

Psychological Ownership: An Empirical Examination of Its Consequences

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Analysis of data from 797 residents of university housing cooperatives demonstrated that psychological ownership was positively related to extrarole behavior. In addition, mediated regression analysis supported the hypothesis that the relationship between psychological ownership and extrarole behavior was mediated by organizational commitment. Furthermore, psychological ownership was superior to satisfaction in predicting extrarole behavior. The article concludes with a discussion of potential managerial implications and recommendations for future research.

The key to effectively managing in the 1990s will be knowing how to install psychological ownership. It's psychological ownership that makes the competitive difference.

—T. L. Brown, 1989, p. 15.

Does the psychological ownership that members have for their organization actually make a difference in their behavior? In the past decade, numerous scholars have proposed that "financial ownership" leads to positive consequences for organizational members and for the organization. For example, Florkowski (1987) proposed that profit sharing could positively affect a firm's productivity, quality, turnover, and absenteeism. Buchko (1992) demonstrated that employee attitudes (including satisfaction and

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commitment) were associated with the financial value of an ESOP (employee stock ownership plan). Klein (1987) demonstrated a positive relationship between company contributions to an ESOP and employee attitudes.

More recently, however, Pierce, Rubenfeld, and Morgan (1991) and Pierce, Van Dyne, and Cummings (1992, 1994) have theorized that "psychological ownership" has positive consequences regardless of the organizational member's financial ownership and regardless of the member's legal status as an owner or nonowner. Pierce and his associates proposed that psychological ownership would be associated with positive behavioral and social-psychological consequences, and that these relationships would hold even for members without an equity ownership position. Writers in the popular management press have also discussed and advocated the importance of employee psychological ownership (e.g., Brown, 1989; Peters, 1988; Stayer, 1990).

Despite both scholarly and popular business press interest in psychological ownership, most of the evidence concerning the consequences of psychological ownership is anecdotal. Thus the purpose of this article is to build on the work of Pierce et al. (1991) and Pierce et al. (1992, 1994) and test a model of the consequences of psychological ownership.

PSYCHOLOGICAL OWNERSHIP AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Pierce et al. (1992) defined psychological ownership as that state in which an individual feels as though the target of ownership (or a piece of that target) is theirs. Psychological ownership represents a bonding such that organizational members feel a sense of possessiveness toward the target of ownership even though no legal claim exists. This sense of ownership manifests itself in the meaning and emotion associated with phrases that connote possessiveness such as "my job" or "our organization."

Although title to and control over (something) are definitional characteristics of financial ownership, the concept typically implies much more than this. Ownership is also associated with a sense of responsibility and shared interests with other owners to protect the target of ownership (Webb, 1912). Ownership is associated with pride that minimizes shirking and motivates organizational members to perform at high levels (Bernstein, 1979). Extending these characteristics of financial ownership to psychological ownership, Pierce et al. (1991) theorized that psychological ownership would be associated with high levels of motivation including the performance of extrarole behaviors (constructive work efforts that benefit the organization and go beyond the required work activities). Thus our first hypothesis suggests:

Hypothesis 1: Psychological ownership and extrarole behavior will be positively related.

Extrarole behavior (ERB) is discretionary behavior that is not formally rewarded by the organization (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Van Dyne, Cummings, & McLean Parks, 1995). In contrast, in-role behavior (IRB) is behavior that is required or expected of members by the organization (Organ, 1988; Williams & Anderson, 1991). This distinction is important, because in-role behavior is heavily influenced by organizational structural contingencies such as standard operating procedures and group norms (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982; Pinder, 1984; Staw & Boettger, 1990). We argue that these structural contingencies minimize the variance in in-role behavior because most organizational members will perform their basic roles as expected by the organization. In contrast, extrarole behavior is discretionary and as such should exhibit greater variance as a function of individual psychological states such as psychological ownership (Pearce & Gregersen, 1991). Thus a sense of ownership will be more likely to influence extrarole behavior than in-role behavior. This reasoning leads to our second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: The relationship of psychological ownership and extrarole behavior will be stronger than the relationship of psychological ownership and in-role behavior.

There is a parallel in the job satisfaction literature to the relationship of psychological ownership and extrarole behavior just proposed. Mobley, Horner, and Hollingsworth (1978) found that job satisfaction was not related to job performance but was related to the more discretionary behaviors of absenteeism and turnover. Likewise, Organ (1988) theorized that job satisfaction is more likely to be related to extrarole behavior than to global performance or in-role behavior. In fact, a number of studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between satisfaction and extrarole behavior (e.g., Bateman & Organ, 1983; Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983).

