The Relationships Between Job Characteristics and Job Satisfaction Among Call Center Workers.

Carly M. Leblanc

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Abstract
Empirical studies have shown that employee turnover rates in call centers positions are significantly greater than most other job positions. This quantitative study examined the relationship of call center employees' job satisfaction and job characteristics using Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Model as the primary theoretical framework. Specifically, the study looked at the components of the Motivating Potential Score, including three psychological states and five job characteristics, in relation to job satisfaction. This study surveyed call center employees within a large payroll and human resources services company in New York State. The results of the study demonstrated that there was a strong positive correlation between job satisfaction and the Motivating Potential Score. In addition, the study showed that of the three psychological states, experienced meaningfulness and knowledge of results almost equally had the strongest relation to perceived job satisfaction. Feedback was shown to have the greatest relationship to job satisfaction of the five job characteristics among the overall sample of call center workers. These findings highlight the opportunity to conduct additional research to gain greater insights into call center job design, training for both call centers workers and their management, and additional initiatives for motivating for female employees. Overall, this research provides greater understanding of job characteristics in call center positions and their relation to call center employees' job satisfaction.

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The Relationships Between Job Characteristics and Job Satisfaction
Among Call Center Workers

By

Carly M. LeBlanc

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by
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Committee Member
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Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education
St. John Fisher College

August, 2013
Dedication

The doctoral journey is often an emotional, financial, logistical and physical challenge for many. I could not have made it through the process without the kindness and encouragements of many individuals. First, I must thank my mother, Lynn, and my grandmother, Shirley, for their strong commitment to encouraging advanced education opportunities within our family. I must also thank my father, Jim, for his guidance and financial support throughout my learning journey. My fiancé, Jeffrey, deserves much praise for his daily support, appreciation of and patience for this process.

In addition, I must also thank my dissertation committee, Dr. Marie Cianca and Dr. Timothy Franz, for their guidance and support throughout the dissertation journey. This talented team of faculty guided me through the process of discovering a meaningful research question and study design. Advancements to this field of research from this study should be accredited to their collaborative efforts and ability to work from previous experiences.

Finally, I must thank my fellow doctorate program classmates. In particular, I would like to thank Deborah Pearce, Phil Uncapher, Marilee Montanaro, Ellen Wayne, and Sean Tracy for their kind love and humor throughout the entire dissertation journey.
Biographical Sketch

Carly M. LeBlanc currently serves as an Operating Risk Management Performance and Prevention Analyst at Paychex, Inc. in Rochester, NY. Beginning her college education in 2002, Ms. LeBlanc attended the State University of New York at Oswego, and graduated with a Bachelors of Science degree in Marketing along with a minor in Economics in 2005. She began attending Roberts Wesleyan College in Rochester, NY in 2006. She graduated with a Master of Science in Strategic Leadership and earned the program’s Academic Excellence Award in 2008. In the summer of 2011, she began doctoral studies in the Ed.D. in Executive Leadership program at St. John Fisher College in Rochester, NY. Ms. LeBlanc pursued her research in the field of call center management and job satisfaction under the direction of Dr. Marie Cianca and Dr. Timothy Franz, receiving the Ed.D. in Executive Leadership degree in August 2013.
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I must thank my father, Jim, for his financial support throughout my higher education journey. I also thank my employer for supporting my continuing education through their tuition reimbursement program as well as the opportunity to work with members of the organization to complete my dissertation study. Without these supports, completion of this journey may not have been possible.
Abstract

Empirical studies have shown that employee turnover rates in call centers positions are significantly greater than most other job positions. This quantitative study examined the relationship of call center employees’ job satisfaction and job characteristics using Hackman and Oldham’s Job Characteristics Model as the primary theoretical framework. Specifically, the study looked at the components of the Motivating Potential Score, including three psychological states and five job characteristics, in relation to job satisfaction. This study surveyed call center employees within a large payroll and human resources services company in New York State. The results of the study demonstrated that there was a strong positive correlation between job satisfaction and the Motivating Potential Score. In addition, the study showed that of the three psychological states, experienced meaningfulness and knowledge of results almost equally had the strongest relation to perceived job satisfaction. Feedback was shown to have the greatest relationship to job satisfaction of the five job characteristics among the overall sample of call center workers. These findings highlight the opportunity to conduct additional research to gain greater insights into call center job design, training for both call centers workers and their management, and additional initiatives for motivating for female employees. Overall, this research provides greater understanding of job characteristics in call center positions and their relation to call center employees’ job satisfaction.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

During the last three decades, growing globalization of the economy and advancements in technologies led to the development of new products and services (Holdsworth & Cartwright, 2003). Jacobsen (2008) reported that organizations today are better able to serve their stakeholders when there is a primary focus on the customer. As a result, organizations are using new development initiatives, such as Six Sigma, as customer expectations are changing. Among these initiatives, leaders must pay close attention to the job satisfaction of their workforce as these workers can provide supple utility for their organization. Employee turnover, particularly regarding the redundant loss of knowledge and related costs, is a challenge for an organization’s strategic planning and performance (Whitt, 2006).

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employee turnover rates can surpass more than 75% annually in some industries (Tucker, 2012). Many of these industries facing high turnover rates employ call center workers to support their daily operations and client inquiries. Specifically, the call center profession has been widely recognized for being hampered by low employee job satisfaction, exemplified by high turnover (Whitt, 2006). LeBreton, Binning, Adorno and Melcher (2004) observe that it is not uncommon for organizations to spend $5,000 to $7,000 in onboarding new call center employees while this same population experiences anywhere from 50% to 300% annual
turnover. In addition to the onboarding costs, expenses are incurred in recruiting new employees to renew this turning workforce.

Business, media, and academic communities have been attracted to the rapid growth of call centers in several technologically advanced industrial economies (Belt, 2002). These service-based call centers are experiencing extraordinary headcount growth, an important new source of employment in many countries, in response to the demands of the 24-hour electronic society (Holdsworth & Cartwright, 2003). As medium-to-large companies invest resources into building and sustaining call centers within their organization, millions of dollars are lost annually as high turnover issues remain ineffectively, weakly, or not at all addressed (LeBreton, Binning, Adorno, & Melcher, 2004). The focus of this research is the relationship between call center employee job satisfaction and employee turnover, specifically identifying the present job characteristics that contribute to employee job dissatisfaction.

**Background on Call Centers**

In the 1960s, the first set of call centers was opened by the aviation industry (Hillmer, Barbara, & McRoberts, 2004). For many organizations since then, call centers are a basic business requirement for customer support, service, and marketing. Call centers most often consist of a set of resources including personnel, computers, and telecommunications equipment; handling paths of communication which are either inbound, outbound, or both inbound and outbound (Gans, Koole, & Mandelbaum, 2003). Call centers often provide the primary customer or partner interface for post-sales and supplemental service, information, complaint resolution, reservations, and ticketing support (Whiting & Donthu, 2006). Anton (2000) estimates more than 70% of customer
interactions occur through call center teams. The delivery of communication through telecommunication technology allows for low-cost service delivery in comparison to face-to-face delivery. Gans et al. (2003) observe that capacity costs, specifically human resource costs, account for 60 to 70% of operating expenses.

Dean (2007) confirms that affordability and availability of operating call centers has seen enormous worldwide growth. Hillmer and colleagues (2004) note that, initially, the Internet was once generally considered by organizations as a replacement for call centers. In contrast, the Internet has increased the need for real-time service support provided by call centers. The current popularity of an e-commerce environment, as well as the implementation of the “Do Not Call” list in 2003 has increased the need for inbound call centers.

The development of call centers offers customers one-call resolution or additional access to information. The typical call center organizational hierarchy consists of a call center manager, team managers, call coach(s), call monitor(s), team leaders, senior agents, and agents. A diagram illustrating a typical call center hierarchy is displayed in Appendix A. Call center management must be concerned about both the quality of the service the representatives provide as well as the quantity (Ruyter, Wetzels, & Feinberg, 2001). Most commonly, call center employees are evaluated for performance based on three measures. First, employees are evaluated on response time, or how quickly incoming phone calls can be answered. Second, employees are measured by waiting time, or how long a customer happens to wait in queue before their call or email is answered by a call center agent. Third, employees are measured on how many calls can be answered in a given period of time, or the level of employee productivity commonly referred to as
calls per hour (CPH). The reporting structure and evaluation measures may vary across call centers due to the nature of the product or service the organization supports.

**Problem Statement**

Data collected in 1999 by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics over various years reflect more than 1.55 million call center workers employed in the United States, more than 1.4% of private sector employment. Gans et al. (2003) predicted by these data that call center staff is growing at the rate of 8% per year. Similar to the early United States manufacturing industries, call centers today are experiencing radical changes as they move to production-line style workflow (Garelis, 1996).

**Tangible and intangible costs of turnover in call centers.** There are both tangible and intangible costs related to employee turnover in call centers. Hillmer et al. (2004) created a model depicting the tangible costs related to hiring and replacing a call center worker. The components of the model include screening, interviewing, testing candidates’ knowledge during the interview process, wages paid during the training period, training materials and trainers during the onboarding process, orientation, and technological changes to call center equipment when a new agent begins work. In addition, intangible costs of turnover in call centers include expenses related to having to identify mistakes, correcting errors, and reduced productivity of a call center worker during their onboarding period, typically the first 6 months of employment.

**Current state of employee turnover in call centers.** In 2003, call centers employed more than five million workers and comprised a $180 billion industry in the United States (Markels, 2003). Markels (2003) notes that “While call centers have become a major gateway that link customers to a firm, research indicates that 84% of
consumers have had a dismal call center experience” (p. 384). This is not surprising to some researchers. Baker (2005) estimates that call centers must onboard approximately a million and a half new call center employees every year in North America alone.

Training these new employees, given the average cost of both recruiting and training call center workers is about $10,000, can cost organizations aggregately an estimated $15 billion annually.

Employee turnover in call centers is a significant issue for these organizations with an annual turnover reportedly ranging from 50% to 300% across industries (LeBreton, Binning, Adorno, & Melcher, 2004), a rate that is considerably higher than the total workforce monthly average of less than 2% (HR Focus, 2008). In other words, it has not been uncommon for two to four different workers to fill a single call center position in a given year. Medium to large-sized organizations, including non-profits, can incur millions of dollars in losses each year due to the threat of high turnover rates. LeBreton et al. (2004) stress the importance of being able to identify high-turnover-risk job applicants and current call center workers in order to retain or build stakeholder value.

**Organizational need for call center employee job satisfaction.** Significant technological advances have increased the opportunity for call centers to deliver, maintain, capture, and recapture customer satisfaction; however, these advances are not keys to long-term success as competitors can easily adopt similar technologies (Ruyter, Wetzels, & Feinberg, 2001). Instead, long-term call center success is achieved through a strategic combination of technological sophistication, managerial philosophy and mission, and dedicated and mission-oriented employees. In other words, management
must monitor and invest in the welfare of their human capital in addition to technological capital (Ruyter, Wetzels, & Feinberg, 2001).

High turnover in even medium-sized organizations can cost millions of dollars annually (LeBreton, Binning, Adorno, & Melcher, 2004). Cleveland and Hash (2004) confirmed through an analysis of previous research studies that call centers’ performance is fettered by low employee job satisfaction and high turnover, referred to sometimes as churn. Research studies over the past two decades have focused on the significant impact of increased employee job satisfaction and how job satisfaction can reduce employee turnover; or in other words, increase employee retention (Whitt, 2006). LeBreton et al. (2004) stress that the “identification of high-turnover-risk job applicants could provide extraordinary high utility to these employers” (p. 307). This identification, specifically addressing job satisfaction issues, may provide utility for reshaping job design or remedial employee development interventions.

**Addressing job satisfaction issues.** Herzberg’s (2003) Two Factor motivation-hygiene theory identifies hygiene factors, often tended to as extrinsic motivators (e.g., company administration, supervision, salary), and intrinsic motivators (e.g., achievement, recognition, the work itself). Both extrinsic and intrinsic motivators have been positively correlated to employee job satisfaction. Stringer, Didham, and Theivananthampillai (2011) noted that Herzberg’s research indicated that these motivators lead to job satisfaction because they satisfy an individual’s need for self-actualization. Poole’s (1997) research supports this idea. Poole found significant positive association that indicates as work motivation increases, job satisfaction increases.
Frey (1997) reported that intrinsic motivation can increase as the result of workplace enhancement programs that boost employee morale. Evidence stemming from the self-determination theory illustrates that intrinsic motivation can be enhanced through supporting and encouraging employee autonomy and self-esteem through pay-for-performance. Wright and Kim (2004) noted that when organizational performance is linked to pay-for-performance initiatives, employees view their work as important. The employee’s ability to perceive their work as significant increases their job satisfaction because they are better able to meet higher level motivational needs, such as self-esteem.

**Theoretical Rationale**

The theoretical rationale for the proposed study is based on Hackman and Oldham’s (1975) Job Characteristics Model. As described in further detail later in this section, the Job Characteristics Model is a widely used framework to better understand how particular job characteristics impact job outcomes, including job satisfaction. As a part of the understanding of how the Job Characteristics Model will be important to this study, additional models will be introduced. First, Smith, Kendall, and Hulin’s (1969) Job Descriptive Index is one of the most widely used scales in measuring employee job satisfaction. Second, Hackman and Oldham’s (1975) Job Diagnostic Survey will be described as it serves an important role in identifying the factor gaps in the position design. Third, Hackman and Oldham’s (1975) Motivating Potential Score will be described as a critical tool used in understanding the influence each factor has in employee job satisfaction.

An employee’s job satisfaction is an internal reaction, stemming from a system of norms, values and expectations formed by the employee, to perceptions of the work and
job conditions (Saygi, Tolon, & Tekogul, 2011). Luthans (1994) describes job satisfaction as an attitude developed by an individual towards the job and job conditions. The early 1970s work related to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory of Motivation and Hygiene aided the evolution of the understanding of job satisfaction. Herzberg claims that there are twelve factors affecting job attitudes (Herzberg, 2003). Based on his research, Herzberg concluded that achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth were all factors characterizing events on the job that led to extreme satisfaction. Furthermore, company policy, supervision, and relationship with supervisor were shown to be factors characterizing events on the job that led to extreme dissatisfaction.

According to Hackman and Oldham (1975), job satisfaction is “the happiness that workers feel for their jobs” (p. 159). Conversely, job dissatisfaction can be attributed to employees not being able to exhibit their personal talents and stress of too many tasks, duty conflicts, negative attitude of the management, and lack of decision-making ability (Saygi, Tolon, & Tekogul, 2011). Additional psychological problems can impact the ability for an employee to be fully satisfied in their position. Hackman and Oldham (1975) studied the “mind-set” of job satisfaction. Their Job Characteristics Model explains how motivated and satisfied employees producing better work can help to increase a company’s stakeholder value.

Michailidis and Dracou (2011) described the three critical psychological states that managers must create to achieve employee motivation and high levels of service quality. The researchers commented that the first and most important psychological state of an employee is one where employees feel that their work is meaningful. The second
psychological state is when employees feel that they are responsible for their own work and need to receive feedback on their work. The third psychological state focuses on feedback. Feedback provides employees with an understanding of how well they are performing their jobs and meeting employer expectations.

**Job Descriptive Index.** Smith, Kendall, and Hulin (1969) introduced the Job Descriptive Index (Landy, Shankster, & Kohler, 1994). Landy, Shankster, and Kohler posit that this scale is the “gold standard” of job satisfaction scales. The job satisfaction scales have 70 items on which participants use a 5-point scale for responses. In recent work, the Job Descriptive Index scale has a Cronbach alpha of .92 (Yahyazadeh-Jeloudar & Lotfi-Goodarzi, 2012).

The Job Descriptive Index scale measures six major factors associated with job satisfaction: the nature of the work itself, attitudes towards supervisors, relations with co-workers, opportunities for promotion, salary and benefit, work condition in the present environment (Landy, Shankster, & Kohler, 1994). Smith, Kendall, and Hulin (1969) describe that work itself is concerned with the employee’s satisfaction with the actual job duties. Work includes an employee’s opportunities for creativity and task variety. Fichter and Cipolla (2010) explain that these opportunities allow for an individual to increase his knowledge, and changes in responsibility, amount of work, job enrichment, and job complexity. The pay factor evaluates an employee’s attitude towards pay, and is based on the perceived difference between the employee’s actual pay and expected pay. The promotion factor measures an employee’s satisfaction with the organization’s promotion policy and its administration. Supervision refers to the employee’s satisfaction with his
direct management. Co-workers are the workers on the present job, who impact the level of employee satisfaction with his fellow employees (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969).

Many researchers have used the Job Descriptive Index to measure job satisfaction in empirical studies in a great number of industries as well as in a variety of study objectives. For example, industries studied using the Job Descriptive Index for job satisfaction measures in relation to areas of research interests include role conflict, ambiguity, and burnout in financial advising (Fichter & Cipolla, 2010), organizational effectiveness in hospitality (Erkutlu, 2008), absenteeism and tenure in manufacturing (Kass, Vodanovich, & Callender, 2001), and over-qualification in public postal service (Johnson & Johnson, 2000).

Though the Job Descriptive Index is a good tool, it is an imperfect tool for measuring job satisfaction. Nagy (2002) acknowledges that this scale has undergone a tremendous amount of research that has sought to justify and validate the items within the scale. However, Nagy argues that the Job Descriptive Index appears that it may produce an “incomplete” evaluation of an employee’s facet job satisfaction. For example, the components of the Job Descriptive Index may not be able to identify employee considerations such as “schedule of payment” when evaluating his pay satisfaction (Nagy, 2002).

**Job Characteristics Model.** Hackman and Oldham (1975) continued their exploration and research in the area of employee job satisfaction after they were able to define and better understand the psychology of the employee “mind set.” Their proposed Job Characteristics Model emerged during a time when American companies were coming to terms with rampant job dissatisfaction and the realization that the traditional
Industrial Age organization was inadequately designed to meet productivity demands in a competitive global marketplace (Dore, 2004). The Job Characteristics Model has been widely used in research because it is highly adaptable for different employee groups and various types of organizations. The model explains that specific features of a job can affect the job involvement. It demonstrates how these features may encourage the internal motivation of employees. Specifically, Hackman and Oldham found five job characteristics that were most common measurable sources of job satisfaction; these characteristics include skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback.

The five job characteristics that make up the Job Characteristics Model are associated with and may produce three critical psychological states for workers, which include experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results (Sledge, Miles, & van Sambeek, 2011). Experienced meaningfulness is often explained as a state of mind where employees perceive their work as being valuable and worthwhile. Experienced responsibility is referred to as the extent to which a worker feels personally accountable for their job output. The meaningfulness psychological state is directly affected by skill variety, task identity, and task significance while autonomy affects the responsibility psychological state (Michailidis & Dracou, 2011).

The knowledge of results is the extent to which an employee regularly is knowledgeable about and understands how well they are completing their job tasks (Sledge, Miles, & van Sambeek, 2011). Feedback is related to the knowledge of results psychological state. Hackman and Oldham’s research suggested that job satisfaction is
enhanced when any of these five characteristics has been positively impacted (Michailidis & Dracou, 2011).

Generally, the Job Characteristics Model poses that goodness and significance of work play a significant role in the worth of employee due to internalization of value through job involvement (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965). Other researchers, including Lawler (1992) and Pfeffer (1994) agree with Hackman and Oldham’s model. They argue that through job design, job involvement could be increased (Khan, Jam, Akbar, Khan, & Hijazi, 2011).

**Job Diagnostic Survey.** Prior to Hackman and Oldham’s (1975) work, there was limited understanding regarding work redesign and our capability to capture significant data connected to the changes. Developed from the foundation of the Job Characteristics Model, the Job Diagnostic Survey measurement instrument was designed to diagnose existing jobs to determine if job redesign might be able to improve employee motivation and productivity. The Job Diagnostic Survey was additionally designed to identify the factor gaps in the job position design. The Job Diagnostic Survey can be used both as an assessment and evaluation tool to detect effects of job changes on employees (Hackman & Oldham, 1975).

