Randolph’s 3 keys to empowerment.

The group of account managers is a self-managed team. They are directly involved in decision-making and implementation process (Randolph, 1995). They are also held accountable, both to themselves and the organization, for the decisions they make.

*Summary comments on research question 2*

The results from exploring research question 2 revealed some interesting relationships. Higher levels of perceived organizational empowerment exist in the “middle” members of the organization. These people appear to have the necessary amounts of information, autonomy, and team atmosphere (Randolph, 1995) required to report highest scores. The members of the organization who are at the “top” and “bottom” report the lowest levels of perceived organizational empowerment. This may suggest the effect of too many stakeholders for the senior managers and the effects of working in a highly regulated position for the donor specialists and mobile unit assistants.
Research question 3

Is there a relationship between higher reported scores on the Gallup climate survey and position in the organization?

Key findings

This question was divided into two separate hypotheses. In brief, the key findings from the first research question were: 1) Higher perceptions of the climate of the organization are not associated with higher positions in the organization; 2) Lower perceptions of the climate are associated with lower positions in the company; and 3) Higher perceptions of the climate of the organization are associated with those in the middle of the organization.

Interpretation and discussion of finding 1 from research question 3

The finding that senior managers don’t report highest scores on climate is not surprising. The nature of the questions from the climate survey appears to be addressed to those who are not at the top of the organization. It is interesting that the senior managers reported the lowest scores in category 2, which focuses on a person’s perception of their contribution to the organization; and in category 3, which focuses on whether or not a person feels he or she belongs in the organization.

Category 2 focuses on a person’s perception of their contribution to the organization. It is compelling to see low scores in this category. One would assume that simply because they are senior managers, they would feel they contribute a great deal to the organization. However, upon further examination,
one can assume that due to their position, senior managers don’t receive much positive feedback regarding their performance. This can lead directly to them feeling as though no one cares about them as a person. Because of the multiple stakeholders combined with the multiple demands and priorities each stakeholder places on them, senior managers are not likely to be able to do what it is they do best on a daily basis.

Category 3 focuses on whether or not a person feels they belong in the organization. As stated previously, one would think senior managers would report higher scores in this category. However, the position they hold in the organization may actually be detrimental to higher scores in this category. When a person is at the top of the organization, opportunities for best friends in the organization are scarce. Demands from multiple stakeholders may give them the impression that their opinions don’t count. Also, the mission/purpose of the organization may not be well aligned with the duties associated with their position, so one can see why they might report lower scores on these scales.

Interpretation and discussion of finding 2 from research question 3

The finding that mobile unit assistants report the lowest scores on the climate categories is surprising. The scores on the first category indicate that the mobile unit assistants have the materials they need to perform their job well, as well as clear expectations regarding outcomes. It appears the mobile unit assistants report lower scores in the other three categories.
Category 2 evaluates whether or not a person feels they contribute to the organization. Mobile unit assistants appear unsure of their contribution to the organization. One could assume that due to the nature of their work, not many opportunities exist to provide praise and recognition. Because of this, mobile unit assistants may feel as though no one is concerned about them as employees or people.

Category 3 focuses on whether or not a person feels they belong in the organization. Because of the nature of their job, mobile unit assistants may feel as though their opinions don’t count. This could be due in part to the regulation that is a part of the job. Category 4 focuses on whether or not a person has had opportunities to improve him or herself at work. The reported scores in this category provide information that mobile unit assistants don’t feel that anyone is concerned with their growth and development in the organization.

*Interpretation and discussion of finding 3 from research question 3*

The finding that administrative personnel report the highest scores on the climate categories is very interesting. At first glance, one might not think that these members would perceive the highest scores. However, after considering the types of work administrative personnel are involved, it begins to make more sense. Administrative personnel are an integral part of any organization. The nature of their job allows for very clear expectations (e.g. answering phones, creating company correspondence, filing, etc.) not to mention easily measurable skills (e.g., Microsoft Office, Internet). This allows for very concise feedback.
Administrative personnel also have access to development activities that are relatively easy to define. They are also more likely to receive praise from those they work with (their stakeholders) because that stakeholder generally has a stake in the output from the administrative personnel.