If satisfaction explains variance in extrarole behavior, why is there a need to add psychological ownership as another antecedent? The most supportive answer would be that psychological ownership may actually be a better candidate for explaining variance in extrarole behavior than job satisfaction. In other words, psychological ownership may explain more variance in extrarole behavior than the variance that can be explained by satisfaction. For example, an individual could be satisfied with an organization but not be willing to engage in extrarole behavior because extrarole behavior requires

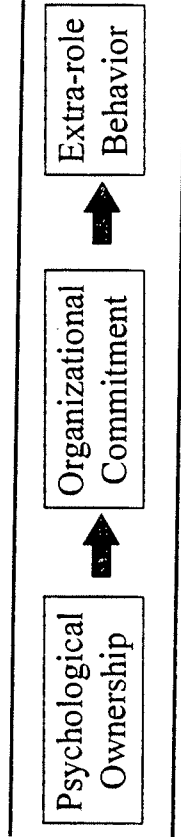


Figure 1: Model of the Consequences of Psychological Ownership

initiative. In contrast, we argue that the sense of responsibility that accompanies psychological ownership is more likely to lead to proactive acts by organizational members in the form of extrarole behavior. Thus our third hypothesis compares the strength of two relationships and suggests a stronger link between psychological ownership and extrarole behavior compared to the link between satisfaction and extrarole behavior:

Hypothesis 3: The relationship of psychological ownership and extrarole behavior will be stronger than the relationship of satisfaction and extrarole behavior.

The next step in our hypothesis development concerns the process through which psychological ownership influences extrarole behavior. This process is illustrated in Figure 1. Earlier, we noted that ownership connotes a sense of responsibility and shared interests for the target of ownership. Drawing again from the ESOP literature, we note that Florowski (1987) proposed employee ownership as an antecedent of organizational commitment (an indicator of an employee's sense of responsibility and shared interests). Klein and Hall (1988) found a strong correlation between ESOP satisfaction and organization commitment. Extending the ESOP literature to psychological ownership, Pierce et al. (1991) proposed that psychological ownership is an antecedent of organizational commitment.

In turn, there is additional support in the literature for conceptualizing organizational commitment as an antecedent of extrarole behavior. Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) theorized that committed individuals are more willing to give of themselves to contribute to the organization's well being, and O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) found a positive relationship between organizational commitment and extrarole behavior. Our logic leads to a conclusion similar to that of Pierce et al. (1991). In their theoretical article on ESOPs, they proposed that under certain conditions, financial ownership leads to psychological ownership and to an integration of employee and owner interests. In turn, this integration of interests leads to beneficial behavioral and attitudinal employee responses. In summary, the theoretical

and empirical literature on the antecedents and consequences of organizational commitment suggests the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Organizational commitment will mediate the relationship of psychological ownership and extrarole behavior.

There is, however, some empirical data that might be interpreted as a potential contradiction to the above hypothesis. Steers (1977) found that organizational commitment was positively, but only marginally, related to performance. Steers, however, used a global measure of performance, which we speculate was most likely based on assessment of in-role behavior. In contrast, we differentiate between in-role and extrarole behavior. We suggest, once again, that structural contingencies that constrain the variance of in-role behavior (including some conceptualizations of global performance) will minimize the possibility of a relationship between organizational commitment and in-role behavior or between organizational commitment and global performance. Extrarole behavior, however, is a discretionary behavior with greater potential for variance than in-role behavior. Thus we would expect a stronger link between organizational commitment and extrarole behavior compared to the link between organizational commitment and in-role behavior. Accordingly, our final hypothesis suggests:

Hypothesis 5: The relationship of organizational commitment and extrarole behavior will be stronger than the relationship of organizational commitment and in-role behavior.

METHOD

STUDY DESIGN AND PARTICIPANTS

A survey was conducted of residents of university affiliated housing cooperatives in a major upper-midwestern metropolitan area. Participation in the study was voluntary and confidential. The survey instrument was distributed to all 1,965 adult residents in the cooperatives, who were asked to complete a paper-and-pencil questionnaire and to mail it directly to the research team conducting the study.