The Job Diagnostic Survey has the ability to observe objective measures, individual psychological states resulting from these dimensions, affective reactions of employees to the job and work setting, and individual growth need strength (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). The individual growth need strength psychological state describes that those who desire achievement and success tend to have higher growth need strength. The
Job Diagnostic Survey has a recorded reliability factor typically well above the expected 0.70 Cronbach’s alpha (Pierce & Dunham, 1978).

An individual’s completion of the Job Diagnostic Survey initiates the calculation of the Motivating Potential Score (Herzberg, 2003). The formula for the Motivating Potential Score takes skill variety, task identity and task significance into equal amount while factoring in autonomy and feedback to populate a better understanding of one’s ability to perform well in a given position. The Motivating Potential Score formula is presented in Figure 1.1.


Each job characteristic represented in the Motivating Potential Score equation has an assigned weight on the outcome score (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). According to the equation, autonomy and feedback appear to have greater power in the motivation outcome because they are multipliers whereas skill variety, task identity and task
significance are averaged together to equal the strength of autonomy or feedback individually. Less significant dimensions in the equation include factors specifically task-related, including skill variety, task identity, and task significance. Skill variety is defined by Hackman and Oldham (1975, p. 161) as “The degree to which a job requires a variety of different activities in carrying out the work, which involve the use of a number of different skills and talents of the employee.” Task Identity is described as “The degree to which the job requires completion of a “whole” and identifiable piece of work – that is, doing a job from beginning to end with a visible outcome” (Hackman & Oldham, 1975, p. 161). Hackman and Oldham explained task significance as “The degree to which the job has a substantial impact on the lives or work of other people – whether in the immediate organization or in the external environment” (1975, p. 161).

Autonomy and feedback, as they relate to the management of the job, are core job dimensions deemed of greater significance in the Motivating Potential Score equation (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). Hackman and Oldham (1975) defined autonomy as the “degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the employee in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out” (p. 162). Feedback from the job itself is the degree to which employees obtain direct and understandable information about their performance and effectiveness of carrying out their required work activities. In addition to feedback from the job itself, Hackman and Oldham (1975) posed that the degree to which information directly related to employees’ job performance is provided to employees by their supervisor or co-workers is a subset of the overall feedback dimension. Another subset of the feedback dimension included the degree to which the position requires employees to work with
others directly, including internal organization members or external organizational “clients.”

The Motivating Potential Score formula suggests that an increase in any of the five job characteristic factors will increase the motivating factor score (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). The formula also suggests that if any of the job characteristic factors are cited as low, the motivating factor score will be low. If a job has a high Motivating Potential Score, the Job Characteristics Model predicts that motivation, performance, and job satisfaction will be positively affected (Steel, 2012). In addition, a high Motivating Potential Score predicts the likelihood that negatives outcomes, such as absenteeism and turnover, will be reduced.

A common misunderstanding is that the score will affect all individuals the same; rather, those individuals with a stronger individual growth need strength, or a higher readiness to respond to “enriched” jobs, will be more likely to be motivated in the given job conditions. In contrast, Hackman and Oldham suggest that the employees with weaker individual growth need strength will be less likely to be motivated in the given job conditions. For example, employees with the lower readiness to respond to “enriched” jobs may be in a position where they “find such a job anxiety arousing and may be uncomfortably stretched by it” (Hackman & Oldham, 1975, p. 160).

The Job Diagnostic Survey has received some criticism. Most significantly, Tahun (1997) notes that the Job Diagnostic Survey measures perceived, not objective, levels of job satisfaction. Tahun’s argument, however, is weakened by supporting research using Herzberg’s (2003) two-factor theory illustrating the importance of employee perception in motivation (Paswan, Pelton, & True, 2005).
Corderly and Sevastos (1993) additionally criticized that the Job Diagnostic Survey needs to be updated in order to produce the most accurate results. Particularly, the model should be revised to avoid dimensionality concerns. Corderly and Sevastos recommended that the Job Diagnostic Survey preferably utilize positively worded phrases for the survey concepts in place of negatively worded phrases. Concerns about the impact of the level of the respondents’ education has been questioned (Sledge, Miles, & van Sambeek, 2011); however, Kulik, Kulik, and Schwalb’s (1986) research found that education was not a moderating factor in this model.

**Applications of the Job Characteristics Model.** The Job Characteristics Model was created to identify job characteristic gaps for the purpose of job redesign (Tahun, 1997). Low-performing employee groups can be evaluated using the Job Diagnostic Survey to offer direction for work modifications. Tahun notes that “Because the theory emphasizes that importance of perceived task characteristics and the objective change of job dimensions will lead to change of perceived job characteristics, redesigning the job can be carried out in two ways” (1997, p. 9). First, the skill task characteristics can be changed subjectively. This method does not quantify how much the job characteristics should be changed; however, the change of the perceived job characteristics can be measured. Second, job enrichment can be manipulated; allowing employees to perceive the actual job has been enriched.

The work of Hackman and Oldham (1975) and others provides researchers with the opportunity to better understand and explore job satisfaction and motivating potential of employees in job positions amongst various industries. The use of this theoretical framework and corresponding tools provided by earlier researchers invites new research
to be completed in specific workforce sectors. In addition, research conducted using this theoretical framework can provide greater understanding to multiple fields of knowledge as well as provide insight to possible job redesign.

**Statement of Purpose**

Despite researchers’ use of the Job Characteristic Model across many types of employee positions and industries, currently, there is little information available to understand job characteristic deficiencies causing job dissatisfaction in call centers. The purpose of this study is to examine the perceived job characteristics of call center employees of service organizations in relation to job dissatisfaction. The Job Characteristics Model, Job Diagnostic Survey, and the Motivating Potential Score framework can be used alongside the Job Descriptive Index to show causation of job characteristics causing job dissatisfaction. Al-Qutop and Harrim (2011) insist that management can improve the well-being of their workers by using the Job Characteristics Model to redesign work. They have insisted, too, that management’s use of this model allows employees to engage in wider contacts with customers, clients, and suppliers. Bravendam (2002) adds, through management’s use of the Job Characteristics Model to redesign work that a satisfied employee is more committed and can be retained in the organization for a longer period, thus enhancing the productivity of the organization. By identifying job characteristic deficiencies, call center management may be better equipped to respond to the specific areas that cause the employee dissatisfaction, which is at least partially responsible for high turnover currently seen in this employee population.


**Research Questions**

Past research has analyzed job characteristics as variables in occupational stress and well-being studies either using Karasek’s (1979) Demand-Control Model or Hackman and Oldham’s (1976) Job Characteristics Model (Ford & Wooldridge, 2012). However, existing studies indicate minimal empirical evidence of the Job Characteristic’s Model Job Diagnostic Survey and Motivating Potential Score tools ability to predict job dissatisfaction in call center teams. The research for this study is intended to better understand the impact of the motivating potential on job satisfaction among call center employees. The following research question and sub-questions seek to provide empirical evidence to lessen this research gap:

Research Question 1: What is the impact of motivating potential on job satisfaction for call center employees?

- **Research Question 1a:** What is the impact of motivating potential, using the overall Motivating Potential Score for analysis, on job satisfaction for call center workers?

- **Research Question 1b:** What is the impact of motivating potential, using the three psychological states for analysis, on job satisfaction for call center workers?

- **Research Question 1c:** What is the impact of motivating potential, using the five job characteristics for analysis, on job satisfaction for call center workers?
Additional understanding of the possible root causes of unfavorably low perceived job satisfaction in call center workers can help prompt recommendations to management to combat severely high employee turnover issues.

**Potential Significance of the Study**

Employee turnover can be the single greatest financial and morale drain for call centers (Reynolds, 2003). Empirical job satisfaction studies in call centers using Hackman and Oldham’s Job Characteristics Model (1976) to guide turnover reduction recommendations have not yet been conducted. Despite the lack of research, call centers are increasingly investing in turnover reduction initiatives (Gallagher, 2004).

In spite of the investments made to reduce employee turnover, organizations continue to struggle with higher than average call center work turnover (Hillmer, Barbara, & McRoberts, 2004). This research will not only assess the extent of call center employee job satisfaction, but will also determine which job characteristics may serve as deficiencies to motivating potential. More importantly, the ability to use Motivating Potential Score to analyze call center job characteristics may provide further understanding of the impact on the motivating potential for each of the five individual measurement dimensions included in the Motivating Potential Score formula. Whatever impact the research reveals, the empirical findings would provide a successful contribution to the call center, employee turnover, motivating potential, and job satisfaction literature. The recommendations provided in Chapter 5 may help call center managers move from investing heavily in reactive employee turnover tasks, such as recruiting and onboarding, to less costly, proactive employee retention initiatives.
**Definitions of Terms**

For the purpose of this research, key terms and concepts have been defined in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Concept</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes towards supervision</td>
<td>The Job Descriptive Index supervision factor refers to the employee’s satisfaction with his direct management (Fichter &amp; Cipolla, 2010).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Hackman and Oldham (1975) defined autonomy as the “degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the employee in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out” (p. 162). Autonomy is one of the dimensions included in the Motivating Potential Score.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call Center</td>
<td>Call centers consist of a set of resources including personnel, computers, and telecommunications equipment; handling paths of communication which are either inbound, outbound, or both inbound and outbound (Gans, Koole, &amp; Mandelbaum, 2003). In many organizations, call centers provide the primary customer or partner interface for post-sales and supplemental service, information, complaint resolution, reservations, and ticketing support (Whiting &amp; Donthu, 2006).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Churn

High employee turnover rates are sometimes referred to as churn (Cleveland & Hash, 2004).

Experienced meaningfulness

Experienced meaningfulness is a critical psychological state identified in the Job Characteristics Model. For workers, it is often explained as a state of mind where employees perceive their work as being valuable and worthwhile (Sledge, Miles, & van Sambeek, 2011).

Experienced responsibility

Experienced responsibility is a critical psychological state identified in the Job Characteristics Model. It is referred to as the extent to which a worker feels personally accountable for their job output (Sledge, Miles, & van Sambeek, 2011).

Extrinsic motivation

Extrinsic motivation is motivation that “requires an instrumentality between the activity and some separable consequences such as tangible or verbal rewards, so satisfaction comes not from the activity itself but rather from the extrinsic consequences to which the activity leads” (Gagne & Deci, 2005, p. 331).
Feedback

Feedback from the job itself is the degree to which an employee obtains direct and understandable information about their performance and effectiveness of carrying out their required work activities. In addition to feedback from the job itself, Hackman and Oldham (1975) posed that the degree to which information directly related to the employee’s job performance is provided to the employee by their supervisor or co-workers is a subset of the overall feedback dimension.

Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation is motivation that “involves people doing an activity because they find it interesting and derive spontaneous satisfaction from the activity itself” (Gagne & Deci, 2005, p. 331).

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is “the happiness that workers feel for their jobs” (Hackman & Oldham, Development of the Job Diagnostic Survey, 1975, p. 159).

Job dissatisfaction

Job dissatisfaction can be attributed to employees not being able to exhibit their personal talents and stress of too many tasks, duty conflicts, negative attitude of the management, and lack of decision-making ability (Saygi, Tolon, & Tekogul, 2011).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Characteristics Model</td>
<td>Hackman and Oldham’s (1975) proposed Job Characteristics Model explains that specific features of a job can affect the job involvement. The model demonstrates how these features may encourage the internal motivation of employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Diagnostics Survey</td>
<td>Low-performing employee groups can be evaluated using the Job Diagnostic Survey tool to offer direction for work modifications (Tahun, 1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Descriptive Index</td>
<td>The Job Descriptive Index scale measures six major factors associated with job satisfaction: the nature of the work itself, attitudes towards supervisors, relations with co-workers, opportunities for promotion, salary and benefit, work condition in the present environment (Landy, Shankster, &amp; Kohler, 1994).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of results</td>
<td>The knowledge of results is a critical psychological state for workers included in Hackman and Oldham’s Job Characteristic Model (Hackman &amp; Oldham, Development of the Job Diagnostic Survey, 1975). It is the extent to which an employee regularly is knowledgeable about and understands how well they are completing their job tasks (Sledge, Miles, &amp; van Sambeek, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs</td>
<td>Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs places human needs in a hierarchy order (Gambrel &amp; Cianci, 2003). The theory posits that an individual’s basic human needs must be satisfied before modifying behavior to satisfy higher-level needs. These human needs include physiological, safety and security, belonging (social), self-esteem, and self-actualization (defined in terms of individual development).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motivating Potential Score</td>
<td>An individual’s completion of the Job Diagnostic Survey initiates the calculation of the Motivating Potential Score (Hackman &amp; Oldham, Development of the Job Diagnostic Survey, 1975). The formula for the Motivating Potential Score takes skill variety, task identity and task significance into equal amount while factoring in autonomy and feedback to populate a better understanding of one’s ability to perform well in a given position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for promotion</td>
<td>The Job Descriptive Index promotion factor measures an employee’s satisfaction with the organization’s promotion policy and its administration (Fichter &amp; Cipolla, 2010).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay</td>
<td>The Job Descriptive Index pay factor evaluates an employee’s attitude towards pay, and is based on the perceived difference between the employee’s actual pay and expected pay (Fichter &amp; Cipolla, 2010).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onboarding</td>
<td>Onboarding is a comprehensive introductory process for newly hired employees to an organization (Snell, 2006). An effective onboarding process enables new team members to gain access to information, tools and materials needed to perform their function more quickly. Productivity generated by successfully onboarding a new hire sooner will have a direct, positive effect on the overall productivity of the company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>Employee retention is an important ongoing process in which the organization retains the employees for the maximum period of time or until the completion of the project (Sohail, Muneer, Tanveer, &amp; Tariq, 2011). It is a continuing employment relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with co-workers</td>
<td>Satisfaction with co-workers is a factor associated with job satisfaction in the Job Descriptive Index. Co-workers are the workers on the present job, who impact the level of employee satisfaction with his fellow employees (Smith, Kendall, &amp; Hulin, 1969).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with work itself</td>
<td>Satisfaction with work itself is a factor associated with job satisfaction in the Job Descriptive Index. It is concerned with the employee’s satisfaction with the actual job duties. Work includes an employee’s opportunities for creativity and task variety (Landy, Shankster, &amp; Kohler, 1994).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Six Sigma approach

Six Sigma is a disciplined approach for dramatically reducing defects and producing measurable financial results (Pulakanam, 2012). The program provides a collection of long-standing management and statistical tools and a problem-solving methodology known as define, measure, analyze, improve, and control (DMAIC).

Skill variety

Skill variety is defined by Hackman and Oldham (1975) as “The degree to which a job requires a variety of different activities in carrying out the work, which involve the use of a number of different skills and talents of the employee” (p. 161). Skill variety is one of the dimensions included in the Motivating Potential Score.

Task identity

Task identity is described as “The degree to which the job requires completion of a “whole” and identifiable piece of work – that is, doing a job from beginning to end with a visible outcome” (Hackman & Oldham, 1975, p. 161). Task identity is one of the dimensions included in the Motivating Potential Score.
Task significance  Hackman and Oldham explained task significance as “The degree to which the job has a substantial impact on the lives or work of other people – whether in the immediate organization or in the external environment” (1975, p. 161). Task significance is one of the dimensions included in the Motivating Potential Score.

Turnover  Employee turnover is an issue due to the costs involved in recruiting and training replacement workers (Balsam, Gifford, & Sungsoo, 2007).

Two-Factor Theory  Herzberg’s (2003) Two Factor motivation-hygiene theory identifies hygiene factors, often tended to as extrinsic motivators (e.g., company administration, supervision, salary), and intrinsic motivators (e.g., achievement, recognition, the work itself). Both extrinsic and intrinsic motivators have been positively correlated to employee job satisfaction.

Chapter Summary  
As organizations rely more on email communications and strict scheduling through software programs, the need for evaluation of job satisfaction in call center workers increases dramatically (Bassett-Jones & Lloyd, 2005). However, existing studies indicate minimal empirical evidence of initiatives to address turnover rates, leading to questions regarding the need for job redesign in call center teams. Further analysis of the current state of job dissatisfaction in call center workers may provide a
basis to determine the need for job redesign. Additionally, it may provide greater
evidence for managers to invest in tools and techniques to improve employee job
satisfaction in an effort to reduce employee turnover.

The remaining chapters present additional information based on the literature
reviewed, and additional research and analysis. In Chapter 2, a review of the literature
includes research relevant to the topic of job satisfaction in call center workers. In
addition, the literature review evaluates empirical studies of call center employees in
specific studies related to turnover and retention, employee wellbeing and emotional
labor, performance surveillance, role clarity, effect on service quality, motivation to adapt
and women in call center roles.

Chapter 3 describes the details regarding the proposed quantitative design of this
research study, including rationale for this method of research. The findings are
presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 4 presents the data collected within the quantitative study
to determine the need for job redesign in call center teams. In the final chapter, Chapter 5,
the researcher discusses the implications of the findings, limitations of the study, and
future recommendations.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction and Purpose

The issue of high turnover in the rapidly evolving and stressful work environments of call centers has received more attention in recent years as organizations are now starting to quantify the real cost of employee turnover (Hillmer, Barbara, & McRoberts, 2004). The research for this study is intended to better understand the impact of the motivating potential on job satisfaction among call center employees. The following research question and sub-questions seek to provide empirical evidence to lessen this research gap:

Research Question 1: What is the impact of motivating potential on job satisfaction for call center employees?

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Research Question 1c: What is the impact of motivating potential, using the five job characteristics for analysis, on job satisfaction for call center workers?
The review of literature will first identify significant research studies relating to the antecedents of employee turnover. The second section of the literature review will examine job satisfaction, specifically studies involving call centers. The third section of the literature review will describe empirical studies based on the Job Characteristics Model theoretical framework. Research methodology, gaps, and recommendations stemming from this literature review will be addressed in the chapter summary.

**Turnover**

Most employers are not aware of why some employees leave and other employees stay with their organization (Iqbal, 2010). However, employers do know that employee turnover yields both undesirable tangible and intangible organizational costs (Hillmer, Barbara, & McRoberts, 2004). Carraher (2011) realized the potential value that could be created by researching employee retention. In 2011, he studied turnover prediction using attitudes towards benefits, pay, and pay satisfaction among employees and entrepreneurs in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. A survey tool was used to collect annual assessment data from 911 participants over a 4-year period. The survey included questions popularly used in both existing equity and expectancy theories.

Carraher (2011) analyzed the results of the study using the participants’ assessment data in addition to their actual salary/income data obtained from their organizational records. For employees, the data displayed a significant connection that pay was considered more important to employees during the recruitment phase while benefits were significantly most important for retaining employees. Unlike for employees, pay was not usually a significant factor for turnover in entrepreneurs.
However, similar to employees, benefits did play a significant role in the retention rate of entrepreneurs.

Similarly, a study by researchers Rosen, Stiehl, Mittal, and Leana (2011) provided further evidence that pay was not a significant facture in predicting turnover. Both of these studies affirm that factors other than pay are critical in the research surrounding the issue of employee turnover. Rosen et al. (2011) longitudinal study set out to understand the job factors and work attitudes associated with just staying or leaving. Using a random sample of certified nursing assistants from Pennsylvania’s Department of Health’s certified nursing assistants’ registry, phone surveys were conducted to gather data. Participants who remained at the same organization over the one year study were coined “stayers.” The stayers reported greater job benefits and lower turnover intentions than the participants who switched to another facility during this same timeframe. Of those who left the industry, the “leavers”, they reported lower job satisfaction and emotional well-being and left for health reasons. In the study, the turnover intentions were predicted by job satisfaction and by the absence of health insurance. Rosen et al. confirm through their results that pay was not a significant predictor of either turnover intent or actual turnover.

