

Does Cultivating a Giving Culture Make People More Willing to Share Counter-Normative Ideas?

Publicized in October 2001, the Enron Scandal drew the world's attention to the company's rampant fraud. Sherron Watkins, then vice-president of the Houston-based energy trading and utility company, was publicly praised and recognized for taking the courageous step of reporting Enron's executives who employed unethical accounting practices that inflated the revenues of the seventh-largest corporation in the United States. The act of openly voicing her counter-normative view on Enron's then work ethics and expose the fraud resulted in her termination and tarnished her reputation. Such incidents, wherein individuals chose to share creative and counter-normative opinions that went against the organizational norm and attract ill-repute and criticism, are not limited to Watkins.

Other examples can be seen. Sergeant Joseph M. Darby exposed the Abu Garib torture and prisoner abuse in 2006. In 2009, a former sales representative for Pfizer, a large pharmaceutical manufacturer, blew the whistle on the company's widespread illegal marketing of its prescription painkiller Brexta¹ Famously in 2013, Edward Snowden, leaked vast amounts of classified information on government spying, national security and individual privacy while working for the National Security Agency.² As these cases illustrate, an employee observing wrongdoing within an organization faces an ethical decision of whether or not to blow the whistle and call out the immoral consensual practice. After the occurrence of a triggering event, an employee could voice out the wrongdoing by "blowing the whistle" or remaining silent out of loyalty or neglect. If the employee chooses to go against the normative consensus held, members of the organization react to and frequently retaliate against the employee.³ For this paper, considering the employee's actions are altruistic instead of revengeful, if whistleblowing puts them in this type of predicament, why then does anyone choose to be a whistleblower?

The umbrella term of constructive deviance or “going against the norm entails” several different and specific aspects such as creative performance, going against authorities, noncompliance, whistleblowing, counter-normative ideas and prosocial rule breaking. It is defined as “intentional behaviors that depart from the norms of a referent group in honorable ways.”⁴ Unlike workplace deviance, which focuses on dysfunctional behavior (antisocial behavior, workplace aggression, stealing, incivility, etc.), constructive deviants are employees who break rules and norms with the intent to benefit the organization, its stakeholders, or society-at-large. For example, an employee may intentionally depart from organizational policies or procedures to solve a problem. Similarly, a manager will violate company’s procedures in order to solve a problem.⁵

When organizational members break free from constraints of norms to conduct honorable behaviors, they most often face repercussions in terms of retaliation from the employer (e.g., poor performance ratings, no provision of incentives and bonuses), and resentment from coworkers. What factors, then, in the organizational environment motivate a worker to go against an implicitly inferred consensual practice? In particular, this paper will investigate under what circumstances an individual chooses or does not choose to express his or her counter-normative ideas. Mainly, under what conditions do people decide to share their creative ideas that help their organization become more productive when such thoughts go against the normative practice of their organization. To answer this question, this paper will begin by examining existing literature, then describing the hypothesis and methodology of the present study. This will be followed by data analysis, discussion of the results and limitations.

Stimulators of organizational success

An individual's creative behaviors are the core of any high-performance organization, thereby giving a competitive advantage to the organization. The results from empirical research carried out at a major Dutch financial services firm⁶ suggests that employees' innovative work behavior is positively associated with workplace performance.⁷ By sharing diverse thoughts, employees contribute to widening the pool of creative ideas, which encourages innovation, and thereby reducing costs and optimizing processes. Without sharing out-of-the-box, creative and counter-normative ideas, an organization's growth will waver and eventually cease. Conforming to opinions of others or authorities hinders effective decision-making. With the constant change in the field of science, technology, economics, and mathematics, employees need to update their thought processes, collaboratively weigh the pros and cons of a decision and finally adapt the company's policy to the changing environment.

As shown above, there are many examples of whistleblowers as they have been notably recognized for going against the established norm.⁸ Even though their opinions were considered unpleasant by in-group members and ultimately led to the downfall of the organization, without them, the organizations could have incurred even greater losses. Had there been other in-group members who shared their dissatisfaction or righteous outrage without the fear of being rejected, unethical practices are assumed not to have had occurred. If, from the very start, contradictory ideas are shared, then an organization can effectively, efficiently and ethically change current processes, introduce new techniques, and make productive decisions for the benefit of the organization and immediate society as a whole.

What makes people more likely to share ideas that are not consistent with the majority's beliefs? Does an unethical event have to occur for one to display such constructive deviant behaviors? In other words, people possess various opinions about many issues in their minds.