A total of 797 questionnaires were completed and returned, thus giving a response rate of 41%. About 70% of the respondents were undergraduate or graduate university students and the rest were spouses of students. Male and female populations were almost equally represented (47.6% males and 52.4%

females). The housing cooperatives contain a highly diverse community of residents. About 41% of the respondents were White/non-Hispanic, whereas 49.8% were of Asian/Pacific Islander ethnic background. In addition, there were American Indians (.5%), Chicanos (.4%), Blacks (2%), and Hispanics (5.7%). Respondents were citizens of 53 different countries.

The university housing cooperatives were chosen for several reasons. First, these are voluntary nonwork organizations that do not provide merit increases or promotions based on members' discretionary behavior. Therefore, there is less probability that the relationship between psychological ownership and discretionary behavior, if significant, would be confounded by other more instrumental reasons for extrarole behavior. Second, the inclusion of organizations of the same nature provides a control for potential confounds attributable to industry differences (Beard & Dess, 1981).

MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENTS

Psychological ownership was measured by using the Pierce et al. (1992) 5-item measurement instrument. This measure was developed and validated by a team of researchers led by Jon Pierce at the University of Minnesota. The complete description of the theoretical justification and empirical support is presented in Pierce, Van Dyne, and Cummings (1994). Psychological ownership was operationalized with a set of items measuring the attitude of feeling ownership of the cooperative, such as "this is MY cooperative," "I sense that this cooperative is OUR organization," and so on. Each item response used a Likert-type scale anchored with 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. Cronbach's alpha for this measure in our sample was .89.

Organizational commitment was operationalized as an attitude of feeling identification with and affective attachment to the cooperative. Meyer and Allen's (1984) 8-item Affective Commitment Scale was used. Each item response used a Likert-type scale anchored with 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. The Cronbach's alpha of this measure in our sample was .77.

Satisfaction was operationalized as the overall satisfaction of residents with life in the cooperative. It was measured by a single item asking respondents to what extent they agreed or disagreed (1 = *strongly agree*; 7 = *strongly disagree*) with the statement, "I am extremely satisfied with the quality of life here at the cooperative."

In-role behavior was measured with a 6-item instrument that was developed by modification of Williams and Anderson (1991). The items measured the extent to which residents fulfilled their formal requirements with questions like "I fulfill responsibilities specified at the cooperative," "I perform

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Construct	Mean	SD	Correlation Coefficients				
			1	2	3	4	5
Commitment	4.36	1.03	(.77)				
Psychological ownership	4.12	1.35	.5792*	(.89)			
Satisfaction	5.33	1.37	.4550*	.4585*	^a		
In-role behavior	6.26	0.77	.0522	-.0143	-.0049	(.87)	
Extrarole behavior	3.41	1.08	.3207*	.1831*	-.0279	.2059*	(.93)

a. Cronbach's alpha values in parentheses on the diagonal.
* = significant at the level of .001, two-tailed test.

tasks . . ." and so forth.¹ The scale items are reported in the appendix. The items had a 7-point response scale anchored with 1 = *always* and 7 = *never*. The scale was reverse scored so that high scores represented a high fulfillment of in-role requirements. The Cronbach's alpha for this instrument in our sample was .87.

Extrarole behavior was operationalized as a set of actions that contribute to the smooth functioning of the cooperative but are not required formally. These were actions like "I orient new people when they move here," "I help others . . ." "I speak up . . ." and so on. The measurement instrument (based on Organ and Konovsky's (1989) measure of altruism and Van Dyne, Graham, and Dienesch's (1994) measure of advocacy participation) contained seventeen items. The scale items are reported in the appendix. The items had a 7-point response scale anchored with 1 = *always* and 7 = *never*. The scale was reverse scored so that high scores represented a high level of extrarole behavior. Its Cronbach's alpha was .93.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alphas as well as the Pearson Product Moment correlations are reported in Table 1.

Hypothesis 1, which stated a positive relationship between psychological ownership and extrarole behavior was tested by Pearson Product Moment correlation. The correlation of psychological ownership and extrarole behavior was .1831 ($p < .001$), thus supporting the hypothesis.

TABLE 2
Results of the Mediated Regression Analysis

Equation	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Beta Coefficient	t Value	Adjusted R ²	F Value
(1)	Organizational commitment	Psychological ownership	.5792*	19.83*	.3346	393.21*
(2)	Extrarole behavior	Psychological ownership	.1831*	5.15*	.0323	26.53*
(3)	Extrarole behavior	Psychological ownership	.0000	.02	.1015	44.12*

NOTE: The adjusted R² and F value results are for each overall equation.
*p < .001.