Turnover antecedents have been strongly related to job satisfaction as an antecedent, especially in call centers. LeBreton et al. (2004) stressed the importance of being able to identify high-turnover-risk job applicants and current call center workers in order to retain or build stakeholder value. Call center organizations often depend on agency workers to help support predictable call seasons or unpredicted call volumes in addition to helping with staffing changes due to turnover. Biggs and Swailes (2006) investigated the level of organizational commitment of agency workers in relation to full-
time workers in call center roles. Previous studies had not used a strong control to interpret results between the full-time and agency call center workers. Their study took place in call centers of various types of organizations located in the United Kingdom. This mixed-methods study to measure organizational commitment utilized qualitative interviews after completing quantitative questionnaires using a sample of full-time, agency, and management employees.

Biggs and Swailes (2006) used Cook and Wall’s (1985) nine-item British Organizational Scale to measure organizational commitment while job satisfaction was measured using Hackman and Oldham’s (1975) five-item General Satisfaction. Results showed strong correlations between employee commitment and job satisfaction. In regards to job satisfaction, the results demonstrated a strongly positive correlation with those participants reporting that they are valued in their current position. The data collected for this study did not show significant correlations between commitment and support for agency workers and anti-agency worker attitudes. In addition, they found a weak correlation between job satisfaction and support for agency workers and anti-agency worker attitudes in the review of the responses. Biggs and Swailes noted that the quantitative study results represented their prediction that job satisfaction would have the largest influence on organizational commitment and was valued for employees in their current call center position as the second largest influence on job satisfaction.

The main themes from these dialogues included: worker relationship, skill variety, organizational commitment to 3rd party employing organization, organizational commitment to employment agency, involuntary/voluntary status, job satisfaction and job security. Biggs and Swailes (2006) were then able to make strong conclusions from their
analysis of the data. The first conclusion made was that call center workers “being valued in current position had a significant association with organizational commitment” (p. 138). This association was perceived by Biggs and Swailes to be similar to perceived organizational support. The second conclusion they discussed was that “the disadvantages of higher organizational commitment that may arise for permanent workers have less influence on agency workers” (p. 138).

Using the dialogue scripts from full-time employees, the study was able to suggest that the use of agency workers has a negative effect on full-time employees’ organizational commitment and may threaten levels of job satisfaction. Therefore, the important contribution made by Biggs and Swailes (2006) in this study was the ability to show the need for a powerful antecedent for employers to be able to use to develop a system of reciprocating trust between full-time and agency workers.

Hillmer et al. (2004) developed a model to estimate the cost of call center employee turnover. The researchers applied the model to an actual Fortune 500 firm, using data reported from 2002. The model included both tangible and intangible costs of turnover expected to be incurred in a call center position. In this study, the organization analyzed operated a relatively small call center. It consisted of 31 agents with 4 supervisors. Hillmer notes that “when inputs had to be estimated, conservative values were used” (2004, p. 39).

The call center investigated in Hillmer et al. (2004) study reported a 60% agent turnover rate in the one year reviewed. By using their model to quantify both the tangible and intangible costs, the researchers estimated that one agent vacancy cost the organization $21,551. This cost is comparative to the average annual salary expense of a
call center agent, about $26,500. Notable inputs included the costs of human resources, trainer, and technician salaries. Additional inputs included items related to the cost of recruiting and training new call center workers. Overall, the calculated expense to the Fortune 500 Company in this study, with a relatively small call center team consisting of 31 call center workers and four supervisors, was expected to incur costs equaling more than $400,000 for their vacancies in 2002.

In large organizations where turnover rates are high, turnover costs incurred can reach far into millions of dollars (Hillmer, Barbara, & McRoberts, 2004). Hillmer et al. noted that, for most organizations, these hidden costs and costs indirectly related to call center employee turnover can be prevented. By increasing the understanding of employee job satisfaction in call centers, the turnover issue can be better addressed.

**Job Satisfaction in Call Centers**

Although employee turnover appears to be the most recognizable outcome of job dissatisfaction, call center workers report other disabling attributes related to their job. Issues related to call center work job dissatisfaction include wellbeing and emotional labor, role clarity, effect on service quality, motivation to adapt, and treatment of female workers.

**Well-being and emotional labor.** Call center positions are typically fast paced jobs (Hillmer, Barbara, & McRoberts, 2004). Employees have little or no time in between service calls. Many of the inbound calls to employees involve upset, angry, or frustrated clients. It is not uncommon for call center workers to be verbally abused without an opportunity to respond to the conflict outside of their pre-scripted word tracks. Employees’ flexibility to respond to clients based on their own insight is severely limited.
The following empirical studies analyze the relationship between call center employee wellbeing and emotional labor and job satisfaction.

Holman (2002) explored the perception that call centers have a negative impact on employee wellbeing. The purpose of this study was to further understand how job design, performance monitoring, human resource practices, and team leader support have an impact on call center employee anxiety, depression, and intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction. Holman’s study was the first of its kind to focus on two major measures of wellness, anxiety and depression, in call center workers.

Included in Holman’s (2002) study were customer service representatives in a financial services institution located in the United Kingdom. This mixed-methods study used an on-site questionnaire administered after call center representative and team leader interviews were completed. The questionnaire included items regarding anxiety, depression, intrinsic satisfaction, extrinsic satisfaction, job characteristics, method control, attention demand, role breadth, monitoring of representative performance, payment fairness, performance appraisal, training and team leader support.

Pertaining to job satisfaction, Holman’s (2002) analysis showed significant associations between extrinsic job satisfaction and method control, payment fairness, training adequacy, team leader support, and monitoring to punish. Age was positively associated with depression and intrinsic job satisfaction while job tenure was negatively associated with intrinsic job satisfaction. Holman noted the research summary showed that high control over work methods and procedures, otherwise known as autonomy, were highly associated with wellbeing. In addition, a low level of monitoring and a supportive team leader were most highly associated with wellbeing. The research
suggests that excessive monitoring over time may decrease the wellbeing of an employee; making an individual feel more depressed and less engaged. Supporting evidence provided in the qualitative interviews suggested that increased training hours may reduce anxiety levels in these employees.

In a separate study of call center workers, researchers Holdsworth and Cartwright (2003) set out to explore the relationship between stress, satisfaction and the four dimensions of psychological empowerment. The four dimensions of psychological empowerment examined were meaning, impact, self-determination and competence. The study aimed to provide a better understanding of call center workers’ perceptions of themselves to be empowered and whether this differs from employees in a more traditional office environment. Holdsworth and Cartwright also investigated how the participants examined in this study compared with the general working population in job stress and job satisfaction variable ranges. In addition, the study identified relevant empowerment dimensions associated with job stress, job satisfaction, and mental and physical health of the call center workers.

Holdsworth and Cartwright (2003) gave a questionnaire to participants to obtain self-report measures of perception of empowerment, organizational sources of stress, job satisfaction, and mental and physical health. The participants of this study all worked for a call center organization providing customer service and deployment of service engineers for the UK alarm and security division of a large international organization. Participants were asked to complete a self-report questionnaire survey. The survey consisted of four scales; one was Spreitzer’s (1995) multi-dimensional assessment of psychological empowerment measured perceptions of empowerment with four items and
the other three were scales from the Occupational Stress Indicator (Cooper, Sloan, & Williams, 1988). The Occupational Stress Indicator was used to measure intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of job satisfaction, 12 items measuring mental and physical health and job stress sub scales. The job stress sub scales included factors intrinsic to the role, organizational role, relationships with other people, career and achievement, organizational structure and client, and home-work interface (Holdsworth & Cartwright, 2003).

The data were used to compare mean scores for each of the scales from the Occupational Stress Indicator with the normative data for the general working population and normative data for a sample of traditional office workers. The researchers found that the call center workers were significantly more stressed: call center workers reported to be significantly more stressed based on the questions that measured stress in relation to factors intrinsic to the job, organizational role, career and achievement, and the organizational structure and climate. The call center workers also reported being less satisfied in their current job; specifically in achievement and growth, and organizational processes. Call center workers reported poorer mental and physical health than the general working population. In addition, mental or physical health did not influence job satisfaction directly; however, self-determination was significantly related to overall job satisfaction (Holdsworth & Cartwright, 2003).

Holdsworth and Cartwright (2003) were able to provide strong evidence that in call center workers, self-determination is most strongly a contributor to overall job satisfaction and showed additional evidence that it may indirectly influence health; both mental and physical. In addition, call center workers perceive themselves to be less
empowered than traditional office workers. Their research shows support for job redesign due to low levels of empowerment for call center employees. Low levels of empowerment in call center workers are attributed to job design deficiencies. The anticipated outcomes of high levels of empowerment, including increased job satisfaction, health, productivity and the potential reduction in associated costs, may be achieved in a job redesign.

Emotional labor is defined by LeBreton, Binning, Adorno and Melcher (2004) as the “product of both situational characteristics and individual characteristics and is conceptually analogous to a Person × Situation interaction” (p. 307). It is an important element for identifying and managing people in organizations. Understanding emotional labor can be a helpful skill for job redesign or employee development interventions. Grandey’s (2000) model of emotional labor depicts that if an employer is able to identify employees who are susceptible to viewing job activities as negative, and consequently labor emotionally during the employment, the organization can better predict turnover risks. Emotional stability has been linked, through both conceptual models and empirical studies, to job stress and strain, physical health complaints, group affective tone, prosocial behaviors, absenteeism rates, job satisfaction, job performance, tenure, turnover interventions and voluntary inventory (LeBreton et al., 2004).

The purpose of LeBreton et al. (2004) study was to improve knowledge regarding the relative importance of affective constructs in two unique ways; to explore the relative importance of trait-based personality constructs and to develop a state-based job-specific affect constructs for predicting job attitudes and withdrawal behaviors of current customer service call center representatives. The Customer Service Fit Index, a paper-
and-pencil screening instrument, formerly known as the call Center Fit Index, along with a separate page indexing job attitudes, withdrawal cognitions, and criterion behaviors was used to observe responses from participants (LeBreton, Binning, Adorno, & Melcher, 2004). The participants included a sample of current call center employees from four call centers across various industries located within the United States.

LeBreton et al. (2004) used five different importance methodologies to show the relationship between extroversion, agreeableness, emotional stability, conscientiousness, and job-specific affect to several withdrawal criteria. Unexpectedly, the results of the study populated a specific pattern of job dissatisfaction predictor-criterion relations. The researchers illustrated in the study that employee job dissatisfaction tends to lead to negative job thoughts. Negative job thoughts tend to lead to negative job behaviors. Negative job behaviors tend to lead to employee absenteeism. Most importantly, employee absenteeism tends to leads to employee turnover. In addition, the results from this study supported that management may be able to increase predictive validity by combining emotional stability and job-specific affect because of their unique contributions to the “thermodynamics” of turnover (LeBreton, Binning, Adorno, & Melcher, 2004). Emotional stability evolved as an accurate predictor of job satisfaction in workers and could further advance the quality of call center research.

The rapidly changing environments of call centers often induce high stress on workers (Hillmer, Barbara, & McRoberts, 2004). This high stress, along with other factors, contributes to call center job satisfaction barriers and turnover. The research regarding the relative values of work-related stress across industries and sectors is currently scarce. However, Johnson, Cooper, Cartwright, Donald, Taylor and Millet
(2005) contributed to this research gap in a multi-industry study. In their study, they compared the experience of work-related stress across a diverse set of 26 occupations located in the United Kingdom. The stress related variables considered in this study were psychological well-being, physical health and job satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2005). By researching the relative values of these work-related stressors and stress outcomes, a value could be assigned to each variable in an effort to rank the order for comparison across varying occupations.

Johnson et al. (2005) utilized a short stress evaluation tool which helped to provide information regarding work-related stressors and stress outcomes. To measure occupational scores on physical and mental ill health and job satisfaction, the ASSET (Robertson Cooper, 2002b) stress questionnaires scores were taken. The study’s sample included workers from call center-type positions from 26 organizations. The three factors of work-related stress were correlated to each other at an occupational level. Across all occupations, a very strong relation with job satisfaction was shown with both physical health and psychological well-being. The relationship between physical health and psychological well-being was also very strongly correlated. The researchers proposed as physical health and psychological well-being deteriorate, job satisfaction decreases (Johnson et al., 2005).

In addition to correlational findings, the ranking of the variables across occupations provided an opportunity for additional analysis that could be used to improve the allocation or concentration of healthcare resources across worker occupations. A group of six occupations showed average scores of the job satisfaction variable to be significantly worse than average occupational scores; one of which included customer
service call center workers. Work-related stress in customer service call center jobs was broken down into three factor categories; in regards to work-related stress, the occupation ranked 4th for physical health, 12th for psychological wellbeing, and 4th for job satisfaction. Johnson et al. noted that emotional labor associated with high stress jobs may be a potential causal factor (Johnson et al., 2005). Overall, the study showed evidence of the factors of work-related stress as significant measurements to rank occupations across industries and that these factors could be potentially used to rank positions within sectors in future research.

The Job Characteristics Model provides an opportunity for enhanced understanding of job satisfaction in relation to employee wellbeing and emotional labor. Specifically, an analysis of the autonomy and feedback enhances this opportunity. In the Motivating Potential Score formula, these two job characteristics are illustrated as the characteristics associated with the management of the job.

**Performance surveillance.** The technological advancements in recent years have spurred an increased need for highly skilled, technology-savvy call center workers (Hillmer, Barbara, & McRoberts, 2004). Along with the overwhelming skill demand, call centers are typically known to be highly structured, with close surveillance and works controls of workers. Call center employees’ schedules are precisely created to only allow breaks and meals as deemed required, typically by employment laws. The following empirical studies note the possible relation between call center employee job satisfaction and performance surveillance.

Although cited for not paying enough attention to the well-being of employees, U.S. companies spend hundreds of millions of dollars each year to monitor their
employees electronically (Holman, Chissick, & Totterdell, 2002). As monitoring
technologies become cheaper to purchase, easier to install, and provide more analytical
option, more and more employees will see changes in the methods used to analyze their
performance. Holman, Chissick, and Totterdell (2002) conducted a study to better
understand the impact of performance monitoring on call center employee well-being. In
addition, the study also questioned the role of emotional labor in this supposed
relationship between performance monitoring and well-being. Participants in this study
included call center representatives from two financial services call centers located in the
United Kingdom.

The Holman, Chissick, and Totterdell’s (2002) questionnaire rated content,
purpose, and intensity of the employee performance monitoring using Chalykoff and
Kochan’s scale (1989), emotional labor and emotional dissonance as well as surface
acting/deep acting using Brotheridge and Lee’s scales respectively (1998), and job
control and job demand through an adapted version of the Jackson, Wall, Martin and
David’s scale (1993). In addition, job-related well-being was measured through the use of
multiple scales. Maslach and Jackson’s (1981) scale was used to measure the intensity of
emotional exhaustion, and anxiety and depression using Warr’s (2002) scale. Through the
use of regression analysis, the results indicated that the performance-related content and
the beneficial-purpose of monitoring were positively related to the sample of call center
employees’ well-being. The purpose of the performance and content of performance
monitoring were reported to have had a strong relationship with job satisfaction. On
another note, emotional dissonance and intensity of performance were shown to have a
negative relation to job satisfaction (Holman, Chissick, & Totterdell, 2002). Overall, this
study provided insight that performance monitoring acts as a strong antecedent of call center employee well-being with impact possibilities being both positive and/or negative.

A later study by Annakis, Lobo and Pillay (2011) further explored the impact of monitoring while also focusing on work environment and flexibility on call center employee job satisfaction. The purpose of the Annakis et al. case study was to investigate predictors of workers’ job satisfaction from the labor process and equity theories. The researchers were concerned about the high turnover and absenteeism rates in this industry and worked to interview call center workers at a small, medium, and large organization across three diverse business sectors within one large city in Australia. The sample was consistent with the call center employee population throughout Australia (Annakis, Lobo, & Pillay, 2011).

Annakis et al. (2011) adopted a qualitative approach to learn more about the ways employees respond to the managerial control process which directly influences job satisfaction. The performance management system constructs were used to design the interview protocol (Annakis, Lobo, & Pillay, 2011). The constructs were flexible and tentative to allow for new research themes. The research themes included: monitoring, flexibility, work environment, Human Resource Management, Performance Management System, and overall job satisfaction. Also, the constructs were designed to allow for suggested changes to improve job satisfaction to emerge.

Dialogue from the conversations was recorded and presented in the case study as they represented each of the constructs. Regarding work environment, almost half of the focus group participants responded positively that that team leaders and management encouraged the workers to participate in decision making for both strategic and daily
team functions. The issue of monitoring arose as a concern from the majority of the workers interviewed; one participant stated “management keeps important things away from staff and they do not deal with any real issues especially during meetings” (Annakis, Lobo, & Pillay, 2011, p. 83).

The researchers noted that in the responses to work environment, teams were identified as a source of dissatisfaction. For example, almost all of the workers in one of the focus groups recommended that management should make performance targets more difficult because the current job was “easy work for easy pay” (Annakis, Lobo, & Pillay, 2011, p. 83). From this same group, about half of the participants suggested that management should allow more flexible scheduling. The flexible scheduling, participants explained, would allow employees to attend a local school program that many of their co-workers had or were attending attended. Additionally, the participants of the study reported that they were more satisfied in their job due to the fact that the university they were attending held the programs at a site around the corner from their office (Annakis, Lobo, & Pillay, 2011).

Annakis, Lobo, and Pillay (2011) discovered two emerging themes. First, differentiation occurred by job function. Inbound call representatives were primarily concerned with quality tensions of the customer transaction. The quality was not rewarded and monitoring and performance practices geared towards timing, volumes, call drop-offs and call waiting. Unlike inbound representatives, outbound representatives were worried about customer abuse and rejection as well as not feeling confident in their ability to keep to their scripts. Second, uncommon to most organizations outside of call centers, call center employees were able to positively identify with their internal teams or
company (Annakis, Lobo, & Pillay, 2011). Further research is required in the area of both of these emerging themes.

The emerging issue of “big brother” or intensive surveillance was most recently explored in Sewell, Barker, and Nyberg’s (2012) study. The researchers noted that call centers are a territory that is notoriously identified as the archetypal surveillance-based organization where employee performance is supervised at the most fine grained level. The objective of this study was to understand how call center employees “draw on opposed discourses to understand the purpose and consequences of performance measurement as workplace surveillance” (Sewell, Barker, & Nyberg, 2012, p. 189). The research study was designed to help explain how employees used logic to develop conflict management strategies and to develop a three step method for a more practical employee approach to dealing with these discourses.

Sewell et al. (2012) case study observed employees working full-time in an insurance company call center in Australia. Participant performance in this organization was evaluated in accordance with key performance indicators: (a) the workers’ availability in taking or waiting for calls, (b) compliance to the call-center’s operational procedures, (c) scores in call coaching, (d) processed feedback forms to other internal departments within the product area, (e) team contribution (i.e., being positive enthusiastic, and punctual), and (f) a minimum target attendance rate of 95% of their shifts.

In Sewell et al. (2012) study, the results of these conversations showed a few consistent themes among employees. First, there was an importance to be ranked in the top 50 percentile as the participants tried to explain and justify during snack and lunch
breaks why their specific performance was low at times. In this study, the outcomes of
the performance measurements were used by management to award extrinsic prizes (i.e.,
vouchers or time off) (Sewell, Barker, & Nyberg, 2012). Second, they reported that, in
conversations with the call center team leaders and management, all were aware of the
consequences of surveillance. However, management only had brief discussions in their
staff meetings related to the considerable number of employee frustrations. Third, not
only was employee job satisfaction at stake, but also the service quality. The call center
workers were typically evaluated based on their ability to use their given resources. Their
computer program was considered a reliable resource and their responses to clients were
expected to match the information provided in the computer program. However, the
computer systems were not always reliable due to certain situations, information update
delays, or numerous other reasons. Call center workers would knowingly reply
incorrectly to a customer’s questions if the insurance computer program was not
preparing an accurate one for one reason or another. In other words, workers knowingly
provided incorrect answers to a client because it would improve their performance scores.
Sewell and fellow researchers (2012) deemed this an irrational thought process knowing
the employees were “playing the system” to receive a high score for following set
procedures.