Summary comments on research question 3

Research question 3 generated unexpected and expected results. Those who are in the "middle" of the organization reported higher scores in the climate categories. These members tend to have clearly defined job duties that are relatively easy to recognize and reward as needed. Opportunities for growth and development are also fairly easy to identify. Those at the "top" report lower scores. This could be due to a lack of positive feedback, misalignment of job duties to the mission of the organization, or the lack of opportunity to do what they do best on a daily basis because of multiple demands. Those at the "bottom" also report lower scores. This could be due to a lack of knowledge of what contribution they make to the organization, the amount of regulation that is a part of their job, and the lack of opportunities for growth and development.

Research question 4

Do relationships exist between the three instruments used in the survey?

Key findings

This question was divided into three separate hypotheses. In brief, the key findings from the fourth research question were: 1) Competence from the psychological empowerment scale has no significant relationship to either of the
determinants of organizational empowerment and the climate categories; 2) significant positive relationships exist between the determinants of organizational empowerment and the climate categories.

**Interpretation and discussion of finding 1 from research question 4**

The finding that competence has no relation to either the organizational empowerment scales or the climate categories is interesting. The other scales appear to have significant relationships, but competence appears to stand alone. This could indicate that competence is measuring something different than the other scales of psychological empowerment.

**Interpretation and discussion of finding 2 from research question 4**

The finding that significant positive relationships exist between the determinants of organization empowerment and the climate categories is very interesting. The two measures appear to measure two different things. However, on further examination, it appears that the two instruments are very similar. The four climate categories have questions that are related to a person’s perception of having clear expectations communicated to them, as well as the information needed for them live up to those expectations. Similarly, the information sharing scale on the organizational empowerment measure gives information regarding a person’s perspective of the amount of information they receive on a consistent basis; creating autonomy through boundaries appears to be related to giving a person clear expectations, which would involve setting boundaries.
Summary comments on research question 4

Research question 4 generated interesting results. Competence appears to be unrelated to any of the other scales, which is interesting because it is a valid scale on Spreitzer's (1995) psychological empowerment instrument. Yet, the other scales of psychological are positively related to the other scales. This could be due to competence measuring something that has not been previously determined. Organizational empowerment and the climate survey appear to be very significantly related and could, in fact, be measuring nearly the same concepts.

Conceptual implications from study

The findings from this study contribute to emerging literature in empowerment.

Those who are most empowered are those in the "middle" of an organization.

It is an oft-assumed idea that people at the highest levels of an organization have higher perceptions of empowerment. This study suggests that people at the highest levels of the organization perceive low levels of empowerment. Those at the bottom of an organization are assumed to have lower perceptions of empowerment. This research suggests this may be the case. This study suggests that highest perceptions of empowerment lie with those in the "middle" of the organization. This could be due in part to clear boundaries as well as sufficient information to perform their jobs well (Randolph, 1995). This can also be due to the clear sense of meaning as well as their
awareness of the impact their job has on the overall goals of the organization (Spreitzer, 1995).

*Perceptions of empowerment are consistent across instruments*

The results of this study suggest that empowerment is a feeling that is consistent in the individual. The instruments used to measure perceptions of empowerment focused on differing points of view. Psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995) focused on the individual’s perception of the value of the work they do. Organizational empowerment (Randolph, 1995) focused on the individual’s perception of the systems their organization has in place to increase feelings of empowerment. The climate categories focused on the individual’s perceptions of others’ actions within the organization. The consistently high and low perceptions by the same groups of people suggests to the researcher that if a person feels empowered, he or she feels empowered regardless of the instrument used to test for perceptions.

*Information sharing from organizational empowerment may be the same as “what do I get?” from the climate categories*

Randolph’s (1995) research served to establish methods of achieving organizational empowerment. He believes organizational empowerment rests upon the effective sharing of information, creating autonomy, and the establishment of self-managed teams. Randolph mentions sharing information as the starting point on the road to empowerment. Similarly, the base camp from the climate categories (Buckingham and Coffman, 1999) focuses on the effective communication of expectations of performance and having the right materials
and tools to do the job effectively. The high positive correlations that exist between the two measures (.55) suggest a strong significant relationship between the questions on each measure.