Hypothesis 2 stated that psychological ownership would have a stronger relationship with extrarole behavior than with in-role behavior. The correlation between psychological ownership and in-role behavior was not significant ($r = -.0143, p = .69$) whereas the correlation between psychological ownership and extrarole behavior was significant ($r = .1831, p < .001$). We used the Hotelling-Williams test (Williams, 1959a, 1959b) to test the equality of these two dependent correlations. The test of the difference between the correlations of psychological ownership and extrarole behavior, and between psychological ownership and in-role behavior, produced a value of $t = 4.53, p < .05$. The null hypothesis that the two correlations are not significantly different was therefore rejected and Hypothesis 2 was fully supported.

The same method was used to test Hypothesis 3, which stated that the relationship between psychological ownership and extrarole behavior would be stronger than the relationship between satisfaction and extrarole behavior. The correlation between satisfaction and extrarole behavior was not significant ($r = -.0279, p = .439$) whereas the correlation between psychological ownership and extrarole behavior was significant ($r = .1831, p < .001$). The Hotelling-Williams test produced a value of $t = 5.806, p < .05$, thus rejecting the null hypothesis of a nonsignificant difference between the two correlations. Therefore Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Hypothesis 4 was tested using the mediated regression approach recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986). In this approach, the three separate regression equations are estimated: First, the mediator is regressed on the independent variable; second, the dependent variable is regressed on the independent variable; and third, the dependent variable is simultaneously regressed on the independent variable and the mediator. According to Baron and Kenny, mediation is indicated if the following conditions are met: The independent variable must affect the mediator in the first equation; the independent variable must affect the dependent variable in the second equation; the mediator must affect the dependent variable in the third equation; and, finally, the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable must be less in the third equation than in the second equation. Full mediation is supported if the independent variable has no significant effect when the mediator is controlled. Partial mediation is indicated when the independent variable's effect is reduced in magnitude but is still significant when the mediator is controlled.

The results of the three regression equations to test the mediational hypothesis are presented in Table 2.

In the first equation, the mediator organizational commitment was regressed on the independent variable psychological ownership and produced significant results. In the second equation, the dependent variable extrarole

behavior was regressed on the independent variable psychological ownership and again yielded significant results. Finally, extrarole behavior was simultaneously regressed on psychological ownership and organizational commitment. In this third equation organizational commitment stayed significant, whereas psychological ownership was not significant. Thus the results indicate a fully mediated relationship and support Hypothesis 4, which proposed that organizational commitment would mediate the relationship of psychological ownership and extrarole behavior.

Hypothesis 5 was tested with the Hotelling-Williams test of the difference between dependent correlations. The correlation between organizational commitment and extrarole behavior was significant ($r = .3207, p < .001$) whereas the correlation between organizational commitment and in-role behavior was not significant ($r = .0522, p = .147$). The Hotelling-Williams test yielded a value of $t = 6.346, p < .05$. Therefore the null hypothesis of a nonsignificant difference between the two correlations was rejected and Hypothesis 5 was fully supported.

Finally, related to Hypotheses 3 and 5, we found a difference in the response patterns for extrarole behavior and in-role behavior. As expected, residents reported relatively high levels of in-role behavior (mean of 6.26 on a 7-point scale) and fairly low variance (standard deviation of .77). The response statistics for in-role behavior were corroborated with data on financial fines—only 5% of the residents had a serious fine history for not meeting their in-role behavior requirements during the past year. In contrast to in-role behavior, the mean for extrarole behavior was lower (mean of 3.41 on a 7-point scale) and the variance was greater (standard deviation of 1.08). In sum, in-role behavior, compared to extrarole behavior, had a weaker relationship with psychological ownership and organizational commitment because there is less discretion in the performance of in-role behavior and thus less potential variance in in-role behavior to be explained by another variable.

DISCUSSION

Overall, the empirical results of this study are consistent with our theoretical argument that psychological ownership makes a difference in the behavior of organizational members, and the data analysis provides strong support for the relationships proposed in our hypotheses. Psychological ownership was positively related to extrarole behavior. Thus results demonstrate that those with higher levels of psychological ownership were more likely to engage in extrarole behavior that benefits the organization.

Results also show that the relationship between psychological ownership and extrarole behavior was stronger than the relationship between psychological ownership and in-role behavior. Furthermore, there was a lower mean and greater variance for extrarole behavior than for in-role behavior. These results support our argument that in-role behavior is constrained by organizational factors (e.g., rules, procedures, fines) and is thus less likely to vary as a function of individual psychological states (when compared to extrarole behavior). These results are also compatible with Organ's (1988) point that when responding to feelings of inequity, organizational members are more likely to reduce their discretionary contributions and may not make a significant change in their expected role behavior. This is because the consequences of a drop in the performance of required behavior will often result in unpleasant disciplinary action. In contrast, a reduction in the performance of discretionary behavior is less likely to lead to such negative consequences.