Sewell et al. (2012) emerged with an opportunity to build on these two opposing
discourses as they became obvious in the data collection. The mechanism they built could
be used to (a) move beyond a static and dualistic representation of performance
measurement as being either “good” (i.e., protective or caring) or “bad” (i.e., coercive)
and to (b) focus on how management comes to see surveillance practices as being
legitimate or illegitimate in particular organizational settings. The authors suggested moving towards a system of performance measurement where the employees have an active role in critique and improvement initiatives (Sewell, Barker, & Nyberg, 2012). The question of how to do that and what role ethics plays in this initiative were the questions remaining for these researchers and have yet to be answered by any published research.

Considerably more research has been published using call centers workers in the UK and Australia mainly due to the high percentage of these countries’ populations employed in call center work. Approximately 2% of the UK working population was employed in 1998 by call centers with growth patterns that may predict a doubling of this percentage within every 10 years (Fernie & Metcalf, 1998). The danger in relying on foreign studies of employee surveillance is that certain levels of surveillance may be normal to one culture when it would be intrusive to another (Foucault, 2000). Additional research is needed in the United States to compare the validity of foreign findings for domestic use.

The increased understanding of the role of performance surveillance in call centers may apply to the researchers’ interpretation of some of the dimensions of the Job Characteristics Model. Specifically, the feedback and autonomy characteristics may be impacted by performance surveillance issues in relation to job satisfaction in call center workers.

Role clarity. Call center workers are expected to constantly manage high caller expectations (Hillmer, Barbara, & McRoberts, 2004). In addition, their role often requires them to understand complex products and services, explain complex pricing tiers, navigate through frequently changing, complex software and database systems, operate
within compliance and ethical standards, and ever-increasing employer expectations. While call center managers work to eliminate unneeded tasks and improve role clarity, the following empirical studies exemplify the issues related to role clarity and job satisfaction in call centers.

Mukherjee and Malhotra’s (2004) study was designed to explore the effects of role clarity and its antecedents and consequences on employee-perceived service quality. Role clarity antecedents included feedback, autonomy, participation, supervisory consideration and team support. Role clarity consequences included organizational commitment, job satisfaction and service quality. The research was conducted in in-bound telephone, in-house call centers of a major retail bank in the United Kingdom. Only employees with regular employee contact received questionnaires.

The survey questions were created based on items from the Job Characteristics Model and cognitive theories. Job satisfaction, task autonomy and feedback were observed items based on Hackman and Oldham’s Job Diagnostic Survey (1976) while role clarity was measured using Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman’s (1970) scale. The research uncovered role clarity as a significant factor in providing reason for employees’ perceptions of service quality. Mukherjee and Malhotra’s (2006) findings indicated feedback, participation, and team support influenced role clarity, which in turn influences job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The researchers concluded that call center workers should attempt to build stronger role clarity in their role in order to provide better service quality.

Issues of low job satisfaction related to role clarity may become more transparent as more studies using the Job Characteristics Model to analyze all three psychological
dimensions are performed. Specifically, experienced meaningfulness and knowledge of results dimensions may depict the importance of role clarity in relation to job satisfaction.

**Service quality.** In call centers, management is often too busy working to recruit, interview, hire, and orient new workers to adequately address the primary business needs of the existing phone representatives (Hillmer, Barbara, & McRoberts, 2004). While workers are stressed and supervisors and managers are busy tending to turnover complications, much of the planned workload does not get completed as intended. The following empirical studies visited will explain the importance of job satisfaction in relation to service quality.

Malhotra and Mukherjee (2004) investigated how different forms of organizational commitment and job satisfaction influence the service quality delivered by contact employees. Three objectives of interest included: (a) testing empirically the nature of the relationship between job satisfaction and service quality, (b) testing empirically the nature of the relationship between the three components of organizational commitment and service quality, and (c) testing empirically the relative importance of the effects of job satisfaction and organizational commitment on service quality.

Malhotra and Mukherjee (2004) studied full time employees from four call centers in a major United Kingdom retail bank. Job satisfaction was measured using the Job Diagnostic Survey while organizational commitment was measured using Meyer, Allen, and Smith’s (1993) revised three-component scale of affective, normative, and continuance commitment. Service quality was measured by the call center representatives themselves using a shortened and adapted version of the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988) instrument (Malhotra & Mukherjee, 2004).
The researchers described affective commitment for this study as the emotional attachment of the employee towards his/her organization, and reflects the willingness of employees to accept and support the organization’s goals. Job satisfaction was most highly related to affective commitment and normative commitment and showed significant relation to service quality but not to continuance commitment. Overall, Malhotra and Mukherjee (2004) found the affective component of commitment was more important than job satisfaction in determining service quality of call center workers.

Moshavi and Terborg’s (2002) study involving both full-time and contingent call center workers explored the role of human capital in explaining the job satisfaction and performance of these workers. The research took place in a large, retail clothing, mail-order catalog company in the United States which employed approximately 600 call center workers within a single-site. Previous research focusing on job satisfaction and the possible correlation with job performance noted the importance of using demographic variables for controls; including age, race, and gender (Moshavi & Terborg, 2002).

An employee questionnaire was completed by both contingent employees and full-time employees. Employee measurements were gathered by looking at work status and employee job satisfaction using Durham, Smith, and Blackburn’s Index of Organizational Reactions (1977); including amount of work, type of work, financial rewards, supervision, co-workers, company identification, career facilitation and physical conditions. Employee training hours, education level and tenure were also assessed to measure human capital using the Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) guidelines. Customers were randomly selected and contacted within two days following a service encounter from both full-time and contingent employees and were used to measure job
performance of the call center workers. The customers rated the employees based on knowledgeability of the employee, the friendliness/courtesy of the employee, and overall satisfaction with the encounter (Moshavi & Terborg, 2002).

The results of a subgroup analysis demonstrated a strong correlation between job satisfaction and job performance for contingent workers, however, represented an insignificant correlation for full-time workers. According to Moshavi and Terborg, the findings in this study were the first to report this statistically significant linkage at the individual level of analysis (Moshavi & Terborg, 2002).

Moshavi and Terborg (2002) found that contingent call center workers had less human capital but higher job satisfaction than regular workers. In addition, it was found that human capital mediated the relationship between work status and job satisfaction. The researchers did not expect to find an absence of performance differences between contingent and full-time call center workers; possibly because these results were pooled from an organization with a long-standing history of call center training programs and monitoring management which may not ideally represent the call center population (Moshavi & Terborg, 2002).

These studies aimed to monitor the effects of low job satisfaction on service quality (Hillmer, Barbara, & McRoberts, 2004). Although some of these studies had shown that employment status plays a significant role on the extent of the effect on service quality, additional research is still needed to further support this observation.

**Motivation to adapt.** Many workers find themselves incompatible with the highly structured environments of call centers. Workers are surrounded by frequently changing product and service knowledge as well as rigid rules that guide their daily
actions. In general, call center workers seek environments that value their independence, commitment, and creativity. Issues related to motivation to adapt and job satisfaction are described in the following empirical studies.

Adaptive job performance examines how individuals deal with new conditions or job requirements. Cannon and Perreault (1999) recognized that product, process, or procedural adaptations made by organizations for their customers were positively related to levels of customer trust and longer lasting relationships. Gwimmer, Bitner, Brown, and Kumar (2005) empirically tested antecedents of employee adaptive behavior. The two distinct dimensions evaluated were interpersonal adaptive behavior and service-offering adaptive behavior. A hypothesis of interest included the test to see if greater motivation to adapt results in higher levels of (a) interpersonal adaptive behavior which is described by the researchers as the “altering of sales behaviors during a customer interaction or across customer interactions based on perceived information about the nature of the selling situation” (p. 133) and (b) service-offering adaptive behavior which could be described as the variation of the service delivered to the customer outcome (Gwimmer, et al., 2005).

In Gwimmer et al. study (2005), call center workers were randomly selected and invited through a telecommunication firm’s facility electronic mail system to participate in the study. The questionnaire included questions to measure both specific service-offering and interpersonal behaviors using, for example, Tyagi’s 1985 Motivation to Adapt construct and Lennox and Wolfe’s 1984 Revised Self-Monitoring Scale. They calculated a score that was constructed for both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation by
adding the products created by multiplying the corresponding instrumentality and valence items (Gwimmer, et al., 2005).

The researchers found that there was a weak relationship between service-orientation and interpersonal adaptive behavior. However, service-orientation was strongly linked to service-offering adaptive behavior. Results for motivation for call center employees to adapt, indicated extrinsic motivation is not related to either dimension but intrinsic motivation is significantly and positively related to service-offering adaptive behavior (Gwimmer, et al., 2005).

Gwimmer’s (2005) study helped to further explain what types of rewards predict adaptive behavior with respect to higher levels of service quality. Research shows that call center workers, research shows that employees demonstrate higher levels of quality service when rewarded with something of intrinsic value. The results of this study also helped to confirm that call center workers have the ability to adapt the quality of service by making changes to their interpersonal approach as well as by varying the actual service levels to fit the needs of a particular set of customers. The personality constructs of self-monitoring, tolerance for ambiguity, and service orientation play a vital role in adaptive behaviors (Gwimmer, et al., 2005).

The ability for call center workers to adapt may be better explained through the use of the Job Characteristics Model in call centers. Specifically, job characteristics related to task significance, variety, and identity may provide insight on the relationship between job satisfaction and the motivation to adapt.

**Female workers.** Call center workers are considered to represent an underserved workforce in relation to investments in job satisfaction initiatives (Hillmer, Barbara, &
McRoberts, 2004). This investment shortage can be partially attributed to managers’ lack of awareness of the cost of employee turnover. Females, who typically represent an underserved population in general, may be more so at risk than males in relation to experiencing low job satisfaction in call center work. The following studies explored female call center workers and job satisfaction.

As of 2012, research conducted to better understand women and their increasing role in call centers remains sparsely published. Belt (2002) notes, “it is also unclear from this research to what extent women managers are able to move beyond the call centre and closer to the power centres of business. The issue is likely to become particularly important over the coming years, as technological development threatens the long-term sustainability of call centres, and as such it would be a fruitful area for future research” (p. 65).

Women are reported to make up an estimated 70% of the call center workforce throughout the growth of the position across a number of local and national labor markets (Belt, 2002). Belt (2002) examines the current state of women’s job dissatisfaction and potential career progression through the use of a qualitative research study conducted at call centers across financial services, mail order, outsourced, and IT industries in the United Kingdom and Ireland. The call center staff took part in individual and group interviews in the workplace. Participants were a mixture of part-time and full-time, temporary and permanent, sales and customer service staff, as well as employees of different ages.

In both of the mail order call centers that were examined, 30% to 50% of the employees fit a profile described as long-serving (more than 10 years) female employees
who age 40 years or older. Two men in the study noted the active recruitment effort to seek women for these roles in order to provide stability to the position that was often characterized by high turnover and restricted opportunities for promotion. Belt (2002) noted that while these women tended to stay in the agent role, those who tended to leave and seek jobs elsewhere were the significantly younger, middle-class, and highly educated women.

The overall research displayed results showing call center management employees having worked long hours, demonstrated high levels of commitment to their organizations and having been geographically mobile in order to receive their promotion. Belt concluded that this case study provided clear evidence of a ‘glass ceiling’ in operation (2002). She noted that although reaching a management level is often in the development plans for a female call center worker, the results of the study show that most women halt their career progression at the team leader level.

Belt (2002) explains this ceiling as being composed of many different factors; including the general lack of management opportunities available and the absence of appropriate management training for team leaders, as well as the associated ‘role gap’ between team leaders and managers. Belt found it surprising that women having children did not play a significant role in this apparent glass ceiling as very few of the women interviewed had children. The results of this study provided support to Wajcman’s (1998) claim that women managers still have to ‘manage like a man’ to break through this glass ceiling.

There is a need for additional research to better understand the job satisfaction of women working in call centers. A study of medical representatives and job satisfaction
and motivation using the Job Characteristics Model depicted contradicting evidence compared to Belt’s (2002) study. Michailidis and Dracou’s (2011) study of medical representatives in Cyprus insisted that there were no significant differences between genders in terms of satisfaction levels.

**Job Characteristics Model**

Herzberg’s initial 1950’s publications of the “two-factor theory” failed in practice. The theory did not fully convince researchers that it could be used to improve job satisfaction and motivation through job redesign initiatives (Buchanan & Huczynski, 1997). By 1975, as additional research began to support Herzberg’s original theory, Hackman and Oldham developed the Job Characteristics Model (1975). The Job Characteristics Model was designed to identify worker-perceived job characteristic deficiencies (Michailidis & Dracou, 2011). The five core job characteristics of this model included skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. Additionally, the model provided a method of job re-designing that was intended to increase satisfaction and motivation of the employees within the job.

Michailidis and Dracou (2011) examined the need for job redesign for medical representatives using the Job Characteristics Model and the Job Diagnostic Survey (Short Form). Similar to call center workers, the daily work of the medical representatives was described as very stressful, demanding, and require high energy and self-motivation. Also similar to the work of call center employees, the sales representatives’ evaluation, measured by sales, depended on whether the customer/doctors felt convinced about the quality of the products. Medical representatives in Cyprus participated in Michailidis and Dracou’s (2011) study. Participants completed the Job Diagnostic Survey (Short Form)
and participated in a focus group. The focus group was intended to draw recommendations from representatives on job redesign ideas to improve job satisfaction and motivation.

Following analysis of the Motivating Potential Scores, the researchers explained that, most importantly, the medical representatives’ current job design did not align well with the skills and expectations of most of the representatives (Michailidis & Dracou, 2011). Generally, the sample indicated that task significance and feedback from the job itself existed at a higher level in their job design than skill variety, task identity, and autonomy components of the Motivating Potential Score. In addition, the current job design did not fulfill representatives’ needs for achievement, recognition, and growth. Michailidis and Dracou commented that the study, ultimately, showed a significant need for jobs to be redesigned in a way that would exceed the employee’s needs in all five job characteristics included in the Job Characteristics Model. Specifically, managers needed to consider enhancing skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback when redesigning the medical representative job position.

In a related study, Nakhata (2010) researched not only the state of job characteristic deficiencies, but also to what extent job dimensions were related to job satisfaction. Using the modified version of the Job Diagnostic Survey, Nakhata collected participant responses from small and medium-sized business entrepreneurs in Thailand. This sample population was chosen because of its known entrepreneurial behaviors. It was important to better understand this population’s job satisfaction in relation to job dimensions because the small and medium-sized business entrepreneurs were noted to have greatly enhanced the Taiwanese economic and social development.
Nakhata’s (2010) findings indicated that the small and medium-sized business entrepreneurs had moderate scores for skill variety and autonomy. This was explained by the fact that most small and medium-sized business entrepreneurs need to perform many activities that challenge their skills, knowledge, and abilities. Nakhata noted that these workers had responsibility for management work in addition to the technical work. Most likely explained by the culture in Taiwan, the participants had a relatively low feedback score in this study. In Taiwan, employees are not generally encouraged to offer sincere feedback or criticism to their small and medium-sized business entrepreneurs. This is because most employees have considerably lower levels of completed education compared to their employers. Nakhata acknowledged that small and medium-sized business entrepreneurs are “usually convinced that their ideas must be better than those of their employees” (2010, p. 224).

Due to the findings from Nakhata’s (2010) study, it is important to take into consideration factors, such as local culture, in the conclusion section of this current study. Hackman and Oldham’s (1975) Job Characteristics Model has shown to be a highly effective tool in identifying and, more importantly, understanding the extent of job design-characteristic deficiencies related to job satisfaction. An increased knowledge of job satisfaction lends an opportunity to reduce employee turnover.

**Methodological Review**

The literature review includes quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods studies. The studies included topics with a main focus on employee well-being and turnover regarding job satisfaction in customer service call center workers. The studies described sample populations that were common to the call center industry including, for
example, gender, age, education, employment status, and tenure. The majority of the studies were observed in locations within the United Kingdom, United States and Australia.

Measurement tools that were commonly used to dictate levels or vulnerability to job satisfaction included the Job Diagnostic Survey, Wolfe’s Self-Monitoring Scale, Index of Organizational Reactions Scale, Human Capital Theory guidelines, Performance Management System constructs, ASSET stress questionnaire, etc. Although the tools, guidelines, construct, theories differed in background and support, they shared many of the same factors that were demonstrated through the research to similarly identify job dissatisfaction across industries and, specifically successfully, within the customer service call center organizations.

A variety of methods exists for determining the relative contribution of multiple variables in predicting single criterion. Many of the studies in this literature review included at least two of these methods to confirm consistency and reliability. LeBreton et al. (2004) observed some of the more widely used approaches in empirical studies including: (a) the squared correlation between the criterion and each predictor, (b) the squared standardized regression coefficient, and (c) the product (often referred to as the product measure) of the correlation and the standardized regression coefficient. The researchers noted the importance of comparing the results obtained using multiple importance statistics when using any type of method (LeBreton, Binning, Adorno, & Melcher, 2004).
Substantive Gaps in the Literature

Whitt (2006) developed a mathematical model in an attempt to help analyze the benefit of increased call center employee retention obtained by increasing worker job satisfaction. He agreed that the issue of churn, or high turnover, as well as service quality in call center employees had a root cause: low employee job satisfaction. Using a series of interrelated theories (i.e., renewal theory) and mathematical logic models, Whitt claims to be able to predict the overall long-run average performance and an organization’s transition costs (Whitt, 2006).

The model assumes the number of employed agents is constant over time and that a new agent is immediately hired to replace each call center worker who has left one of the positions. Agents are also assumed to be independent and identically distributed random variables with an expected agent-retention probability distribution, which relies on management. After variables are included, the quantitative research model yields a description of the consequences of management changes that may cause the agent-retention distribution to change on the long-run average staff experience and the long-run average performance (Whitt, 2006). Management changes can often keep hidden the costs of turnover, and in result, allow the turnover and staffing issues to remain unaddressed. Results of the validity and reliability of this model have not yet been published in academia but have been supported by the research of well-recognized scholars including Gans et al. (2003) and Singh et al. (1994).

Whitt’s model, used to predict employee performance in relation to retention efforts, has not yet yielded statistically significant results in the field. Studies have not been conducted to show how changes in the agent-retention will produce corresponding
changes in the staff-experience. Whitt notes, “Given that management actions may
significantly affect agent job satisfaction, with some actions acting positively but others
(e.g., persuasive monitoring) possibly acting negatively, it is desirable to investigate how
these actions actually do affect retention, staff experience, and performance” (Whitt,
2006, p. 251).

There is not substantive research of the antecedents of affective commitment and
like personal characteristics, work climate, job characteristics, training, etc., are important
in determining the satisfaction and commitment of employees” (p. 170). They continued
by noting that turnover rates are lower for employees with higher job satisfaction in call
centers. Thus, it is important for employers to understand what the organization can do to
improve quality service through the enhancement of the commitment and satisfaction of
their call center employees (Malhotra & Mukherjee, 2004).

All of the factors included in the work-related stress and job satisfaction outcomes
are difficult to determine across occupations. Johnson et al. (2005) recommended in
further research that factors such as the threat of workplace violence or verbal abuse, lack
of control over work related issues to a greater extent and work overload, both common
issues in call centers. Further research in the existing literature on work-related stress or a
qualitative study may be needed to understand what other factors should be taken into
consideration when exploring work-related stress in regards to job satisfaction.

Overall, there has been a lack of studies completed using call center workers as
the focus of a job satisfaction study using the Job Characteristics Model to answer the
research questions posed in this study. The current disadvantage to this field of study is
the unknown impact of the motivating potential on job satisfaction for call center employees. Specifically, a lack of research exists regarding job satisfaction and the overall Motivating Potential Score, three psychological dimensions of the Motivating Potential Score formula, and the five individual measurement dimensions included in the Motivating Potential Score formula.