Limitations to the generalizability of the study

Demographics

Information regarding the demographics of the participants in the survey was not collected. Because the researcher has no idea of the characteristics of the people involved, it is difficult to make a determination of how representative the sample is of the general population of the area.

Same source bias

The fact that the same people completed the survey could limit the generalizability of the study. Correlation may exist between the different instruments that might normally be unrelated simply because the same person completed the instruments. This person’s values and beliefs may have been inadvertently incorporated into the different instruments.

Organizational structure and nature of the business

It is unclear whether the same results would be obtained from a different organization. The industry in which the data was obtained is a highly regulated industry.
Implications for HRD practice

Importance of empowerment

Empowerment emerged from theories of participative management (MacGregor, 1960; Likert, 1961) and motivational theories (Maslow; 1943; Herzberg, 1968; Alderfer, 1969; McClelland, 1975). It was not a widely used term until nearly the end of the 20th century. Empirical research is still limited, yet anecdotal information is widely available and in use by HRD practitioners. This study adds to the body of knowledge available on the subject of empowerment. It gives the reader a unique approach to the subject of empowerment by exploring empowerment by position in the company, as well as using data obtained from a non-profit organization.

This study also contributed to the research surrounding empowerment as a multi-dimensional concept. It adds to the current understanding that empowerment is a group of cognitions that work together. It also expands on that theme by combining three instruments that are widely used separately to obtain a bigger picture of empowerment.

Importance of using multiple instruments to measure empowerment

Most previous research on empowerment has focused on either one dimensional models (Conger and Kanungo, 1988) or multi-dimensional models based on one underlying concept (Randolph, 1995; Spreitzer, 1995; Buckingham and Coffman, 1999). A study that examined the relationship between more than one instrument allows a researcher to use more than one perspective of
empowerment. It will allow the HRD practitioner to approach the concept of empowerment from more than one angle in order to provide an organization with a more holistic idea of the issues that may exist in the organization. It can also provide the practitioner with plans of action based on the results of the multiple instruments.

Recommendations for future research

There are a number of directions for future research suggested by this study. This study examined quantitative analysis of perceptions of empowerment and provided insight into what people feel in the non-profit organization examined in the study. This research needs to continue by exploring why these people feel the way they do. A qualitative study is recommended that addresses the question what specifically is in place internally and inside the organization that makes account managers perceive highest levels and senior managers perceive lower levels of empowerment.

This study should also be conducted in for-profit and other non-profit organizations that have similar hierarchy, as well as organizations with different structures. The object of such research is to determine if the results are unique to the organization used in this study or if they can be generalized across organizations that have similar structures.

Other recommendations for future research include:
1. The mobile unit assistant position is a unionized position. A study that examines perception of empowerment in union vs. non-union is recommended.

2. A study that examines the perceptions of empowerment based on demographical information (e.g., men vs. women) of people in similar positions to determine if demographical information affects empowerment is recommended.

3. The account manager position is largely commission based. A study that examines the perceptions of empowerment in salaried versus commission-based positions is recommended.

Conclusion

This study has investigated the relationships that exist between perceptions of empowerment and position in an organization. The focus of the study has been to examine the question of whether or not higher perceptions of empowerment are found in those members of an organization that hold higher positions. It is the belief of the researcher that higher perceptions of empowerment are found in those who are in the “middle” of the organization as opposed to those who are at the top. It is also the belief of the researcher that lower perceptions of empowerment are found in those at the bottom and most interestingly at the top of the organization. This study has contributed to the literature available on empowerment.
Because this study examined parameters not previously examined (e.g., empowerment in relation to position in the organization), it provides a foundation for future study of empowerment as it relates to position. The results of this study also lend credibility to the use of multiple instruments to gauge perceptions of empowerment due to the different perspectives that are important to one’s perception of empowerment (e.g., from the individual and organizational perspectives).