One could argue that such opinions/knowledge could be coded into documents or in a knowledge management system; however, much of such opinions and knowledge is implicit and cannot be codified.⁹ Nevertheless, the implicit opinions/knowledge can be accessed through the active participation of people. Sharing of such implicit opinions/knowledge cannot be forced but can be encouraged and facilitated, no matter what the event. In other words, it is not the unethical nature of a situation, but any motivational factors that are crucial for helping people share implicit opinions/knowledge.¹⁰

Motivational Factors Associated with “Going Against the Norm”

Individuals “going against the norm” can play a rudimentary role in promoting organizational change and serve as future change agents.¹¹ They are also known to have a higher risk-taking propensity,¹² and taking risks is in fact a requirement for creativity. Philp Merrifield and fellow authors’ explanatory study was a part of early scientific investigation of risk-taking in the context of creativity.¹³ They established a significant correlation between participants’ associational fluency, a measure of creativity, and their score on adventure, a measure of risk-taking. Sternberg further illustrates that an important factor for personal success stems from sensible risk-taking which paves the path to creative intelligence, the ability to generate new and interesting ideas,¹⁴ He emphasized that the risk of being “different,”—going against the norm—is important in creativity. The results from a quasi-experimental research consisting of sixty-four participants from United Kingdom demonstrated a strong link between social risk-taking, the willingness to challenge norms, and creativity. Another similar study of a much larger and diverse population, 417 participants in the United States, corroborated the earlier results.¹⁵ Individuals present creative ideas and products to social groups for evaluation, appreciation or criticism. This activity involves uncertainty and high social risk because it entails the possibility

of the creative idea or product being rejected by some, or all individuals of the same social group. Thus, creative acts require individuals who are willing to take risks.

Friedman specifically explains how a company's marketing department can attract consumers, and help in the success of an organization, by challenging cultural norms.¹⁶ In November 2016, Patagonia vowed to donate 100 percent share of its Black Friday sale to grassroots environmental groups that protect indispensable natural resources such as air, soil, and water. By countering traditional norms and adopting a more human approach, the company earned ten million dollars in sales, instead of their expected earning amount of two million dollars. Their value-driven campaign turned out to be a huge success. Along with many loyal customers, the initiative attracted thousands who had never purchased anything from Patagonia before, who then continued purchasing the brand's products.¹⁷ Rather than hearing marketing speak, "best deals," "once in a lifetime" savings or "buy this," the company's refreshing decision to do something different increased its brand's credibility.

In 2017, Ariel, one of Procter & Gamble's India-based detergent brands launched a new advertisement campaign, "Share the Load." In India, patriarchal norms have marked women as inferior to men. While men are expected to earn, women are expected to run the house. This powerful advertisement questioned, "Why is laundry only a mother's job?," and not only sparked the conversation about men and women's roles at home, but also drove a 60 percent increase in sales and 132 percent increase in brand awareness for Ariel.¹⁸ Additionally, other notable companies who tapped into their employees' creative mindset include Dollar Shave Club who highlighted cost-effectiveness, ease and convenience while buying one dollar razors; Airbnb, wherein homeowners can get touristy feelings in their own locality/city/town by sharing their house with tourists; Netflix, who were quick to recognize that millennials would rather pay for

an on-demand service than a product; and Casper, who eliminated middlemen from their mattress' sales chain and made buying more efficient. At the end of the day customers care more about the unique and memorable experiences that define their purchases, rather than the tangible product itself. Today, with a dynamic economy, and changing consumer tastes and preferences, traditional consumerism does not resonate in the market. Hence, employees need to break norms and diversify ideas to innovatively contribute to organizational success.

An emergent model of constructive deviance, wherein conditions under which people generate and share counter-normative ideas, sheds light on three main factors: intrinsic motivation, felt obligation and psychological empowerment.¹⁹ Intrinsic motivation refers to a drive to participate in a specific task because it is inherently enjoyable.²⁰ Whereas, felt obligation is influenced by one's attachment to the group. It is based on the social exchange theory, which suggests the budding of a mutual commitment between two or more parties through a series of reciprocal exchanges.²¹ In a study which analyzed archival survey data from individuals who observed wrongdoing in any of twenty-two organizations, observers who were more favorably inclined to their jobs (attachment with team members, higher number of work years, etc.) were more likely to engage in whistleblowing behaviors.²² Psychological empowerment encompasses a myriad of variables such as self-worth, risk-propensity, competence, and self-determination. It fortifies and strengthens an individual in some way, allowing him or her to engage in constructive deviance. Empowerment "enables employees to participate in decision-making, helping them to break out of stagnant mindsets to take a risk and try something new."²³ The results of mixed-methods research conducted in Australia using qualitative and quantitative methods to study several stores where positive deviance is most likely to occur revealed that empowering leadership style was positively correlated to constructively deviant behaviors.