Chapter Summary

To summarize the literature, studies within call centers and using the Job Characteristics Model show opportunities to advance the knowledge of job satisfaction issues resulting in employee turnover issues. Hillmer et al. note that “call centers that employ HR practices that take advantage of employees’ skills and ideas and involve them in decision making have lower turnover rates and better financial outcomes” (2004, p. 36). As employees perceive these job characteristics meet or exceed their expectations, their motivating potential is high and turnover risk is reduced.

The empirical studies examined in this literature provided insight on the antecedents to job satisfaction. Important factors to understand for the purpose of this study were shown to include wellbeing and emotional labor, performance surveillance, role clarity, service quality, motivation to adapt, and the female workforce in call centers.

Chapter 2 introduced general findings related to turnover, job satisfaction, call centers and the Job Characteristics Model. The emerging research gaps presented a strong need for further research into call center employees’ job satisfaction in relation to the job characteristics included in Hackman and Oldham’s (1975) Job Characteristics Model. This proposed research study could provide greater insight and prevention of undesired turnover, incrementally more so than the state of the literature today.
Chapter 3 describes how this researcher’s study is designed and executed in order to collect data and provide insight to the research questions related to job characteristics and job satisfaction. In the process, the researcher seeks to add the body of research on job satisfaction and cell center workers. Through data collection and analysis, a summary report of findings emerges which is offered to the managers of the organization in which the research takes place.
Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

Organizations are increasingly threatened by the high rate of employee turnover in call center positions (LeBreton, Binning, Adorno, & Melcher, 2004). While there has been ample research on call center employees and low job satisfaction throughout the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, currently, there is little research to better understand the relationship between employee perception of job characteristics and job satisfaction in call centers. Prior to this study, research had not yet been performed to examine the perceptions of call center employees’ relationship of the motivating potential of a job, using Hackman and Oldham’s (1975) Job Characteristics Model to job satisfaction.

The overall research question posed in this study has been explored through the use of a quantitative research design with a one-time collection of primary data. The research for this study is intended to better understand the impact of the motivating potential on job satisfaction among call center employees. The following research question and sub-questions seek to provide empirical evidence to lessen this research gap:

Research Question 1: What is the impact of motivating potential on job satisfaction for call center employees?

Research Question 1a: What is the impact of motivating potential, using the overall Motivating Potential Score for analysis, on job satisfaction for call center workers?
Research Question 1b: What is the impact of motivating potential, using the three psychological states for analysis, on job satisfaction for call center workers?

Research Question 1c: What is the impact of motivating potential, using the five job characteristics for analysis, on job satisfaction for call center workers?

Understanding of this research study and outcomes may offer a basis to determine the effectiveness of current job satisfaction initiatives and provide call center management information for job redesign. Creswell (2009) provided support for the use of quantitative research for further investigation of this question due to the existence of the academically well-acknowledged instruments.

Research Context

The setting of the study was a large payroll, human resource services, and benefits outsourcing company in New York State. Founded in the 1970s, the company has worked to help business owners outsource their payroll and human resource tasks in order to help the customer concentrate on the business’ core purpose. As of 2013, the company had grown to more than 12,000 employees providing services to more than half a million small-to-medium sized businesses across the United States.

Internally, the organization supports many call center positions to support more than 65 products and services that are offered to clients. Within the company’s human resource services product division, more than 250 full-time employees serve in varying capacities to respond to inbound and outbound service communications throughout each business day. Many of these employees are referred to within the organization as product
or service support advisors. In addition, a team of about 12 agency workers, also referred
to as temporary workers, assist in answering inbound calls for the primary product
support phone queue. For this study, 234 call center employees from this product division
were invited participants for sampling. Participants were deemed by the researcher to
represent the varied backgrounds and attitudes of those who work across the United
States to support product and services of other large companies, the setting where
turnover is a constant issue for managers.

Research Participants

The workers invited to participate in this study were all available call center
workers from the human resource services line of the organization’s product offering.
These employee call center groups, totaling approximately 234 call center employees,
were located at the company’s facility in New York State. Given the typical r values of
.28 in past research, including both Liden and Wayne’s (2000) and Campion, Medsker,
and Higgs’ (1993) studies, powers of .80 and α of .05, the sample size for this study
required at least 77 call center employees in order to be considered significant for
contributions to the field of research. Due to high employee turnover in these groups, the
employee demographics change constantly. At time of the data collection for this study,
the group was composed of approximately 32% males and 68% females. The majority of
employees were 21-35 years of age. Due to the fact that some participants can be
identified by their age, age-related data were not collected in this study in order to protect
the confidentiality of employees. All employees within the target sample group had
successfully completed a company-proctored math test upon hiring and also held an
Associates or higher-level college degree.
Regardless of the participants’ years of experience at the company, the call center workers would most likely not have participated in a job satisfaction-focused study specifically related to their current position. However, prior to the participants’ exposure to the proposed survey tool in this study, the call center workers were told their participation in this study was completely voluntary. A copy of the Qualtrics survey questionnaire is shown in Appendix B. Following the completion of the questionnaire, participants were offered an opportunity to enter their first name and phone extension for a chance to win a gift certificate to a local restaurant or retail store in a separate document. A link to the prize entry document was provided at the end of the initial questionnaire survey and was not linked to any of the participants’ survey responses. By separating the prize drawing entry, the participant was able to respond to the study’s survey questionnaire with an understanding that the responses would be made in full confidentiality. A copy of the prize entry document is shown in Appendix C. Additional details regarding the participants’ interaction with this study are described in the procedures section of this chapter.

**Research Methods**

The research methods include an overview of the instruments to be used in this study. In addition, a procedures listing explains the plan for both receiving approval to collect data from the participants described earlier and processing the submissions. Finally, a description of data analysis is included. The analysis process described is expected to provide insight to the research questions.

**Instruments.** This non-experimental study was conducted using Qualtrics Survey Software to collect primary data during a single period of time. The invitation for
participants to complete the questionnaire provided insight on job satisfaction based on perceived job deficiencies. The questionnaire, on average, took less than 10 minutes for participants to complete. Appendix D displays a copy of the acknowledgement and acceptance to perform the study at the proposed work site with the participants previously described.

The questionnaire included five questions to measure job satisfaction based on the Job Descriptive Index Short Form, 15 questions from the Job Diagnostic Survey Short Form to determine the Motivating Potential Score and the individual job characteristic components that make up the Job Characteristics Model, as well as four demographic-based questions. The first demographic question asked the participants to provide a description of their gender as either male or female. By collecting gender information, there was an opportunity to supply additional knowledge to the studies of the underserved, female call center worker population. The second demographic question asked the participants to describe their employment status as full-time, part-time, or temporary. Previous studies have displayed significant differences between these statuses. The third question was included to better categorize, or verify, the participant’s position as a call center worker. The question asks the participants to select a description that best reflected their time spent working directly with inbound and outbound service communications within the workday. Participants’ choices to this question included: (a) less than 25%, (b) 25% - 50%, and (c) more than 50%. By categorizing workers by percentage of day spent in a call center employee role, there was an opportunity to identify varying levels of satisfaction and job characteristic deficiencies. Additionally, call centers workers can be better identified by participants responding to working more
than 50% of their day in inbound/outbound service communications within the department. All responses were included in the analysis; however, those responding “more than 50%” were deemed as a better representation of the call center population in question for this study. The last demographic question asked the participant to select the time of service they have completed at the organization, including any applicable time served as a temporary worker. This data helped to understand the relationship between job satisfaction and job deficiency trends as workers age in their positions. Responses for this question included: (a) 0-6 months, (b) More than 6 months but less than 1 year, and (c) 1 year or more.

All call center workers within the groups identified for this study, both the full-time and temporary agency workers, were offered the opportunity to take this Qualtrics survey through a link to the questionnaire included in an email sent securely to their company email account. The invitation to take the survey had participants’ email addresses included only in the Blind Carbon Copy section to protect confidentiality. The researcher’s identity was revealed in both the sender’s email address and in the body text of the email. The initial email sent to the potential participants included an explanation of the purpose of the study, the request for voluntary participation, the survey guidelines and expectations, availability of the survey, and the expected participation benefits. The link to the survey was emailed to all participants simultaneously. An example of the email text is displayed in Appendix E.

Any worker who chose to participate in the survey was asked to respond within ten business days after having received the survey, thus creating a sense of urgency while also not limiting the participant size due to normal delays such as high call-volumes and
typical attendance disruptions including trainings, sick days, Federal holidays, and vacation time. A reminder email was sent on the morning of the tenth business day to remind participants who had not responded to the survey to consider completing the survey. In addition, the reminder email stated that the researcher had extended the availability of the survey for an additional five business days. The survey closed at business close on the fifteenth business day. A closing email was sent to thank participants for their contribution (see Appendix F). The Qualtrics Survey Software recorded the results for the researcher to view and import to IBM SPSS for additional analysis.

**Procedures.** Following the successful defense of the dissertation proposal, the respective IRB applications were submitted. IRB requirements for the non-experimental study were minimal and enabled the data collection to take place during February and March, 2013. The detailed procedures for this study are as follows:

1. Request and collect approval to collect data from participants from an authorized representative of the organization site.

2. Present and receive approval from dissertation committee to submit proposal to IRB.

3. Submit and confirm approval from St. John Fisher College’s IRB committee to collect data.

4. Meet with organization’s site supervisors and managers to present purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits of the study.

5. Send questionnaire invitation through email to participants on business day 1 of data collection period.
6. Send reminder email to participants to take the survey if they have not already on business day 10 of the data collection period. Include a notice that the questionnaire will be available an additional 5 business days as a courtesy time extension for participants.

7. Close survey in Qualtrics at the end of the business day on the fifteenth business day.

8. Send closing email to supervisors and managers to let them know the survey has been closed and that a meeting will be scheduled in the future to discuss the findings.

9. Export participant prize drawing entry data from SPSS into Microsoft Excel. Eliminate any duplicate names and explain in Chapter 4 any indications that duplicate submissions may appear in the data. Use random.org’s random number generator tool to pick a number that can be matched to participants’ names for each gift card prize available.

10. Call each winner of the gift card to announce their prize. Each winner was given the option to have the prize hand-delivered or inter-office mailed to his or her desk.

11. Send closing email to participants to thank them for their contributions to this study.

12. Import data from Qualtrics into IBM SPSS for analysis and then proceed with data analysis plans.

**Analysis.** The researcher imported the data to IBM SPSS statistical analysis software including, a summary of basic response analysis of number of respondents and
individual question responses. To assure the correlation of the questionnaire used in this study, the researcher ran a bivariate Pearson correlation analysis. The results are displayed in Chapter 4.

The current state of call center job satisfaction was addressed in the survey’s first 5 questions based on the Job Descriptive Index survey tool. These scores illustrated the current state of job satisfaction. These scores were also aggregated to reflect department-wide satisfaction scores, including a comparison of job satisfaction responses between gender, employment status, age group, education level, and years of service in the call center workers’ current role.

The responses needed to understand the relation between job characteristics and perceived job satisfaction were answered in the 15 questions stemming from the Job Diagnostic Survey and provided an overall Motivating Potential Score for each participant. These scores showed the current state of job characteristics. These scores were aggregated to reflect department-wide satisfaction states, including a comparison of job satisfaction responses between gender, employment status, time percentage of call center service activities within an average workday, and years of service at the organization involved in this study. The job characteristic scores as well as the Motivating Potential Score results provided means for correlation analysis using the Pearson correlation analysis. This correlation analysis provided insight to both questions that had previously been unclear in academic research. Following the data organization and screening for validity and reliability, the relevant research questions were addressed to show how Hackman and Oldham’s five job characteristics included in the Job
Characteristics Model can be applied to identify job characteristic barriers to call center employee job satisfaction.

Chapter Summary

As described, empirical research currently shows only that call center workers have low job satisfaction scores in comparison to most other types of job roles (Johnson et al., 2005). Academic research does not yet explain the relationships between Hackman and Oldham’s’ five job characteristics, job satisfaction, and the Motivating Potential Score among call center employees. The ability to combine these research tools and to analyze the data in a correlation analysis created a valuable revelation in call center management and overall business functionality, cost control, and organizational growth. These research findings may not only benefit organizations, but also as indicated by LeBreton et al. (2004) improve service levels and employee development that are current symptoms for high turnover in organizations’ employee call center workers. The researcher received approval from St. John Fisher College’s Institutional Review Board to complete data collection (see Appendix G). Chapter 4 displays the research data findings.

Chapter 3 described how this researcher’s study was designed and executed in order to collect data and provide insight to the research questions related to job characteristics and job satisfaction. In the process, the researcher sought to add the body of research on job satisfaction and call center workers. Through data collection and analysis, a summary report of findings will emerge which will be offered to the managers of the organization in which the research will take place.
Chapter 4 presents the results of the research study. Each research question is individually analyzed and the meaning of the results is included. Additionally, an analysis of the supplemental data collected, including gender, work status, and length of service, is presented. A summary of the research findings is provided.
Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

As described in Chapters 1 through 3, the application of the Motivating Potential Score to further understand call center employee perceived job satisfaction had not yet been formally conducted prior to this research study. Moreover, past studies regarding the perceived job satisfaction of call center workers had not previously been analyzed to further understand the relationships between the individual job characteristics and employee job satisfaction. For this study, the research question and additional sub questions were designed to provide this field of study with a greater understanding into what the impact of the Motivating Potential Score has on job satisfaction for call center employees. The following research question and sub-questions seek to provide empirical evidence to lessen the research gap:

Research Question 1: What is the impact of motivating potential on job satisfaction for call center employees?

Research Question 1a: What is the impact of motivating potential, using the overall Motivating Potential Score for analysis, on job satisfaction for call center workers?

Research Question 1b: What is the impact of motivating potential, using the three psychological states for analysis, on job satisfaction for call center workers?
Research Question 1c: What is the impact of motivating potential, using the five job characteristics for analysis, on job satisfaction for call center workers?

The respective analyses are provided in the following sections of this chapter. The research question was further broken down into three sub questions. Specifically, the research question in this study was addressed by designing the questionnaire to separately allow the researcher to analyze Research Question 1a, regarding the overall Motivating Potential Score, Research Question 1b, regarding the three underlying psychological dimensions of Motivating Potential, and Research Question 1c, regarding the five individual measurement dimensions included in the Motivating Potential Score formula.

This chapter presents the questionnaire results of the research conducted using call center workers from a large payroll, human resource services and benefits outsourcing company in New York State. Of the 234 call center workers invited to participate in this study, 127 workers completed the questionnaire. Therefore the participation rate for this study was approximately 54%. For the data analysis, four participant submissions were removed due to having more than three incomplete responses within their questionnaire submission (n=123). Of the respondents, approximately 69% (n=84) were female workers and 31% (n=37) were male workers. Gender was not indicated in two of the responses included in analysis.

Most workers, 87.8%, who participated were full-time employees (n=108); however 3.3% (n=4) workers were part-time status and 8.9% (n=11) workers were temporary workers employed by a third-party staffing agency. Additionally, the majority of the workers, approximately 62.6% (n=77), had been in a call center position within
their current organization for at least the past 12 months prior to taking this questionnaire. About 22.8% (n=28) of the workers had only been in their call center position within the organization for less than 6 months. All other participating employees, approximately 14.6% (n=18), had been in their call center position within the organization for more than 6 months but less than 1 year. In the questionnaire, participants were asked to identify with one of three descriptions that best reflected their time spent working directly with inbound and outbound service communications within the workday. Participants’ choices to this question included: (a) less than 25%, (b) 25% - 50%, and (c) more than 50%. This question was used as a control to assure that the workers participating in this study met the description of a call center worker used in this study. All respondents reported spending more than 50% of their workday primarily with inbound and outbound service communications.

Test of Research Questions

The overarching research question was designed to provide the field of study with insight to what the impact of the motivating potential has on job satisfaction for call center employees. Again, the overarching research question and sub-questions are as follows:

Research Question 1: What is the impact of motivating potential on job satisfaction for call center employees?

Research Question 1a: What is the impact of motivating potential, using the overall Motivating Potential Score for analysis, on job satisfaction for call center workers?
Research Question 1b: What is the impact of motivating potential, using the three psychological states for analysis, on job satisfaction for call center workers?

Research Question 1c: What is the impact of motivating potential, using the five job characteristics for analysis, on job satisfaction for call center workers?

Test of Research Question 1a. Research Question 1a asked whether there was a relationship between call center workers’ perceived job satisfaction and Motivating Potential Score. The relationship was tested using a Pearson correlation. The results of the analysis demonstrated that there was a strong positive correlation between perceived job satisfaction and the Motivating Potential Score, $r (121) = .591, p < .001$. Table 4.1 displays the relationship between the participants’ Motivating Potential Score and perceived job satisfaction. The strong positive correlation between perceived job satisfaction and the Motivating Potential Score means that participants have more motivation for the job itself when they experience a greater sense of job satisfaction.

Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MPS</th>
<th>Job Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=123)</td>
<td>(n=123)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.591***</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).
**Test of Research Question 1b.** Research Question 1b asked whether there was a relationship between call center workers’ perceived job satisfaction and the three psychological states examined in this study, including experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results. The relationship was tested using a Pearson correlation. The results of the analysis demonstrated that there was a strong positive relationship between perceived job satisfaction and experienced meaningfulness, $r (121) = .600, p < .001$. There was also a strong positive relationship between knowledge of results and perceived job satisfaction, $r (121) = .591, p < .001$. Additionally, there was a positive relationship between experienced responsibility and perceived job satisfaction, $r (121) = .362, p < .001$. Overall, call center employees reported an increased sense of perceived job satisfaction as the motivating potential amongst each of the three individual psychological states. In regards to the differences in call center workers’ perceptions of job satisfaction, the psychological states experienced meaningfulness and knowledge of results are of greater significance than experienced responsibility. Table 4.2 displays the relationship between the perceived job satisfaction and the three psychological states.
Table 4.2

*Job Satisfaction and the Three Psychological States Correlations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Job Satisfaction</th>
<th>Experienced Meaningfulness</th>
<th>Experienced Responsibility</th>
<th>Knowledge of Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=123)</td>
<td>(n=123)</td>
<td>(n=123)</td>
<td>(n=123)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.600***</td>
<td>.362***</td>
<td>.599***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningfulness</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.579***</td>
<td>.679***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td>.362***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Results</td>
<td></td>
<td>.599***</td>
<td>.679***</td>
<td>.453***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).
Research Question 1c. Research Question 1c asked whether there was a the relationship between participants’ perceived job satisfaction and the five job characteristics examined in this study, including skill variety, task significance, task identity, autonomy, and feedback. The relationship was tested using a Pearson correlation. The results of the analysis demonstrated that there was a strong positive relationship between perceived job satisfaction and feedback, $r (121) = .599, p < .001$. There was also a strong positive relationship between perceived job satisfaction and skill variety, $r (121) = .531, p < .001$. In addition, there was a strong positive relationship between perceived job satisfaction and task significance, $r (121) = .503, p < .001$. The results depict that the skill variety, feedback, and task significance job characteristics significantly impact the call center employees’ perceived job satisfaction. An increase in the feedback score would provide the strongest leverage to increase the call center employees’ perceived job satisfaction.

There was a positive relationship between task identity and perceived job satisfaction, $r (121) = .493, p < .001$. There was a positive relationship between autonomy and perceived job satisfaction, $r (121) = .362, p < .001$. Changes to the autonomy job characteristic are not correlated with changes in the perceived job satisfaction. In other words, fluctuation in the autonomy score will not significantly impact call center employees’ perceived job satisfaction. Table 4.3 displays the relationship between the perceived job satisfaction and the five job characteristics examined in this study.
Table 4.3

*Job Satisfaction and the Five Job Characteristics Correlations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Variety (n=123)</th>
<th>Task Identity (n=123)</th>
<th>Task Significance (n=123)</th>
<th>Autonomy (n=123)</th>
<th>Feedback (n=123)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td><strong>.531</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>.493</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>.503</strong>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).