The findings from this research also contribute to HRD practice. Organizations may take information from this study and explore perceptions of empowerment in those who hold similar positions in their organizations. Practitioners are also able to extract a different viewpoint on the concept of empowerment to use in intervention or improvement efforts.

In conclusion, this researcher hopes that the present study sheds light on the linkage between perceptions of empowerment and position as well as the usefulness of incorporating more than one instrument to gauge perceptions of empowerment. If as a result of this study there is new clarity regarding the positions in an organization where people are more likely to feel most empowered, then this research will have been useful.
REFERENCES

Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 4, 142-175.


Psychological Review, 84, 191-215.


Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.


Buckingham, M. & Coffman, C. (1999). First, break all the rules: What the world’s


Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1976). Motivation through the design of work:
test of a theory. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 16,*
250-279.


Relations, 1, 5-41.


APPENDIX
Appendix A: Survey
Perceptions Toward Work

Donor Services,
Participant Survey
August-September, 2001
**Research and Feedback on Employee’s Perceptions Toward Work**

The Donor Services Organization senior staff, that is, [redacted] and [redacted] direct reports, in collaboration with [redacted] an external consultant, are conducting research on how employees in Donor Services, [redacted], perceive their work. The results of this research will be presented as feedback to the senior team during a management development program in mid October, and are intended to help the managers work more effectively with employees at all levels, and enhance the organization’s overall satisfaction and productivity.

*As an employee in the Donor Services organization, you are being asked to participate in this research by providing your opinions on a number of work related statements.* Please read and follow carefully the instructions on each page. The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete.

*All of your responses will be held in strict and absolute confidence. Please do NOT put your name anywhere on the survey.* All questionnaires will be analyzed outside of the [redacted] Information will be available to your management team in aggregate form only.

After you have completed your survey, please turn it in to the designated member of your team who will seal all of your team’s surveys in one addressed envelope that will be sent by US Mail to [redacted]

Thank you for your cooperation.
Part A
(Instrument developed by Dr. Gretchen Spreitzer, UCLA)

Instructions:
Please think about the work you do on your team, in your department, and in Donor Services in general. In the blank next to each of the following statements, please indicate your response to the statement using the scale below.

1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Slightly Disagree
4 = Neither Agree or Disagree
5 = Slightly Agree
6 = Agree
7 = Strongly Agree

1. The work I do is meaningful.
2. The work I do is very important to me
3. My job activities are personally meaningful to me.
4. I am confident about my ability to do my job.
5. I am self-assured about my capacity to perform my work.
6. I have mastered the skills necessary for my job.
7. I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job.
8. I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work.
9. I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my job.
10. My impact on what happens in my department is large.
11. I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department.
12. I have significant influence over what happens in my department.
Part B
(Instrument developed by Dr. Alan Randolph, University of Baltimore, and Dr. Ken Blanchard, Blanchard Training & Development)

Instructions:
Please think about your organization (that is, your department and the Donor Services organization in general) and respond to each statement below using one of the SIX choices shown below. Enter your response in the space to the left of the number for each statement.

1 = Almost Never
2 = Rarely
3 = Sometimes
4 = Frequently
5 = Very Often
6 = Almost Always

____ 1. I receive the information needed to help me understand the performance of our organization.

____ 2. I share information with others to help them understand the performance of our organization.

____ 3. We demonstrate trust in people by sharing sensitive information about organization performance.

____ 4. When I need information about our organization’s performance, it is readily available for me to access.

____ 5. When mistakes are made, we focus on correcting the problem not on who to blame.

____ 6. When mistakes are made, we try to learn from the mistakes.

____ 7. People in our organization get information about the organization’s performance in a timely way.

____ 8. We share information about organizational performance so that people can act responsibly to improve performance.

____ 9. We share information in ways that break down traditional hierarchical thinking.

____ 10. We get information into the hands of frontline people so they can make responsible decisions.
Part C
(Developed by Dr. Alan Randolph, University of Baltimore, and Dr. Ken Blanchard, Blanchard Training & Development)

Instructions:
Please think about your organization (that is, your department and the Donor Services organization in general) and respond to each statement below using one of the SIX choices shown below. Enter your response in the space to the left of the number for each statement.