Empowered employees will efficiently strive to complete their job and will deviate from rules or norms if that paves the path to complete their work in the best possible way.²⁴

Reciprocity Ring

Drawing from the last two factors of felt obligation and psychological empowerment, Grant operationally defines a giver culture in terms of the Reciprocity Ring, which was developed by Baker and Baker at Humax Corporation, a part of the Human Resources consulting services industry.²⁵ In this exercise, each participant makes a personal and/or professional request to their fellow members. The teammates are then tasked with pooling their resources, expertise and connections to fulfil each request. The exercise uses the power of a group's giving capacity to advance or outright bestow the personal and/or professional requests from each of its members.

The Reciprocity Ring can be an extremely influential experience. When people give and attribute it to an external reason, such as promotion, they do not start to think of themselves as givers. Whereas, when primed by the Reciprocity Ring, people repeatedly make the personal choice to give to others and start to internalize giving as part of their identities. For some individuals this happens through an active process of cognitive dissonance, wherein they experience inconsistency between their thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors. Once they make the voluntary decision to give, they cannot change their behavior and hence, the easiest way to stay consistent and avoid hypocrisy is to be a giver. While, for other people, their internalization process of learning from observing their own behaviors is best paraphrased by E.M. Forster, "How do I know who I am until I see what I do?"²⁶

When trying to influence an individual, it is often assumed to start by changing their attitudes, hoping that their behaviors follow similar changes. For instance, if people are asked to

sign a statement that they will act like givers, they will start believing that giving is important and hence, incorporate giving behaviors. However, psychological research shows a backward reasoning. Influence is more powerful in the opposite direction; that is, when people's behaviors are changed, their attitudes follow.²⁷ To turn takers into givers and energize givers, it is crucial to convince them to start/increase giving. Over time, a giving culture can have a powerful effect in molding attitudes. Using the pay-it-forward principle, the Reciprocity Ring energizes a group by creating strong relationships that help individuals and organizations. When knowledge is shared, cost and time savings are achieved. Research shows that by incorporating this exercise, thirty people in an engineering and architectural consulting firm estimated savings exceeding \$250,000 and fifty days. Another pharmaceutical firm estimated savings of more than \$90,000 and sixty-seven days.²⁸

In giver cultures, employees function as high-performing units, wherein they help others, share knowledge, offer mentoring and make connections without expecting anything in return. A willingness to support others achieve their goals lies at the heart of efficient collaboration, innovation, quality improvement, and service prowess. Many companies do not reach the level of productive generosity for two main reasons: a hesitancy to give without expecting anything in return and a fear of asking help. People do not want to look incompetent or embarrass themselves by being vulnerable, failing a risk-based decision and asking for help. Trust—the willingness of a party to be susceptible to the actions of another party—is manifested in the degree of vulnerability to another.²⁹ There are many benefits of when organizational members trust each other, including higher organizational commitment, more citizenship behaviors and enhanced job performance.³⁰ Trust also promotes cooperation and productive generosity. When it is relatively easy to seek and offer help, givers become more energized and takers become

more generous, making problems more tractable and thereby contributing to the group's success and stimulating performance of the organization.³¹ The "pay-it-forward" principle in the Reciprocity Ring cements trust and vulnerability. Group members become more willing to share out-of-the-box, counter-normative and implicit ideas which they would have otherwise held back due to the fear of judgment or criticism.