**Supplemental analyses.** Supplemental data from the participating call center workers were collected in the last section of the questionnaire in this study. For the purpose of further exploration in this research problem, a Pearson Correlation Coefficients were calculated examining the relationship between participants’ perceived job satisfaction and motivating potential score with their associated gender, current work status, and length of service in the current call center position. The supplemental data analyses included in this section are separated by the perceived job satisfaction and Motivating Potential Score results to clearly display the significance of the findings as well as the strength of the relationships.

**Gender.** Participant gender identification responses were included in this study. The relationship between the participants’ gender and perceived job satisfaction, Motivating Potential Score, three psychological states, and five job characteristics were tested using a Pearson correlation. In addition, the test of the difference between the two independent correlation coefficients was calculated using Preacher’s (2002) online computer software tool. A strong positive relationship between perceived job satisfaction
and the Motivating Potential Score existed for both males, \( r (35) = .609, p < .001 \), and females, \( r (82) = .534, p < .001 \). Overall, this means that males are more easily satisfied their work than women when the Motivating Potential Score is increased.

Differences between males and females were identified within the three psychological states. There was a strong positive relationship between perceived job satisfaction and experienced meaningfulness for both males, \( r (35) = .606, p < .001 \), and females, \( r (82) = .522, p < .001 \). There was a positive relationship between perceived job satisfaction and knowledge of results for males, \( r (35) = .497, p < .01 \). For females, there was a strong positive relationship between perceived job satisfaction and knowledge of results, \( r (82) = .597, p < .001 \). There was a positive relationship between perceived job satisfaction and experienced responsibility for both males, \( r (35) = .351, p < .05 \), and females, \( r (82) = .357, p < .01 \). This means that males are more responsive to changes in job satisfaction than females in relationship to experienced meaningfulness. Females, in contrast, tended to be more responsive than males to changes in perceived job satisfaction in relationship to knowledge of results and experienced responsibility.

Differences between males and females were also identified within the five job characteristics. There was a strong positive relationship between perceived job satisfaction and skill variety for males, \( r (35) = .604, p < .001 \). For females, there was a positive relationship between perceived job satisfaction and skill variety, \( r (82) = .453, p < .001 \). There was a positive relationship between perceived job satisfaction and feedback for males, \( r (35) = .497, p < .01 \). For females, there was a strong positive relationship between perceived job satisfaction and feedback, \( r (82) = .597, p < .001 \). There was a positive relationship between perceived job satisfaction and task identity for both males, \( r \)
There was a positive relationship between perceived job satisfaction and task significance for both males, $r_{(35)} = .445, p < .01$, and females, $r_{(82)} = .469, p < .001$. There was a positive relationship between perceived job satisfaction and autonomy for both males, $r_{(35)} = .351, p < .05$, and females, $r_{(82)} = .357, p < .001$. This means that males are more responsive to changes in job satisfaction than females in relationship to skill variety and task identity. Females, on the other hand, tended to be more responsive than males to changes in perceived job satisfaction in relationship to task significance, autonomy, and feedback. Overall, males were most likely to respond positively to enhancements in skill variety while women were most likely to respond positively to enhancements in feedback.

Table 4.4 displays the relationship between the perceived job satisfaction, the Motivating Potential Score, and the gender data collected in this call center study.
Table 4.4

*Job Satisfaction and the MPS of Male and Female Correlations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n=37)</td>
<td>(n=84)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction &amp; MPS</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.609***</td>
<td>.534***</td>
<td>.546, p = .59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction &amp; Experienced</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningfulness</td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.606***</td>
<td>.522***</td>
<td>.604, p = .55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction &amp; Experienced</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.351*</td>
<td>.357**</td>
<td>-.034, p = .97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction &amp; Knowledge</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Results</td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.497**</td>
<td>.597***</td>
<td>-.765, p = .44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction &amp; Skill Variety</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.604***</td>
<td>.453***</td>
<td>1.032, p = .30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction &amp; Task Identity</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.417***</td>
<td>.402***</td>
<td>.088, p = .93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction &amp; Task</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.445**</td>
<td>.469***</td>
<td>-.148, p = .88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction &amp; Autonomy</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.351*</td>
<td>.357***</td>
<td>-.034, p = .97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction &amp; Feedback</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.497**</td>
<td>.597***</td>
<td>-.701, p = .48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).
Status. Participant employment status responses were included in this study. The relationship between the participants’ employment status and perceived job satisfaction, Motivating Potential Score, three psychological states, and five job characteristics were tested using a Pearson correlation. A z-test was calculated for this demographic variable due to the small sample size of data collected for part-time and temporary employees.

No inferential statistics were conducted on this section because of the small sample size for part-time and temporary employees. The results for status employees are interpreted descriptively rather than inferentially. In comparing the means, the Motivating Potential Score was shown to have positive relationship with perceived job satisfaction for full-time and temporary employees but not with part-time employees.

Differences, based on the correlation mean comparisons, between full-time, part-time, and temporary workers were identified within the three psychological states. Temporary workers are more motivated than full-time employees when there is an enhancement to experienced meaningfulness. Part-time employees appeared to be unresponsive to changes in either or both experienced meaningfulness and experienced responsibility. Full-time and part-time employees were more likely to respond to changes in knowledge of results in terms of their perceived job satisfaction than temporary workers. Changes in the knowledge of results for temporary workers does not impact their perceived job satisfaction.

Differences, based on the correlation mean comparisons, between full-time, part-time, and temporary workers were also identified within the five job characteristics. Temporary workers were easily motivated than full-time or part-time employees within the same job when looking at skill variety and autonomy. Full-time workers responded
to task significance, feedback, and task identity to increase motivation more so than part-time and temporary workers. Part-time workers were most motivated by autonomy and least motivated by feedback. Specifically, feedback appeared to have a negative impact on part-time employees’ motivation meaning that part-time employees became less satisfied in their work as they received feedback. Table 4.5 displays the relationship between the perceived job satisfaction, the Motivating Potential Score, and the employee work status data collected in this call center study.

Length of service. Participant length of service responses included in this study. The relationship between the participants’ employment status and perceived job satisfaction, Motivating Potential Score, three psychological states, and five job characteristics were tested using a Pearson correlation. Z-tests were conducted for each pairwise comparison of Pearson correlation coefficients. The z-test results ranges from $z = .152, p = .863$ to $z = 1.349, p = .177$. 


Table 4.5

*Job Satisfaction and the MPS of Full-time, Part-time, and Temporary Workers*

*Correlations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full-time (n=108)</th>
<th>Part-time (n=4)</th>
<th>Temporary (n=11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction &amp; MPS</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.601***</td>
<td>-.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction &amp; Experienced Meaningfulness</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.596***</td>
<td>-.036</td>
</tr>
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<td>Job Satisfaction &amp; Experienced Responsibility</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
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<td>.184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction &amp; Knowledge of Results</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.647***</td>
<td>-.720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction &amp; Skill Variety</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.515***</td>
<td>-.142</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction &amp; Task Identity</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
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<td>-.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction &amp; Task Significance</td>
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<td>.126</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction &amp; Autonomy</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.333***</td>
<td>.184</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction &amp; Feedback</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.647***</td>
<td>-.720</td>
</tr>
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*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

***Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).
None of the pairwise comparisons were significant. The results for the length of service results are interpreted descriptively rather than inferentially. Notably, employees having worked in the position for more than one year received the greatest satisfaction from the motivating features within the feedback job characteristic. Employees having worked in the position for less than six months received the greatest satisfaction from the motivating features within skill variety. Employees having been employed more than one year were least satisfied by the motivators included in the autonomy job characteristic. Table 4.6 displays the relationship between the perceived job satisfaction, the Motivating Potential Score, and the length of service data collected in this call center study.
Table 4.6

*Job Satisfaction and the MPS by Employee Length of Service Correlations*

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<td>.605***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
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<td>.637***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.422*</td>
<td>.467</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.415*</td>
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<td><strong>Job Satisfaction &amp; Skill Variety</strong></td>
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<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.415*</td>
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*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

***Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).
Summary of results. In relation to Research Question 1a, the Motivating Potential Scores statistically represents a strong positive relationship with the job satisfaction scores for call center workers. Research Question 1b data analysis depicts a strong positive relationship between perceived job satisfaction and both experienced meaningfulness and knowledge of results psychological states. In addition, the experienced responsibility psychological state showed a less significant, however still strong relationship with perceived job satisfaction. Of the five job characteristics examined in Research Question 1c, feedback was shown to have the most significant relationship with perceived job satisfaction. Autonomy was the least significant job characteristic in relationship to perceived job satisfaction.

The supplemental data collected for this study suggest a strong relationship between perceived job satisfaction and gender. Importantly, the analysis showed that males are more satisfied by the motivating things in their call center job than females. There were no significant findings for the status analysis due to the small sample size for part-time and temporary employees. If the sample size were larger for part-time and temporary employees, the analysis may suggest that part-time employees are less satisfied by the motivating things included in the feedback job characteristic than full-time employees. In addition, there were no significant findings for the length of service analysis due to the small sample size for workers who had been in the position for less than one year. Interestingly, unlike employees having worked more than one year who were most satisfied by motivating things in feedback, employees having worked in the call center position for less than six months received the greatest satisfaction from the motivating things within skill variety.
Chapter Summary

The research findings from this study may not only benefit call center organizations. The research findings may also, as indicated by LeBreton et al. (2004), improve service levels and employee development that are the current symptoms for high employee turnover in call centers. Many significant relationships were identified in data analysis included in this chapter for each sub question of the overall research question.

In relation to Research Question 1a, the Motivating Potential Scores statistically represents a strong positive relationship with the job satisfaction scores for call center workers. Research Question 1b data analysis depicts a strong positive relationship between perceived job satisfaction and both experienced meaningfulness and knowledge of results psychological states. In addition, the experienced responsibility psychological state showed a less significant, however still strong relationship with perceived job satisfaction. Of the five job characteristics examined in Research Question 1c, feedback was shown to have the most significant relationship with perceived job satisfaction. Autonomy was the least significant job characteristic in relationship to perceived job satisfaction.

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In summary, the motivating potential of employees demonstrates a strong relationship with employees’ perceived job satisfaction. This improved understanding of job satisfaction can be used in collaboration with initiatives to combat the issue of high employee turnover in call center organizations.

Chapter 4 presented the results of the research study. Each research question was individually analyzed and the meanings of the results were described. Additionally, an analysis of the supplemental data collected, including gender, work status, and length of service, was presented. A summary of the research findings was provided.

Chapter 5 provides discussion of the research findings for the research questions and supplemental data. Limitations of this study follow the implications discussion in this study. In addition, recommendations for both further research and professional practice are supplied.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

As described in Chapters 1 and 2, the call center profession has been widely recognized for being hampered by low employee job satisfaction, exemplified by high employee turnover (Whitt, 2006). Although the delivery of communication through telecommunications technology allows for low-cost service delivery, the capacity costs, specifically human resource costs, account for 60 to 70% of operating expenses (Gans, Koole, & Mandelbaum, 2003). Reynolds (2003) insists that employee turnover can be the single greatest source of financial and morale problems for call centers. As a result, it is costing organizations across the United States millions of dollars in both tangible and intangible assets to replace and retrain call center workers (Hillmer, Barbara, & McRoberts, 2004).

The inattention to job design for call center workers may attribute to the lower levels of job satisfaction evident of high rates of employee turnover (Hillmer, Barbara, & McRoberts, 2004). To date, empirical studies had not been performed to determine the relationship between call center employee perceived job satisfaction and their corresponding job characteristics using the Job Characteristics Model. This dissertation research investigated the relationship between perceived job satisfaction and the motivating potential of call center workers. In addition, this study collected supplemental data to determine the relationships between perceived job satisfaction, the Motivating Potential Score, and participant identifiers such as gender, length of service, and work
status. In Chapter 5, implications of this research in the broader call center management field will be discussed, along with emerging recommendations for further research and professional practice.

**Implications of Findings**

Turnover antecedents have been strongly related to job satisfaction as an antecedent, especially in call centers. Currently, there is a lack of understanding as to the relationship between job satisfaction and the motivating potential among call center workers that can be used to combat undesirable turnover. The research for this study is intended to better understand the impact of the motivating potential on job satisfaction among call center employees. The following research question and sub-questions seek to provide empirical evidence to lessen this research gap:

Research Question 1: What is the impact of motivating potential on job satisfaction for call center employees?

*Research Question 1a:* What is the impact of motivating potential, using the overall Motivating Potential Score for analysis, on job satisfaction for call center workers?

*Research Question 1b:* What is the impact of motivating potential, using the three psychological states for analysis, on job satisfaction for call center workers?

*Research Question 1c:* What is the impact of motivating potential, using the five job characteristics for analysis, on job satisfaction for call center workers?
The following sections include discussion of research questions and supplemental data findings from this study.

**Research Question 1a.** Research Question 1a was designed to better understand the relationship between job satisfaction and the overall Motivating Potential Score among call center workers. The analysis of the findings revealed that call center workers’ perceived job satisfaction strongly related to the Motivating Potential Score.

The relationship between job satisfaction and job design is important because maximum job satisfaction, only in alignment with maximum job contribution, is an antecedent to full employee engagement (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). By understanding how job satisfaction can be manipulated by the presence of these motivating factors within five job characteristics, efforts can be made to improve employee engagement. Full employee engagement, not primarily job satisfaction, is sought after by employers because it is shown to be the strongest predictor of organizational performance (Factiva, 2007). If call center management is able to measure motivating potential, they are more likely able to combat lower than desired job satisfaction. In turn, call center management is better able to decrease absenteeism and turnover rates and, perhaps, impact employee engagement and performance.

Importantly, this study further confirmed the strong relationship between perceived job satisfaction and the motivating potential as described in previous studies. The data confirms that the job design in call center roles plays a significant factor in job satisfaction. By understanding how job satisfaction can be manipulated through job design, the issue of high employee turnover in call centers can be better addressed. Specifically, Michailidis and Dracou (2011) and Nakhata’s (2010) studies add support for
the validity of this research finding. Both studies found strong relationships between the Motivating Potential Score and job satisfaction among workers across industries.

**Research Question 1b.** Research Question 1b was designed to better understand the relationship between job satisfaction and the three psychological within the Motivating Potential Score among call center workers. The experienced meaningfulness psychological state is composed of the skill variety, task identity, and task significance job characteristics. The experienced responsibility psychological state refers solely to the autonomy job characteristic. The knowledge of results psychological state refers solely to the feedback job characteristic. In the Motivating Potential Score formula, the three psychological states appear to have equal weight amongst each other. However, the individual job characteristics, when grouped with their corresponding psychological state do not have equal weight amongst each other. Both autonomy and feedback have approximately one-third weight each while the remaining one-third is shared among skill variety, task significance, and task identity. Therefore, it may be easier to improve the experienced responsibility or knowledge of results psychological states because there is only one corresponding job characteristic to manipulate within it.

Findings for Research Question 1b revealed the relationship between job satisfaction and the three psychological states among call center workers. The analysis found that experienced meaningfulness and knowledge of results were both strongly related to perceived job satisfaction. Overall, call center workers were more likely to be motivated and better situated to perform well in their work when employees felt knowledgeable and informed about how well they were completing their job tasks. The
understanding may differ between individual employees within the same position because the level of understanding is based on employees’ perceptions.

As found in this study, experienced meaningfulness and knowledge of feedback were most strongly associated with perceived job satisfaction among call center workers. If employees view their work as valuable and worthwhile, their mindset is better able to enhance their motivating potential. For example, if call center employees are able to see an entire process they support, they may be more likely to be satisfied in their work. In addition, the degree to which call center workers receive knowledge of the job itself improves the employees’ motivating potential overall. If there is a deficiency in knowledge of results, the employee may not be receiving timely or frequent enough feedback from the management team. Another reason for deficiency may be due to the delivery method of the feedback. For example, it is important to ensure that employees have scheduled time to review and question their feedback.

Based on past empirical studies and the analysis included in this study, the experienced meaningfulness and knowledge of results psychological states should be examined when call center service quality improvements are needed. If deficiencies are identified, opportunities for job redesign exist. Mukherjee and Malhotra’s (2006) study found that feedback, participation, and team support influenced job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Mukherjee and Malhotra (2006) concluded their study by recommending that call center workers should attempt to build strong role clarity in their work in order to provide better service quality. Issues of low job satisfaction related to role clarity may become more transparent as more studies using the Job Characteristics Model to analyze all three psychological dimensions are performed.
Research Question 1c. Research Question 1c was designed to better understand the relationship between job satisfaction and the five job characteristics within the Motivating Potential Score among call center workers. The experienced meaningfulness psychological state is composed of the skill variety, task identity, and task significance job characteristics. The experienced responsibility psychological state refers solely to the autonomy job characteristic. The knowledge of results psychological state refers solely to the feedback job characteristic. In the Motivating Potential Score formula, the three psychological states appear to have equal weight amongst each other. However, the individual job characteristics, when grouped with their corresponding psychological state do not have equal weight amongst each other. Both autonomy and feedback have approximately one-third weight each while the remaining one-third is shared among skill variety, task significance, and task identity. Therefore, it may be easier to improve the experienced responsibility or knowledge of results psychological states because there is only one corresponding job characteristic to manipulate within it.

The findings revealed a significant need for call center jobs to be redesigned in a way that would exceed the employee’s needs in all five job characteristics. Importantly, feedback was strongly related to perceived job satisfaction among the participants of this study, especially among female participants. Feedback is defined in this study as the degree to which an employee obtains direct and understandable information about their performance and effectiveness of carrying out their required work activities. In addition to feedback from the job itself, Hackman and Oldham (1975) stated that the degree to which information directly related to the employee’s job performance is provided to the employee by a supervisor or co-workers is a subset of the overall feedback dimension.
Feedback not only refers to supervisory feedback, but also the ability to observe the results of their own work. Call center management is responsible for providing the most effective delivery of employee feedback. For example, if feedback is delivered by department members who are not direct supervisors of the workers and who do not play a role in the employees’ performance evaluations, the employees may feel that they have received less feedback than their management perceives they have received.

In call centers, management is often too busy working to recruit, interview, hire, and orient new workers to adequately address the primary business needs of the existing phone representatives (Hillmer, Barbara, & McRoberts, 2004). While workers are stressed and supervisors and managers are busy tending to turnover complications, much of the planned workload does not get completed as intended. Hillmer et al. (2004) note that “Managers often have difficulty creating the business case for eliminating the root causes of high turnover because they lack financial data on the true cost of turnover” (p. 34). Michailidis and Dracou (2011) determined that the Job Characteristics Model, specifically focusing in on the five core job characteristics, provided a method of job redesigning that was intended to increase satisfaction and motivation of the employees within the job. Therefore, call center managers can address turnover issues by redesigning the job to improve satisfaction.

Sewell et al. (2012) study confirmed how unfavorable feedback methods were related to low job satisfaction among call center workers. Notable issues in the feedback process included an inaccurate system for measuring employee productivity due to the timings of breaks, a reward system based on performance measurements used by
management to award extrinsic prizes, the mutual dissatisfaction among workers that was only briefly discussed by management in their staff meetings.

In addition, Sewell et al. (2012) noted in their findings that call center workers did not like that their performance was scored based on their ability to match their information provided to callers with their given resources. The researchers found that call center workers were typically evaluated based on their ability to use their given resources. Their computer program was considered a reliable resource and their responses to clients were expected to match the information provided in the computer program. However, the computer systems were not always reliable due to certain situations, information update delays, or numerous other reasons. Call center workers would knowingly reply incorrectly to a customer’s questions if the insurance computer program was not preparing an accurate one for one reason or another. In other words, workers knowingly provided incorrect answers to a client because it would improve their performance scores.

Sewell and fellow researchers (2012) deemed this an irrational thought process knowing the employees were ‘playing the system’ to receive a high score for following set procedures. The researchers found the current model of performance surveillance to be frustrating to workers and hurtful to the business organization because incorrect information was knowingly being provided to clients. Sewell et al. suggested a move towards a system of performance measurement where the employees have an active role in critique and improvement initiatives.