1 = Almost Never
2 = Rarely
3 = Sometimes
4 = Frequently
5 = Very Often
6 = Almost Always

  1. We share a common vision for our organization at all levels of the organization.
  2. In our organization we strive to live up to our vision.
  3. We work together to translate the vision into specific goals and timelines for everyone in the organization.
  4. We have a shared set of values that guide our actions in this organization.
  5. We create new structures, policies and practices that help people use their knowledge and motivation.
  6. We create structures and procedures that encourage and expect people to take initiative in improving organizational performance.
  7. We set high standards in our organization and tolerate nothing but continuous performance improvement.
  8. We use structures and guidelines to help people learn to act with responsibility and autonomy.
  9. We work together in our organization to make everyone accountable for their actions and for the results in the organization.
 10. We use our performance management process to promote a sense of partnership between levels of the organization.
Part D
(Developed by Dr. Alan Randolph, University of Baltimore, and Dr. Ken Blanchard, Blanchard Training & Development)

Instructions:
Please think about your organization (that is, your department and the Donor Services organization in general) and respond to each statement below using one of the SIX choices shown below. Enter your response in the space to the left of the number for each statement.

1 = Almost Never
2 = Rarely
3 = Sometimes
4 = Frequently
5 = Very Often
6 = Almost Always

___ 1. We use teams as the focal point of responsibility and accountability in our organization.

___ 2. In our organization, teams now make many of the decisions that management used to make.

___ 3. We act as though the diversity of people in our organization is an asset, rather than something to be managed.

___ 4. We provide team and individual training that helps teams operate more efficiently.

___ 5. We work hard in our organization to develop effective, self-directed teams.

___ 6. Our teams act as though they “want to” improve organizational performance, not as though “someone has told them they have to improve”.

___ 7. Teams feel a keen sense of responsibility for the organization’s cost effectiveness and quality of operations.

___ 8. Teams place significant importance on being flexible in providing outstanding customer service.

___ 9. Teams recognize there will be some tough times, and they are prepared to handle those difficult times.

___ 10. We see examples of leadership being exhibited by people throughout our organization.
**Part E**

(Instrument developed by Buckingham & Coffman, Gallop Organization)

**Instructions:**

Please think about your organization (that is, your department and the Donor Services organization in general) and respond to each statement below using one of the **FIVE** choices shown below.

1 = Strongly Disagree  
2 = Disagree  
3 = Neither Agree or Disagree  
4 = Agree  
5 = Strongly Agree

___ 1. Do I know what is expected of me?  
___ 2. Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?  
___ 3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?  
___ 4. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for good work?  
___ 5. Does my supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about me as a person?  
___ 6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?  
___ 7. At work, do my opinions seem to count?  
___ 8. Does the mission/purpose of my company make me feel like my work is important?  
___ 9. Are my co-workers committed to doing quality work?  
___ 10. Do I have a best friend at work?  
___ 11. In the last six months, have I talked with someone about my progress?  
___ 12. At work, have I had opportunities to learn and grow?
Appendix B: Results for organization
## Organization Results

### Psychological Empowerment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>6.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>6.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Determination</td>
<td>4.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>4.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Organizational Empowerment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>4.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure, Boundaries</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Management</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Climate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 1</td>
<td>4.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 2</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 3</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 4</td>
<td>3.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Results by district
## Results by District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Albany</th>
<th>Syracuse</th>
<th>Rochester</th>
<th>Binghamton</th>
<th>Buffalo South</th>
<th>Buffalo North</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Empowerment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>6.46</td>
<td>6.44</td>
<td>6.47</td>
<td>6.58</td>
<td>6.36</td>
<td>6.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>6.32</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>6.23</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>6.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Determination</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>4.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Empowerment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure, Boundaries</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Management</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate Category 1</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate Category 2</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>4.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate Category 3</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>3.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate Category 4</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate Category 5</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>