In a meta-analytic study of 249 articles that focused on the relationship between a trust relevant variable and at least one other risk-taking related variable revealed a moderately strong relationship between trust and risk-taking.³² The distinction between trust and risk-taking highlighted the difference between the willingness to be vulnerable and the act of genuinely becoming vulnerable.³³ Therefore, risk-taking stands as the most proximal behavioral consequence or expression of trust. In other words, employees who are integrated into a trust-based culture are more likely to express their counter-normative views. Personal interactions, which serve to build trust, lead to more willingness to be vulnerable and indulge in risks.³⁴

Workplace interactions foster implied, but not prespecified, obligations.³⁵ In a group of two or more individuals, each person's behavior is reinforced by the other(s) and thereby creates an obligation for performance.³⁶ Using this rationale, social exchange theory can explain the behavior and performance of employees within an organization. Positive social exchange relationships embedded in trust motivate team members to behave in ways that reward and reinforce those positive relationships.³⁷ It promotes knowledge sharing. This reciprocity principle, which allows individuals to be more trusting of and committed to one another, will motivate employees to perform tasks in new, better and innovative ways that go beyond role prescriptions. An experimental study conducted at the University of Cologne, Germany, showed that the social consequences of trust are likely to be instrumental to creativity in public.

Participants who were told that their ideas would be made public were likely to generate more creative and original ideas than those participants in the private condition.³⁸ This research also falls in line with Scott and Bruce³⁹ and Yuan and Woodman,⁴⁰ among others, who propose that trust conditions aim at improving workplace performance.

With the right situational motivation, why then does society underestimate the number of people who are willing to give? This is because people try to predict others' reactions and focus on the costs of saying yes and overlook the costs of saying no. It is uncomfortable, guilt-provoking, and embarrassing to turn down a request for help or not be true to oneself and openly share ideas that might go against the norm. Another important reason, deeply rooted in the American culture, is that people believe there are not many givers around them. Workplaces and schools are often portrayed as zero-sum environments, with forced rankings and mandated grading curves that pit group members against one-another in win-lose contests. In such settings, it is natural to assume that counterparts will lean in the taker direction, so people hold back on giving. They fear that they will socially isolate themselves if they engage in giving behaviors, hence, disguise behind purely self-interested motives.⁴¹ However, with giving being the foundation of an organization and correct environmental stimulators of trust, vulnerability and risk-taking, people can be made to be more giving and more willing to share counter-normative ideas, resulting in long-term organizational success.

Present Study

Based on the literature reviewed above, it is assumed that behavior is a function of situation where human beings respond as situations require them to respond. In other words, despite their biological diversities, if capable of learning, they modify their behavior to meet the challenges of the situations. Therefore, when a giving culture is fostered, trust is cultivated,

and all group members, regardless of their existing level of giving or taking tendency, become more willing to openly share their creative ideas and challenge norms.

Similarly, if a giving culture exists in an organization, employees who score low on the giver trait measure will modify their behavior to fit the situation and be an augmented giver. On the other hand, employees who already score high on the giver trait attribute, will be energized and stimulated to perform even better, thereby surpassing their current giver score. However, as givers are already motivated to give more and freely express their ideas, the increase in percentage of counter-normative ideas shared after the implementation of a giving culture will be lower for givers than takers. So, although the percentage increase in number of counter-normative ideas shared before and after the manipulation of a giving culture is higher for takers, the absolute number of counter-normative ideas shared should be fairly equal for both givers and takers. Thus, the following hypothesis is developed: Regardless of an individual's existing giver/taker tendency, those who undergo the Reciprocity Ring are more likely to share counter-normative ideas as compared to those who do not undergo this exercise.

Participants

For this study, a total of fifty participants and two confederates were recruited from Soka University of America in California, U.S.A. As Soka University's student population has a higher female to male ratio, of the total participants, thirty-three were female (64.7 percent), eleven were male (21.6 percent) and six classified themselves as "others" (11.8 percent). The average age of females was 22.03 years, males was 21.45 years and "others" was 20.33 years. As a majority of students concentrate in Social and Behavioral Sciences at Soka University, 42.86 percent of the participants were concentrating/intended to concentrate in Social and Behavioral Sciences, 22.22 percent in International Studies, 17.46

percent in Environmental Studies, and 17.46 percent in Humanities. While the student participants were randomly recruited, the student confederates—one male and one female to avoid gender biases, were selected by the experimenter. The confederates were kept blind and debriefed after all experiments were completed.

An email via outlook was sent to the students' university email addresses asking for their willingness to participate in this research. No distinctions between participant's race, ethnicity, caste, or creed were made. Biographical data showed that 51.4 percent were Asian, 27 percent White, 4 percent Black or African American, 2.7 percent American Indian, 2.7 percent Pacific Islander and 12.2 percent others. Furthermore, 19.18 percent of the participants identified themselves as Latino, 8.22 percent as Hispanic, 1.37 percent as Spanish and 71.23 percent as "None of These." The two moderators were compensated with an Amazon gift card of \$70 each and three Amazon raffle cards worth \$25 were randomly distributed among the participants.