Autonomy is defined as the “degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the employee in scheduling the work and in
determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out” (Hackman & Oldham, 1975, p. 162). Call center employees are typically scheduled to be logged into their phone or email support queue for their entire shift and respond to callers’ questions in a determined format or work track. This job design provides a lower sense of autonomy to call center workers than many other positions. Surprisingly, in this study, autonomy was the least significant job characteristic in relation to increasing job satisfaction among call center workers.

Knowing that autonomy is the least significant job characteristic in relation to increasing the motivating potential in workers is actually very good news for call center management. This is a significant breakthrough for call center management because it is very difficult to increase autonomy to enhance satisfaction. Taylor and Bain (1999) described call centers positions as “an assembly-line in the head” considering the job is designed on never-ending work and inherent pressure for improved service results. Deery and Kinnie (2004) went as far as to coin the term “electronic sweatshops” to describe modern call centers. Due to business unit needs, it is difficult to schedule workers for additional time away from their desk and the support queues. Often, it would require management to divert needed resources from another department to cover the support queues or spending a significant amount of the call center’s budget to hire additional workers to ensure staffing needs are met to support the queues. This study has provided significant evidence that perceptions of autonomy, a common complaint among call center workers due to strict scheduling needs within the position, is not shown to have the more significant impact on job satisfaction than the other job characteristics examined in this study, including feedback, task identity, skill variety, and task significance. It is
promising that because autonomy is the least significant job characteristic in relation to job satisfaction, flexible and affordable initiatives can be developed and put into place to increase the motivating potential of call center workers.

**Gender.** A strong positive relationship between perceived job satisfaction and the Motivating Potential Score existed for both males and females. Overall, males were more easily satisfied in their work than females when the Motivating Potential Score is increased. Males were most likely to respond positively to enhancements in skill variety while women were most likely to respond positively to enhancements in feedback, though none of these gender differences reached statistical significance.

Belt (2002) reported that females make up an estimated 70% of the call center workforce throughout the growth of the position across local and national labor markets. Interestingly, this study received 69% of its participation from female call center workers, representing the gender gap that Belt described in call centers across the United States. Unlike job satisfaction research in call centers, Michailidis and Dracou’s (2011) study found that there were no significant differences between males and females in medical sales representative positions in terms of job satisfaction and motivating potential. Therefore, it may be true that the unique job characteristics of call center jobs may be a breeding ground for gender inequality and a position that provides more opportunities for males to feel motivated to advance into management positions. It may be the case that women feel less satisfied within the same call center position as males, and therefore have a lower motivating potential to develop their skills and relationships within the organization. Specifically in call center positions, lower levels of motivating potential for
females, in comparison to males, may explain why females are less likely to seek promotions within the organization.

**Limitations**

One limitation of the study was that the data were collected from a single business organization rather than many. Moreover, the research was collected solely within a medium-sized city in New York State. Responses may have differed if varying companies and geographic regions were included. In addition, responses may have differed across other organizations depending on their human capital achievements and other initiatives in place to improve employee job satisfaction.

The sample population used in this study may have lacked significant gender diversity. Specifically, that ratio of men to women who participated in this study was 1:2.32. A more balanced ratio of men to women participants in this study could possibly provide more significant results to further understand perceived job satisfaction of males and females in relation to the Motivating Potential Score.

**Recommendations**

Hackman and Oldham (1974) designed the Job Diagnostic Survey to help organizations diagnose and to undertake work redesign to improve the work motivation and satisfaction of employees. They did this because issues of lower job satisfaction and motivation within the job itself were accompanied by bigger problems. These problems included documented problems in work performance, absenteeism, or turnover. By using Hackman and Oldham’s theoretical framework, the implications of findings from this study provided insights to further explore the relationships between motivating potential, job satisfaction, and job characteristics of call center workers. This section includes
recommendations for further research as well as professional practices that could be used to improve employee job satisfaction and reduce employee turnover in call centers.

**Further research.** By understanding the relationship between job satisfaction and the motivating potential of call center workers, organizations can create initiatives to combat high turnover rates within call centers. To further explore the literature in job satisfaction in call centers, scholarly research should be applied to analyze job characteristics and turnover intention among call centers workers. In addition to analyzing the relationship between job satisfaction and job characteristics, the added exploration of turnover intention among call center workers could provide further understanding to the importance, or weight, of each the job characteristics as they relate to job satisfaction and intentions to leave. Mobley, Horner & Hollingsworth’s (1978) theory of voluntary turnover has been widely used in empirical research and may be appropriate to include for use in future research (Yin-Fah, Sok Foon, Chee-Leong, & Osman, 2010).

In addition to including turnover intentions, future research should include a measure of call center employees’ satisfaction of benefits. As described in Chapter 2, Carraher’s (2011) study revealed through analysis that employees across business sectors, as well as throughout multiple countries, expressed a significant connection that pay was considered more important to employees during the recruitment phase while benefits were significantly more important for retaining employees.

Rosen et al. (2011) study further supported that greater job benefits, not pay, was related to lower turnover intentions. Benefits may differ from one call center organization to another. Specifically, the turnover intentions of the participants in this study were
predicted by job satisfaction and the absence of health insurance. A future study including the analysis of call center employees’ perception of benefits across multiple organizations may provide insight into the relationships between job characteristics, job satisfaction, turnover intention, and benefits.

Although this study provided a minimally sufficient sample size, future studies should attempt to sample a population with a similar ratio of males to females. This study could be used as a model for a longitudinal study to provide further insight to the changes that occur with the Motivating Potential Score of females in call center positions in relation to perceived job satisfaction as they enter the position through the time that they may complete one year of service. The results of this study may provide further evidence to Belt’s (2002) description of call centers as a “female ghetto” in areas of advancement to leadership roles and the job design. A more equal participation ratio of men to women in a similar study may provide further empirical evidence to whether there is a difference in the motivating potential between men and women working in call centers.

Moshavi and Terbor’s (2002) study found that contingent, or temporary, workers had higher perceived job satisfaction than full-time workers. This study did not include a large sample of temporary workers to statistically provide evidence that temporary workers are more easily satisfied than full-time workers. Descriptively, rather than inferentially, it appears by the analyses that this was an accurate assumption by researchers Moshavi and Terbor. Temporary workers are more motivated than full-time employees when there is an enhancement to experienced meaningfulness. Part-time employees appeared to be unresponsive to changes in experienced meaningfulness and experienced responsibility. Full-time and part-time employees were more likely to than
temporary workers to respond to changes in the area of knowledge of results and their perceived job satisfaction. This study revealed initial evidence that changes in knowledge of results for temporary workers may not impact their perceived job satisfaction. Additional research with a focus on temporary workers might be useful.

**Professional practice.** Less satisfied employees, such as call center workers, are quicker to change jobs than other employees in other types of positions within the same organization (Whitt, 2006). Echchakoui and Naji (2013) note that because labor represents about 75% of the operational expenditure for a call center, strong management skills are crucial for the managers of the call centers. These strong management skills include being able to assess problems, provide solutions, and effectively carry out change within the organization. The following sections include 12 specific recommendations to call center managers. More specifically, the recommendations provide insight for regularly assessing the motivating potential of the job, best practices for providing feedback, methods to ensure the opportunity for workers to embrace skill variety is available, and steps for leading change when addressing changes within the job design in call centers. A listing of the recommendations, in the order they are presented, is shown in Appendix K.

**Annual assessment.** Hackman and Oldham (1974) posit that it is important for organizations to periodically use the Job Diagnostic Survey for diagnosis, change, and assessment of job designs. Recommended steps for the diagnostic use of the Job Descriptive Index, adapted from Hackman and Oldham’s (1974, pp. 31-35) instructions, are provided in Appendix H. The output from the Job Diagnostic Survey can prompt for unexpected job redesign or can guide the resource input to planned job redesign.
Typically, the short form version of the Job Diagnostic Survey can be completed by employees in less than 10 minutes. The survey should be conducted annually so that call center managers can benchmark job satisfaction and assess the outcomes of any changes to job design. Based on the organization’s leadership response, action to improve motivation can reduce employee turnover among other benefits to the stakeholders. Improvements made to turnover rates can save larger organizations millions of dollars each year in recruiting, salaries, technology, and training and knowledge loss costs. Subsequently, employee performance and customer satisfaction could improve as a result of improved motivation among call center workers.

**Providing feedback.** Immediate action can be taken by organizations supporting call centers to improve job satisfaction and motivation of call center workers. Within the organizations, members including the management teams throughout the organization, training and development leaders, recruiters, human resource benefit program analysts, and even the call center workers themselves can be involved in the emerging initiatives to improve job satisfaction and motivation. Based on this study’s analysis, call center organizations should focus their attention on redesigning call center positions in a way that increases the motivating potential within both the experienced meaningfulness and knowledge of results psychological states. A job re-design in a call center can include changes to procedures and processes, improved training for all levels of workers, as well as system enhancements. The type of changes may vary across call centers depending on the current job design and resources currently in use by the business unit.

Although experienced meaningfulness had slightly more influence on the motivating potential among call center employees, the better investment may be in
focusing on improving the knowledge of results psychological state. The knowledge of results psychological state encompasses only the feedback job characteristics and therefore has more weight in changing the motivating potential of employees than focusing on one or all of the job characteristics within the experienced meaningfulness psychological state, including skill variety, task identity, and task significance. If additional resources exist to make enhancements to more than just one job characteristic, investing in improvements to skill variety may significantly impact the overall experienced meaningfulness score to increase the overall motivating potential among call center workers.

In other words, to maximize job satisfaction among call center workers with limited resources at hand, it is often more efficient to spend to improve the knowledge of results psychological state. For instance, a dollar spent to improve the knowledge of results psychological state can likely show greater returns than a dollar spent to improve the experienced meaningfulness psychological state. This greater return that is experienced when investing in knowledge of results occurs because improving feedback is the only focus, or the only job characteristic within that specific psychological state, for call center managers wanting to improve the knowledge of results psychological state. If the call center managers wanted to increase the experienced meaningfulness psychological state, the managers would need to spread their resources across initiatives to improve all or some of the following job characteristics: skill variety, task identity, and task significance.

If call center managers do choose to focus on feedback, they must be aware that workers receive feedback not only from their direct supervisors. Call center workers can
receive feedback from customers, co-workers, management, systems, and even themselves. The following recommendations emerging from this study are focused on what organizations, specifically leaders within the call center business units, can do to improve the job satisfaction of their call center workers. The following recommendations provide guidance for creating a foundation of trust for effective feedback, improving the frequency and timing of feedback, giving more clear and concise feedback,

Foundationally, when call center supervisors or managers are providing feedback to workers, it is important that a sense of trust be established. Especially if trust is perceived to be broken, the change agent, specifically the call center management, must teach members of the organization how to address trust issues within the business unit before workers reach a crisis stage and employees leave. To address potential trust issues, employees at all levels within the organizational structure should utilize Blanchard, Olmstead and Lawrence’s (2013, pp. 114-118) Five Steps for Rebuilding Damaged Trust as described in Appendix I. The call center leadership team can build trust within their organizational culture through everyday actions. To do so, each leader within the call center should model the way for others around them to stabilize a sense of trust within the culture (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Call center leaders should avoid broken promises, unfulfilled commitments, withholding information, unfair treatment, lies, and dishonesty. If not, Blanchard et al. (2013) noted “repeated occurrences of these trust-busting behaviors by leaders foster low-trust environments, resulting in employees who are demoralized, disengaged, unproductive, afraid to take risks, and ultimately at a higher risk to leave the organization” (p. 120).
The timeliness and frequency of feedback is also a concern for call center management. Call center employees are typically receiving a large portion of their feedback from customers throughout the standard workday. Much of the feedback many of the US-based call center workers are receiving is negative in nature due to the fact that they are often working with customers who are dissatisfied or frustrated with a product or service. Many companies use a 1:1 employee-supervisor feedback model that only has the employee giving and receiving feedback only once per week, and in some organizations, only once per month.

Call center workers may be receiving mixed messages if they are constantly receiving poor feedback from customers while only receiving occasional positive feedback from their supervision. Call centers are known for experiencing seasonal or time-related spikes in callers waiting to speak to a representative and supervisors and managers are often helping to assist with difficult questions and escalation issues. While some organizations may react to complaints from call center workers about the lack of regular intrinsic-related feedback, the response may usually be to provide an extrinsic reward system to publicly acknowledge workers who exceed service levels in a given month or quarter.

Still, call center leadership is lacking to provide a frequent and clear method of feedback to call center employees. Scheduling of workers has made it difficult for supervisory staff to manage feedback sessions or even quick, informal conversations with employees. In this type situation, Blanchard and Johnson (2003, p. 44) recommended the One Minute Praising method for feedback, as well as for increasing the motivating potential overall, and works well when call center managers follow these specific steps:
1. Tell people up front that you are going to let them know how they are doing.
2. Praise people immediately.
3. Tell people what they did right – be specific.
4. Tell people how good you feel about what they did right, and how it helps the organization and the other people who work there.
5. Stop for a moment of silence to let them “feel” how good you feel.
6. Encourage them to do more of the same.
7. Shake hands or touch people in a way that makes it clear that you support their success in the organization.

Constructive feedback should also be provided and can be done so using Blanchard and Johnson’s (2003, p. 59) One Minute Reprimands method that is effective when you:

1. Tell people beforehand that you are going to let them know how they are doing and in no uncertain terms.

   **the first half of the reprimand:**

   2. Reprimand people immediately.

   3. Tell people what they did wrong – be specific.

   4. Tell people how you feel about what they did wrong – and in no uncertain terms.

   5. Stop for a few seconds of uncomfortable silence to let them feel how you feel.

   **the second half of the reprimand:**

   6. Shake hands, or touch them in a way that lets them know you are honestly on their side.
7. Remind them how much you value them.
8. Reaffirm that you think well of them but not of their performance in this situation.
9. Realize that when the reprimand is over, it is over.

Blanchard and Johnson’s (2003) One Minute Praising and One Minute Reprimands methods require a movement to real-time call monitoring by call center management. Typically, call center managers will set aside time each week to review calls and later provide feedback to the employee regarding the monitored call either through an email or in person during their scheduled 1:1 feedback session. With real-time call monitoring, effective feedback can be delivered prior to call center workers taking their next call. Also, by increasing the frequency of both positive and corrective feedback during the workday, this may reduce the perception in call centers that supervisors only stop by workers desks for reprimands. By influencing the timeliness of positive feedback, call center managers are taking initiative to positively enhance the knowledge of results psychological state. If the call center is staffed to meet high service levels, 1:1 sessions can be reduced to allow for shorter feedback sessions throughout the week or month. In addition, more frequent feedback communication between call center workers and their leadership team can help to improve call center processes. This in turn, can provide a better service experience for customers and possible augment the organization’s value.

Continuously improving the performance monitoring methods can dramatically increase the feedback value for call center employees. It is not uncommon for call center workers to be mainly appraised based on their calls per hour, or CPH, performance. Using calls per hour quotas can lessen the service quality of the customers receive as well
as limit the skill variety available to call center workers within their role. For example, a

call center worker who provides high levels of quality service by talking callers through
the company’s website may feel penalized for having a fewer calls per hour compared to
a fellow call center teammate whom refuses to walk callers through the company website
and whom provides only minimum assistance on a regular basis. This method of
feedback can be seen as ironic and discouraging for call center workings seeking to
provide higher levels of quality service. In addition, by focusing on calls per hour for
performance measurement, call center workers may feel pressured to sacrifice quality for
quantity. This sacrifice may be negatively impact the experienced meaningfulness
psychological state because workers may be less likely to see their work as valuable or
worthwhile as they would if they did not feel rushed through their calls. Overall, a
negative impact to the experienced meaningfulness psychological state may significantly
lower the call center workers’ motivating potential.

Based on the results of this study, call center managers should only use calls per
hour (CPH) figures for scheduling. Instead, statistics such as quality monitoring scores,
hold times, and after call work (ACW) time should be used to provide feedback to
employees regarding their performance. In addition, if a call center needs to take
additional time for a client issue, the employee should be provided a tool for
documenting efforts that are not systematically noted. Exceptions to their schedule, such
as extra time spent to resolve a client’s issue, can be discussed during 1:1 sessions
between employees and their supervisors.

Due to high volume call spikes that often occur in call centers, 1:1 sessions are
often cancelled so that workers can take the calls and supervisors are free to respond to
escalated issues. Call center workers can sometimes work for months without having a 1:1 session. Call center managers should include a supervisor’s 1:1 scheduling adherence to their performance review to assure the workers are regularly meeting with their supervisors to discuss performance.

Regularly scheduled discussions between supervisors and employees, such as 1:1 sessions, can also be a beneficial experience for employees’ development, especially for females who struggle to keep their motivation to seek promotions (Belt, 2002). If a physical meeting is difficult to schedule for the call center worker and the supervisor due to busy times, collaboration tools such as Microsoft Office’s SharePoint discussions groups and Salesforce.com’s Chatter groups can provide an online environment for efficient feedback. Not only will conversations taking place in these online groups help improve feedback, but they may also increase the number ideas for improvements and product innovations that are constantly seen and talked about among call center workers. Many of these ideas rarely have the opportunity to be discussed in front of the call center leadership team otherwise.

**Ensuring skill variety.** The results of this study described the job satisfaction improvement brought on by call center managers designing jobs to maximize skill variety. Talent management expert firms, such as Development Dimensions International (2013), help call center managers profile important skills needed for the job, through the use of a hiring assessment tool, to best match applicants displaying those skills to the position. The BufferApp consulting team (Ciotti, 2013) recommends that call center positions be redesigned in a way that allows call center workers to experience a mix of customer service skills within a workday. These service skills are
• knowledge of the product,
• clear communication,
• attentiveness,
• ability to use “positive language”,
• acting skills necessary to maintain a cheery demeanor in spite of dealing with unhappy people,
• time management,
• ability to “read” customers,
• opportunity to create a calming presence,
• be goal oriented,
• ability to handle surprises,
• the art of persuasion, and
• closing ability (Ciotti, 2013).

For example, if a client expresses curiosity for a product that the call center employee supports encourage the worker to communicate with the client at the next level, with some mastery of persuasion so that the worker can convince the interested customer that the product is right for them (if it truly is). Examples of initiatives for call center workers that can both increase the variety of skills utilized and that also enhance feedback include relationship building activities, communication trainings, and the establishment of collaboration (and not just cooperation) expectations across teams within a business unit as well as across the entire organization. Zappos.com’s founder, Tony Hsieh (2010), shared with business leaders that you will not only satisfy a need of the call center
employee, you may be building a partnership with the organization’s sales and marketing department.

Call center workers typically receive fewer training hours than other workers within an organization due to the need to provide customer support. Call center management, in assistance with the organization’s training and development department, should find alternative training times to support these workers. In some instances, it may be necessary to develop a training department specifically serve the call center business unit. By doing so, trainings could be held for call center workers during hours that allow for customer needs to be met while also providing improved work-life balance for employees. In addition, a training team, and preferably a budget, specifically allocated to the call center would be prepared to both better understand the impact of turnover on the organization and customer base. These resources may also provide an opportunity to provide specialized training means, such as learning technologies or skill development programs, deemed non-essential for other business units within the organization.

**Leading change.** The current mindset that many call center workers and their leadership teams have must change to meet the growing demands of the worldwide economy and rapidly fluctuating opportunities. Ideally, the mindset must evolve from that of call centers being a production line-style sales and support organization to being seen by all members of the organization as one of their key sustainability assets. Workers in a call center can be considered brand ambassadors functioning to enhance the organization’s brand. By doing so, these brand ambassadors in call centers also add future value in customer retention (Ross, 2012). A call center that is well-managed, especially in regards to employee job satisfaction and retention, is more strongly
equipped to critically contribute to the sustainability of the entire organization. Great customer service provided by call centers not only helps to support and retain current clients, but also to attract new clients. With a powerful call center business unit, new clients can be obtained through inbound and outbound sales calls quicker and cheaper. Existing client bases are more likely to provide a positive word-of-mouth to potential clients if they feel that they have had a good customer service experience.