Another important finding of this study is the greater strength of the relationship between psychological ownership and extrarole behavior compared to the strength of the relationship between satisfaction and extrarole behavior. This suggests the need for additional research. Although satisfaction and psychological ownership had a moderately strong, positive relationship ($r = .45, p < .001$), psychological ownership and satisfaction were differentially related to extrarole behavior. This indicates important substantive differences between the constructs of psychological ownership and satisfaction, especially in relation to discretionary behavior. The difference is consistent with the theoretical position that possession and the resulting sense of responsibility are core characteristics of psychological ownership that differentiate it from other constructs that concern the relationship between organizations and their members.

Results also support our hypothesis that organizational commitment would mediate the effects of psychological ownership on extrarole behavior. This relationship was fully mediated and provides strong support for the Pierce et al. (1991) model of psychological ownership. Thus this mediated relationship demonstrates both behavioral (extrarole behavior) and social-psychological (organizational commitment) consequences for psychological ownership.

Finally, data analysis indicates that extrarole behavior is significantly different from in-role behavior. This is based on the differential strength of the correlation between organizational commitment and extrarole behavior ($r = .32, p < .001$) versus organizational commitment and in-role behavior (r

$= .05, n.s.$). Thus, although some scholars have questioned whether in-role behavior can be differentiated from extrarole behavior (e.g., Graham, 1991), results of this study provide strong empirical evidence that organizational members differentiate the two constructs.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study have several important implications for managers and practitioners. First, our study supports and provides insight into the popular belief, as expressed by the quote of Brown (1989) at the beginning of the article, that psychological ownership makes a difference. Empirically, we found psychological ownership significantly related to satisfaction, commitment and extrarole behavior. In addition, prior research has demonstrated a relationship between extrarole behavior and performance (George, 1991; Van Dyne, 1994). Thus, it is possible to speculate that psychological ownership makes a difference because psychological ownership leads to organizational commitment; committed workers engage in extrarole behavior; and extrarole behavior contributes to higher performance.

Second, the data from our study indicate that psychological ownership is a more potent antecedent of extrarole behavior than is satisfaction. Thus, even though prior research (e.g., Bateman & Organ, 1983; Smith et al., 1983) has demonstrated the effect of satisfaction on extrarole behavior, our work suggests that managers should also consider psychological ownership as an important antecedent of extrarole behavior. In fact, the differential strengths of the relationship between psychological ownership and extrarole behavior compared to satisfaction and extrarole behavior suggest that managers might benefit by paying more attention to creating a sense of psychological ownership than trying to increase employee satisfaction. To implement this recommendation, Pierce et al. (1991) should be consulted. In their article, they suggest that providing employees with influence over and information about a target could help develop a sense of psychological ownership for the target.

Third, because our data was collected from members of nonprofit organizations, our empirical results may especially be of value to managers in the growing nonprofit sector.² Nonprofit organizations often depend on unpaid volunteers. By definition, most volunteer behavior is discretionary, so feeling a sense of psychological ownership of a nonprofit organization may be an especially important influence on volunteer contributions of time and energy.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As with all studies, this study has limitations. First, the data for the in-role and extrarole behaviors are self-report and consequently may be subject to self-serving bias. On the other hand, all participants were equally subject to any upward biasing of their responses so this concern should not have influenced any of the relationships reported in the analysis. In addition, our procedures for maintaining confidentiality were stressed to all respondents so that they should have had no concern that the cooperative management would become aware of their individual responses. Finally, the nature of the setting (respondents were residents and not employees) may have minimized self-presentation pressures as residents are not subject to the performance reviews that apply to organizational members who have employee status.

A second limitation concerns common source bias. All data were collected from one source—from resident respondents. Although the nature of most of our constructs (specifically psychological ownership, satisfaction, and commitment) necessitates self-report data, future research should explore the magnitude of this potential common source bias by using structural equation modeling to control for common source. Finally, the correlation and regression analysis of cross-sectional data qualifies any causal inferences. Future research could examine these same relationships in a more controlled setting such as an experimental laboratory or with longitudinal data to assess causality.