Design

A 2x2 between-participants factorial design was used. Participants were first asked to complete the Give & Take measure⁴² which indicated their giver and taker personality scores. A single score index was created by subtracting a participant's taker score from their giver score. This was used to create a median split for low versus high givers. They were then randomly assigned to either the experimental or control group. An online tool⁴³ was used to split fifty numbers between the two groups equally. In order of sign-ups, participants were allotted a number from 1-50 and underwent either the experimental or control condition. Each group exercise took place for approximately twenty minutes and consisted of one participant (from the experimental or control group), two confederates and the experimenter. This signifies that the confederates went through a total of fifty group experiments (both control and experimental

groups). Further, the dependent variable, willingness to share counter-normative ideas, was measured by the number of favorable views typed versus verbally shared about the 2020 United States' Presidential candidate Donald Trump. It was hypothesized that regardless of a participant's measured giver or taker score, individuals in the experimental condition would share more favorable views typed versus spoken about Donald Trump compared to those in the control condition.

Procedure

The experiment took place in one of the academic buildings at Soka University of America during late January to early March, 2020. First the moderators were recruited. Then, during the fourth week of January, all students were sent an email asking their willingness to participate in this study. However, a cover story indicating that the research would investigate the relationship between people's personality and political views was used. The emailed Qualtrics survey included the informed consent form, questions on basic biographical information, and a personality questionnaire assessing their giver and taker score. The Give & Take measure, first independent variable, is a self-report measure consisting of fifteen workplace scenarios wherein the respondent is asked to judge the behavior of someone else in a hypothetical scenario⁴⁴ (see Appendix). In the actual test, each scenario has three possible answers corresponding to three social interaction styles. However, for this experiment, the matcher response was removed and participants had to choose from only two options (giver or taker). Hence, the first measured independent variable categorized participants as high or low on the giver index.

The students were then asked to fill a google document with an alias for their preferred time slot to perform the in-person group activity. As the total student population

at Soka University of America is approximately 450 students, aliases were used so participants would not interact with others and hence, compromise the internal validity of the experiment. Once the students completed the survey and consented to participate, random assignment was used to equally split fifty participants into the experimental and control groups.

On the day of the group experiment, participants were sent an email reminder. During the twenty-minute group activity, the experimental group participants were asked to make a personal request to their fellow group members. The teammates (moderators) were then tasked with pooling their collective expertise and resources to fulfill the request. For this ambiguous situation, the moderators followed no script. Further, the moderators were solicited to make a personal request, which was predetermined, and the other moderator and participant were asked to come up with a solution. To prevent the participants from knowing that the experiment was rigged, moderators acted as participants and carried out every task that a participant was asked to fulfill. After a round of personal requests, the group members carried out a similar task in relation to professional/academical requests. This exercise of tapping into one another's networks is known as the Reciprocity Ring.⁴⁵ For this experiment, the Reciprocity Ring was used to manipulate the second independent variable.⁴⁶ It is used to encourage giving while maintaining a sense of free choice. That is, it was expected that the participant realizes how giving is more efficient than matching or taking. Here, they gain access to a wider network of support wherein everyone is willing to help others without expecting anything in return. While the practical application of the Reciprocity Ring and the change from an individual's taker to giver behavior has been recorded in groups of 12 to 500 members,⁴⁷ this experiment was a novel one consisting of groups of three members.

In the control group, instead of carrying out the Reciprocity Ring, group members were asked to name their favorite movie and then share the contents of their last meal. After the manipulation of the culture of giving, which was stronger in the experimental group, the actual participant was asked to pick a chit which indicated a current presidential candidate's name—Donald Trump or Bernie Sanders. However, unbeknown to the participant, all chits said “Donald Trump.” The group was then given five minutes to type as many favorable views about Donald Trump in another Qualtrics survey. The link was sent through the email reminder and participants were asked to not click on it before the experiment. Meanwhile, the moderators pretended to type as they already had their preplanned list of favorable views. To maintain confidentiality, the actual participant's Qualtrics survey was only accessible to the experimenter and her Capstone mentor. For the next four minutes, if they felt comfortable sharing, group members were asked to briefly discuss what they wrote. The two moderators shared their consistent views across all fifty conditions. Unannounced to the participant, the experimenter took notes on all the ideas spoken by the actual participant. This was then be used to compare the percentage of ideas written versus spoken.⁴⁸ If the participant was not comfortable sharing, the experimenter noted, “No ideas shared.”