To assist leaders in creating and carrying out major change and making it last, Kotter (2012, pp. 22-25) recommended an eight-stage process (see Appendix J). The process provides action items for creating a sense of urgency for change, communicating change initiatives, and making change stick. Although specific initiatives to redesign the job may evolve over time, investing in a culture ready and open to change can make adaptation easy for organizations. Although Kotter’s recommended stages of change are typically viewed as a process for entire organizations enduring strategy shifts or leadership disruptions, these steps can be adapted by leaders of call centers within larger organizations. Kotter’s change process can be used to help call center leaders carry out job re-design recommendations such as the ones mentioned earlier in this chapter.

**Conclusions**

Overall, the motivating potential of employees demonstrates a strong relationship with employees’ perceived job satisfaction. The improved understanding of job satisfaction can be used in collaboration with initiatives to combat the issue of high employee turnover in call center organizations. Call center managers are often too busy trying to recruit and onboard workers to investigate the root causes or underlying issues of higher than average employee turnover. By using the recommendations provided in
this study, call center managers can attempt to move from a reactive to a proactive role in managing worker job satisfaction through job re-design and other communication and trust-building initiatives.

Indeed, call center managers are constantly struggling with the costs and other resources redirected to combat high turnover rates among their employee base. Evidence was provided that the turnover crisis in call centers related to job satisfaction issues is costly to organizations and has a significant impact on the overall operating efficiencies and customer-perceived value. The financial stress caused by turnover, sometimes in the millions annually for larger organizations, alone can disrupt or even take down an entire organization. Theoretical frameworks related to the Job Characteristics Model and job satisfaction were introduced and described. Data was presented on the current status of employee turnover, specifically in call center roles, setting the stage for discussion of the relevant literature related to job satisfaction.

The emerging research gaps presented a strong need for further research into call center employees’ job satisfaction in relation to the job characteristics included in Hackman and Oldham’s (1975) Job Characteristics Model. This proposed research study could provide greater insight and prevention of undesired turnover, incrementally more so than the state of the literature today.

In the process of this study, the researcher sought to add the body of research on job satisfaction and call center workers. Through data collection and analysis, a summary report of findings emerged which will be offered to the managers of the organization in which the research will take place. Each research question was individually analyzed and the meanings of the results were described. Additionally, an analysis of the supplemental
data collected, including gender, work status, and length of service, was presented. The findings of this study expose the strong relationships between job satisfaction and the overall motivating potential of call center workers.

It was determined that call center leaders can maximize their investment to increase job satisfaction of workers by using the Job Diagnostic Survey to diagnose job design deficiencies. Based on the analyses of the data, certain activities or types of initiatives are likely to provide organizations with the greatest return in call center work job satisfaction: feedback and skill variety. For example, call center managers can improve feedback methods by enhancing the performance measurements and by ensuring that a variety of skills exist within in worker’s job design.

Fortunately, feedback is one of the most actionable job characteristics for improvement initiatives. Call center managers must make sure that trust is a strong part of the business unit’s culture. In addition, timely and effective feedback methods must be included to enhance the motivating psychological state, knowledge of results. In this study, autonomy – the most difficult to alter due to the nature of the call center workload – is the least likely job characteristic, in comparison to the other four characteristics, to provide a significant change in job satisfaction when resources are invested in job dimension. Importantly, the leadership and activities at call centers must change if they are to adapt successfully to the present needs of workers, customers, and other stakeholders as technology and product offerings continue to evolve rapidly.
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doi:10.1108/088760405


Appendix A

Call Center Organizational Hierarchy

The typical call center organizational hierarchy consists of a call center manager, team managers, call coach(s), call monitor(s), team leaders, senior agents, and agents. In this diagram, the solid lines are used to indicate the very flat hierarchy that typified call centers in the early to mid-1990s. The broken lines are used around those roles that have emerged more recently in many call centers, adding new layers to organizational structures.

Adapted from A Female Ghetto? Women’s Careers in Call Centers, 2002.
Appendix B

Qualtrics Research Questionnaire Sample

Qualtrics Survey Software

Page 1 of 6

Informed Consent Form

Introduction
This study aims to collect information about your current position’s job characteristics and satisfaction.

Procedures
You will be asked to complete a short questionnaire about your current job position. The questionnaire consists of 24 questions and should take less than 19 minutes to complete. Questions are designed to determine how you perceive your current positions job characteristics. This questionnaire will be conducted with an on-line Qualtrics-created survey.

Risks/Discomforts
Risks are minimal and no greater than anything in your daily life for involvement in this study. However, if you feel at any time emotionally uneasy when asked to respond to questions regarding your perceptions in your current position, please discontinue your participation. Although we do not expect any harm to come upon any participants, it is possible though extremely rare and uncommon.

Benefits
There are no direct benefits for participants. However, through your participation, researchers will learn more about job characteristics and satisfaction of call center agents. Upon completion, there is also an opportunity to enter into a drawing for one of many gift card prizes (see Compensation).

Confidentiality
All data gathered from participants will be kept confidential and will only be reported in an aggregate format (by reporting only combined results and never revealing individual names). The aggregated results will primarily be reported in this study’s findings. In addition, a summary report of the findings will be provided to the large payroll provider company in which you are currently employed. All questionnaires will be concealed, and no one other than the primary investigator and research committee listed below will have access to them. The data collected will be stored in the HIPPA-compliant, Qualtrics-secure database until it has been deleted by the primary investigator.

Compensation
There is no direct compensation however, participants will have an opportunity to enter into a drawing for a gift card.

Drawing entries will not be linked to responders in this questionnaire in order to protect the confidentiality of the participants. Below is a description of the prizes available to participants who entered the drawing after completing this survey:

$5 Dunkin Donuts gift card (5 available)
$10 Wegman's gift card (3 available)
$16 Target gift card (2 available)
$25 Macy's gift card (1 available)

The winners of the gift cards will each be contacted by Carly LeBlanc by phone no later than March 15th. Each winner can choose to have their gift card hand delivered or mailed via interoffice to their desk.

Participation
Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time or refuse to participate entirely without prejudice to your employment status or performance review.

Questions about the Research
If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Carly LeBlanc at 585-356-7600 Ext. 88710, ctleblanc@sjfc.edu, or Dr. Marie Cianca, 585-356-3878, mcianca@sjfc.edu. You can also contact the researchers by writing to Alext Education Building, Room 1048, St. John Fisher College, 3600 East Avenue, Rochester, NY 14618.

Questions about your Rights as Research Participants
If you have questions you do not feel comfortable asking the researcher, you may contact Dr. Marie Cianca, 585-356-3878, mcianca@sjfc.edu. You can also contact Dr. Marie Cianca by writing to Alext Education Building, Room 1048, St. John Fisher College, 3600 East Avenue, Rochester, NY 14618.

I have read, understood, and printed a copy of the above consent form and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

- Yes
- No

Section One

Please describe your present job as objectively as you can. Click the description that best reflects your evaluation of the job:

1. People on Your Present Job. Think of the majority of people with whom you work or meet in connection with your work. How well does each of the following words or phrases describe these people? In the blank beside each word or phrase below, select Y for “Yes” if it describes your work, N for “No” if it does not describe it, or ? for “?” if you cannot decide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Select one</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lazy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustrating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Work on Present Job. Think of the work you do at present. How well does each of the following words or phrases describe your work? In the blank beside each word or phrase below, select Y for “Yes” if it describes your work, N for “No” if it does not describe it, or ? for “?” if you cannot decide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Select one</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fascinating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Pay. Think of the pay you get now. How well does each of the following words or phrases describe your present pay? In the blank beside each word or phrase below, write Y for "Yes", if it describes your pay; N for "No", if it does not describe it; ? for "?", if you cannot decide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Select one</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earnly live on income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well paid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underpaid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enough to live on</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Opportunities for Promotion. Think of the opportunities for promotion that you have now. How well does each of the following words or phrases describe them? In the blank beside each word or phrase below, write Y for "Yes", if it describes your opportunities for promotion; N for "No", if it does not describe them; ? for "?", if you cannot decide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Select one</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good opportunities for promotion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities somewhat limited</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dead-end job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good chance for promotion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly good chance for promotion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular promotions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Supervision. Think of the kind of supervision that you get on your job. How well does each of the following words or phrases describe this? In the blank beside each word or phrase below, write

### Section Two

Please reflect on your agreement of the following statements as they pertain to your current job position.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. My job provides a lot of variety.
2. My job allows me the opportunity to complete the work I start.
3. My job is one that may affect a lot of other people by how well the work is performed.
4. My job lets me be left on my own to do my own work.
5. My job by itself provides feedback on how well I am performing as I am working.
6. While performing my job I get the opportunity to work on many interesting projects.
7. My job is arranged so that I have a chance and the ability to talk with customers/clients/end users.
8. My job has the ability to influence decisions that significantly affect the organization.
9. My job provides me the opportunity of self-directed flexibility of work hours.
10. My job provides me with the opportunity to both communicate with my supervisor and to resolve recognition from them as well.
11. My job gives me the opportunity to use many new technologies.

17. My job is arranged so that I have an understanding of how it relates to the business mission.

18. My job influences day-to-day company success.

19. I am able to act independently of my supervisor in performing my job function.

20. I receive feedback from my co-workers about my performance on the job.

Section Three

Please take a moment to supply demographic information that may provide additional insight for this study.

21. What is your gender?
   - Male
   - Female

22. What is your current employment status?
   - Full-time
   - Part-time
   - Temporary (employed by a staffing agency)

23. By estimation, what percentage of your day involves tasks directly related to inbound or outbound service communications (i.e., phone or email)?
   - Less than 25%
   - 25% to 50%
   - More than 50%

24. What is your length of service in your current role (please include any service time completed as a temporary worker, if applicable)?
   - 6 months
   - More than 6 months but less than 1 year
   - 1 year or more

Enter prize drawing by clicking on this link:
https://sjfc.us2.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_0VuQT5oVla3yYip

Thank you for taking this survey. Your responses have been recorded. If you wish to enter into the prize drawing, please click on the link above. Your personal information will not be linked to your questionnaire responses, and your responses to this survey remain completely anonymous.
Appendix C

Qualtrics Participant Prize Entry Document

Default Question Block

Prizes available to participants who enter this drawing:
5 participants will each win a $5 Dunkin Donuts gift card
3 participants will win a $10 Wegmans gift card
2 participants will win a $10 Target gift card
1 participant will win a $25 Macy’s gift card

Please provide your first name and phone extension to enter the prize drawing. To protect the confidentiality of the participants in this study, names or phone extensions will not be linked with any earlier questionnaire responses.

First Name

Phone Extension

Appendix D

Research Site Acknowledgement and Acceptance

From: Sullivan, Kiley G
Sent: Friday, January 04, 2013 10:18 AM
To: LeBlanc, Carly Marie
Subject: RE: Job Characteristics Study

Carly,

Thanks for taking the time to explain your research design, and I approve the data collection.

Good luck!

From: LeBlanc, Carly Marie
Sent: Friday, January 04, 2013 10:12 AM
To: Sullivan, Kiley G
Subject: Job Characteristics Study

Carly,

Thank you for your support of this proposed research study within the organization. Please reply to this email to confirm your acceptance of this data collection expected to take place during the month of February 2013. A copy of the research design has been supplied to you. I look forward to working with you and your leadership team to present the results of this study.

Sincerely,

Carly M. LeBlanc

Operating Risk Performance and Prevention Analyst

Operating Risk Management

(585) 336-7600 ext. 68718
Appendix E

Initial Participant Invitation Email Sample

BCC: participants@organization.com

From: cleblanc1@organization.com

Subject: Please participate in this study and enter in a prize drawing for a gift card!

Body: My name is Carly LeBlanc and I work in this building. I am working on a study regarding job satisfaction and job characteristics of service workers as part of the completion of my Ed.D. in Executive Leadership at St. John Fisher College. If you are receiving this email, you have been invited, along with other employees within this department, to voluntarily participate in this questionnaire. It is estimated that the questionnaire will take less than 10 minutes to complete. Your responses will help to improve job design in service positions. Respondents will have an opportunity to enter into a drawing for one of many gift cards available to stores including Dunkin’ Donuts, Wegmans, Target, and Macy’s.

Please click on this link below to respond to the survey:

https://sjfc.us2.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_cMZkgRN92LH3GzH

After completing the survey, you will have an opportunity to confidentially enter your name into the drawing for one of many gift card prizes available.

Thank you,

Carly LeBlanc
Appendix F

Closing Email to Participants Email Sample

BCC: participants@organization.com

From: cleblanc1@organization.com

Subject: Thank you for your participation in this study!

Body: Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated and will help to advance knowledge of job characteristics and job satisfaction of service workers. The results of this study will be shared with your division’s management team. Participants’ names and IP addresses were not collected or linked to any of the questionnaire responses in order to protect confidentiality.

Winners of the gift cards drawing have already been randomly selected and contacted by Carly LeBlanc by phone. If you were not one of the winners of the gift cards, please know that your participation in this study may help to improve the job characteristics of your current position.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this study, please contact Carly LeBlanc at 585-336-7600 ext. 68718 or cml09794@sjfc.edu.
Appendix G

St. John Fisher College Institutional Review Board’s Letter of Approval

February 14, 2013

File No: 3173-022113-01

Carly LeBlanc
25 River View Heights
Rochester, NY 14626

Dear Ms. LeBlanc:

Thank you for submitting your research proposal to the Institutional Review Board.

I am pleased to inform you that the Board has approved your Expedited Review project, “Understanding Turnover in Call Centers: A Study of Job Deficiencies using the Job Characteristics Model.”

Following federal guidelines, research related records should be maintained in a secure area for three years following the completion of the project at which time they may be destroyed.

Should you have any questions about this process or your responsibilities, please contact me at 385-5262 or by e-mail to emergen@sjfc.edu, or if unable to reach me, please contact the IRB Administrator, Jamie Mosca, at 385-8318, e-mail jmosca@sjfc.edu.

Sincerely,

Eileen M. Merges, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board

IRB

3490 East Avenue • Rochester, NY 14618 • 585-385-8000 • www.sjfc.edu
Appendix H

Steps for Job Diagnostic Survey Utilization

A recommended series of steps, adapted from Hackman and Oldham’s (1974, pp. 31-35) instructions, for organizations choosing to utilize the Job Diagnostic Survey for job redesign considerations are as follows:

1. **Is motivation and satisfaction really problematic?** If motivation and satisfaction are problematic (and are accompanied by documented problems in work performance, absenteeism, or turnover as revealed by independent organizational indices), the change agent would continue to Step 2. If not, the change agent should look to other aspects of the work situation to identify and understand the reasons for the problem which gave rise to the diagnostic activity.

2. **Is the job low in motivating potential?** To answer this question, the change agent would examine the Motivating Potential Score of the target job, and compare it to the MPS scores of other jobs to determine whether or not the job itself is the probable cause of the motivational problems documented in Step 1. If the job turns out to be low on the MPS, the change agent would continue to Step 3. If the score is high, the change agent would look for other reasons for the motivational difficulties (e.g., the pay plan, the nature of supervision, and so on).

3. **What specific aspects of the job are causing the difficulty?** This step involves examination of the job on each of the five job characteristics to pinpoint the specific strengths and weaknesses of the job as it currently exists. It is useful at
this stage to construct a “profile” of the target job, to make visually apparent where improvements need to be made.

4. How “ready” are the employees for change? Once it has been documented that there is a need for improvement in the focal job – and the particularly troublesome aspects of the job have been identified – then it is appropriate to begin planning the specific action steps which will be taken to Enright the job. An important factor in such planning is determining the growth and strength of the employees, since employees high on growth needs usually respond more readily to job enrichment than do employees with little need for growth. The measure of employee growth need strength provided by the JDS can be helpful in identifying which employees should be among the first to have jobs changed (i.e., those with high growth need strength), and how such changes should be introduced (i.e., perhaps with more caution for individuals with low growth need strength).

5. What special problems and opportunities are present in the existing work system? Finally, before undertaking actual job changes, attention should be given to any particular roadblocks which may exist in the organizational unit as it currently exists – and to any special opportunities which may be built upon in the change program. Many of these factors will be idiosyncratic to the system, and easily identifiable by those responsible for guiding the change.
Appendix I

Five Steps for Rebuilding Trust

To address potential trust issues, employees at all levels within the organizational structure should utilize Blanchard, Olmstead and Lawrence’s (2013, pp. 114-117) Five Steps for Rebuilding Damaged Trust. An overview of the five steps to rebuilt damaged trust is as follows:

1. Acknowledge that a problem exists and needs to be addressed. As you acknowledge the problem, assure the other party that your intention is to restore trust between the two of you and that you are willing to take the time and effort to get the relationship back on track.

2. Admit your part in causing the breach of trust. Own up to your actions and take responsibility for whatever harm was caused. Refusing to admit your mistakes undermines your believability.

3. Apologize for your role in the situation. Even if you do not feel you were entirely at fault, apologize for your part in the situation. Avoid making excuses, shifting blame, or using qualifying statements, as these will undermine your apology.

4. Invite feedback from the other party about how he or she sees the situation. Together, assess how trust was violated. The more specific you can be about the behaviors that damaged the trust, the easier it will be to repair the breach, as you will each have a clear idea about what needs to change.
5. Work together to create an action plan. This is the time to clarify the goals for the relationship and make requests about what you would both like to see more or less of in the future.
Appendix J

Eight-Stage Process for Change

Kotter (2012, pp. 22-25) recommends an eight-stage process of creating major change and making it last. The process is described as follows:

1. Establishing a sense of urgency
   a. Examining the market and competitive realities
   b. Identifying and discussing crises, potential crises, or major opportunities

2. Creating the guiding coalition
   a. Putting together a group with enough power to lead the change
   b. Getting the group to work together like a team

3. Developing a vision and strategy
   a. Creating a vision to help direct the change effort
   b. Developing strategies for achieving that vision

4. Communicating the change vision
   a. Using every vehicle possible to constantly communicate the new vision and strategies
   b. Having the guiding coalition role model the behavior expected of employees
5. Empowering broad-based action
   a. Getting rid of obstacles
   b. Changing the systems or structures that undermine the change vision
   c. Encouraging risk taking and nontraditional ideas, activities, and actions

6. Generating short-term wins
   a. Planning for visible improvements in performance, or “wins”
   b. Creating those wins
   c. Visibly recognizing and rewarding people who made the wins possible

7. Consolidating gains and producing more change
   a. Using increased credibility to change all systems, structures, and policies that don’t fit together and don’t fit the transformation vision
   b. Hiring, promoting, and developing people who can implement the change vision
   c. Reinvigorating the process with new projects, themes, and change agents
8. Anchoring new approaches in the culture
   a. Creating better performance through customer – and productivity-oriented behavior, more and better leadership, and more effective management
   b. Articulating the connections between new behaviors and organizational success
   c. Developing means to ensure leadership development and succession
Appendix K

Recommendations to Call Center Management

Recommendations to call centers management for professional practice, as described in Chapter 5 in the order they are presented, are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Specific Recommendation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual Assessment</td>
<td>1. Utilize the Job Descriptive Survey annually to assess the need for job re-design and benchmarking</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Annually use the Job Descriptive Survey results to re-design the position, as necessary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Providing Feedback</td>
<td>3. Make feedback the primary job characteristic to invest in when redesigning a call center position</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Establish trust with call center workers to improve the feedback quality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Utilize One Minute Manager method for providing concise and effective feedback</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. Provide real-time feedback to employees</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7. Remove the Calls Per Hours stat from performance monitoring reports. Only use this stat for scheduling and decision making at the management level</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. Supervisor’s performance includes consideration to the</td>
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adherence of their 1:1 meetings with workers

9. Utilize tools such as Salesforce.com and Microsoft SharePoint to boost online collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Specific Recommendation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skill Variety</td>
<td>10. Analyze and re-design call center jobs to allow for skill variety</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11. Improve training accommodations for call center workers, including specialized staffing and availability for trainings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>12. Utilize Kotter’s 8-step process for making change stick</td>
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