FUTURE RESEARCH

There are many rich possibilities for future research on the antecedents of, nature of, and consequences of psychological ownership. First, the positive consequences demonstrated in this research suggest the benefits of future research that examines the antecedents of psychological ownership. As discussed in the previous subsection, organizations that value organizational commitment and extrarole behavior may want to increase the incidence of these behaviors by increasing psychological ownership. Research on the antecedents of psychological ownership would inform practitioners in this area.

Second, although data for this study were collected from the nonprofit sector, future research should also be conducted in the for-profit and government sectors. These studies could compare the levels and consequences of psychological ownership in various sectors of the economy.

Third, we have discussed the positive consequences of psychological ownership. Dirks, Cummings, & Pierce (1995), however, have recently

proposed that there may be a "dark side" to psychological ownership. In particular, some individuals with high levels of psychological ownership may resist change and innovation related to the target of their psychological ownership.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results of this study provide strong support for the positive consequences of psychological ownership as modeled by Pierce et al. (1991) and by Pierce et al. (1992, 1994). Psychological ownership does make a difference; these differences are reflected in member social-psychological states (organizational commitment and satisfaction) and in member behavior (extrarole behavior).

APPENDIX

In-Role Behavior Items (adapted from Williams & Anderson, 1991).

- I adequately complete my responsibilities as a resident of the cooperative.
- I fulfill responsibilities specified by the cooperative.
- I perform tasks that are expected of me by the cooperative.
- I meet performance expectations as a resident of the cooperative.
- I neglect some expectations that I should perform here at the cooperative (R).
- I fail to perform essential duties here at the cooperative (R).

Extrarole Behavior Items (adapted from Organ & Konovsky, 1989 and Van Dyne, Graham, & Dienesch, 1994).

- I volunteer for things that are not required.
- I orient new people when they move here.
- I attend functions that are not required but that help the cooperative.
- I assist others with work for the benefit of the cooperative.
- I get involved in the cooperative.
- I help others learn about the cooperative.
- I help others with their responsibilities here at the cooperative.
- I make innovative suggestions to improve the cooperative.
- I make suggestions to others about things that might improve the cooperative.
- I develop and make recommendations concerning issues at the cooperative.
- I speak up and encourage others to get involved in the cooperative.
- I encourage others to speak up at meetings.

I keep myself well informed about issues where my opinion might be useful to the cooperative.
 I get involved in issues that affect our quality of life here.
 I express my opinions about the cooperative honestly even when others in the group think differently.
 When everyone else agrees on an issue, I keep any doubt I might have to myself (R).
 I speak up with my ideas for new projects or improved operations.

NOTES

1. As a resident of the housing cooperative, each resident had specific assigned responsibilities such as the cleaning of public common areas in one's building, removal of snow (not a minor task in the upper midwest), and so on. Residents who did not complete such responsibilities were subject to financial fines.
2. Weisbrod (1988) attests to the growing importance of this sector when he reports that for 1985, there were 887,000 nonprofit organizations, with \$31.4 billion in total revenue and billions of hours of unpaid donated labor.

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Putting the Work Back Into Work/Family

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This article locates the source of the work/family conflict in our shared underlying assumptions about how work must be done if one is to succeed. Based on a 6-month field study of engineers in a Fortune 100 company, three barriers to the successful implementation of work/family policies and programs were identified. Examining the source of these barriers reveals an assumption that individuals must be present at work to succeed. Giddens' theory of structuration is applied to explain why this assumption perpetuates. The article further indicates that to alter this assumption will require rethinking the organization's reward system and the recurrence of impromptu interactions that result. At the end, the article suggests that surfacing this and other underlying assumptions about work has potential benefits for organizations, as well as individuals.

As we enter the postindustrial era, employees face ever increasing demands by the organization for energy, commitment, and time (Bailyn, 1993; Schwartz, 1992). Employees are also more likely than ever before to be in dual-career relationships and someone must take care of the home and family (Hertz, 1986; Hochschild, 1989). As a result of these conflicting demands on employees' time, the work/family conflict has become prevalent in our society (Googins, 1991; Kanter, 1977; Swiss & Walker, 1993). It affects issues of productivity, gender equity, and the psychological contract between workers and their employers (Bailyn, 1993; Schwartz, 1992).

Typically when individuals, whether academics, consultants, or human resource professionals, speak of resolving the work/family crisis, they focus on how to help employees, usually women, cope with the demands of balancing work and family (Ferber & O'Farrell, 1991; Kanter, 1977; Levitan & Conway, 1990; Schwartz, 1992). They work to create policies that enable

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