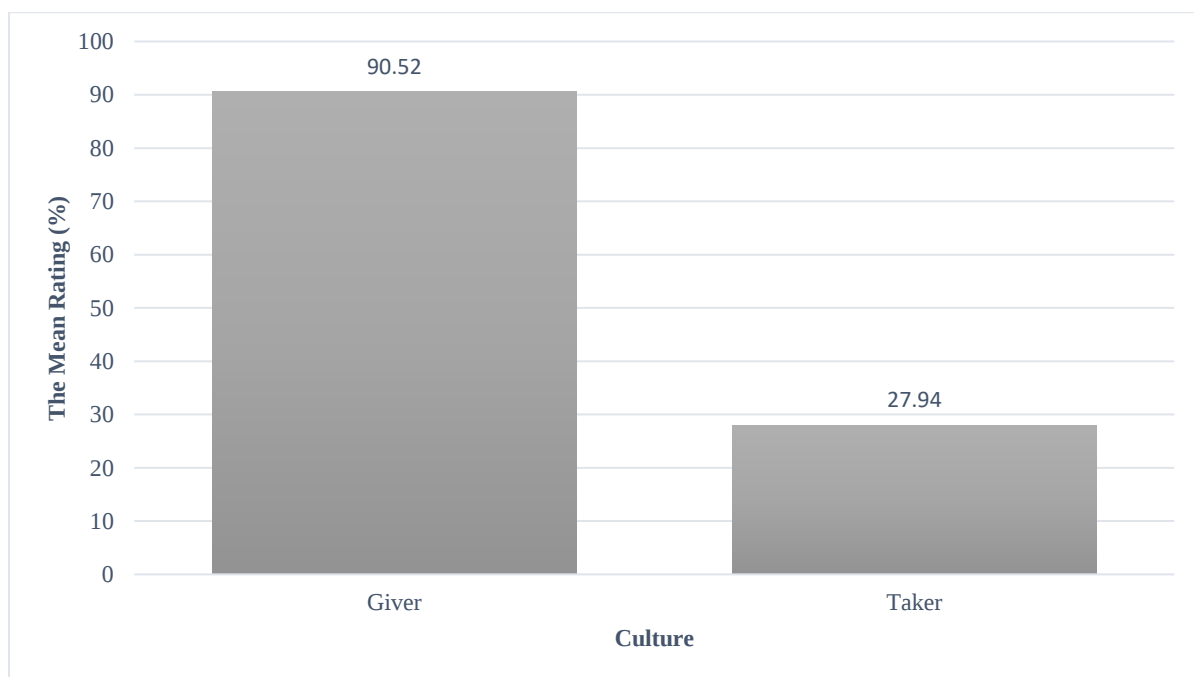
As Soka University of America is considered to be a liberal college,⁴⁹ students holding favorable views about Donald Trump are looked down upon or publicly criticized. This rebuke is expressed in-person or via the university's Facebook page, which includes a large number of current students and alumni. However, due to the manipulation of giver culture, it was hypothesized that participants who underwent the Reciprocity Ring (experimental group condition) were likely to have a higher percentage of favorable ideas written versus spoken about

Donald Trump accompanied by a higher score on the Giver attribute of the Give & Take measure.

Results

To test hypotheses 1, a 2 (giver index) x 2 (culture of giving) ANOVA was performed on the willingness to share counter-normative ideas. The analysis showed that there was a significant main effect of the culture of giving manipulated by the Reciprocity Ring on the participant's willingness to share counter-normative ideas $F(1, 49) = 90.23, p < .05$. Specifically, it indicated that participants who were assigned to the giving culture condition and underwent the Reciprocity Ring were significantly more likely to share a higher percentage of counter-normative ideas ($M = 90.52$ percent, $SD = 21.95$) than those who did not undergo the Reciprocity Ring ($M = 27.94$ percent, $SD = 24.74$) regardless of their existing giver trait.

Figure 1. Mean perceived willingness to share counter-normative ideas as a function of giver or taker culture



Discussion

The current study was conducted to make individuals more willing to share counter-normative ideas. It was hypothesized that a culture of giving, manipulated by Adam Grant's Reciprocity Ring,⁵⁰ would nurture trust among group members, making them more vulnerable and willing to share creative, counter-normative and implicit ideas. The results of the present study were consistent with this general prediction.

In the experimental condition, 56 percent of participants were givers and 44 percent were takers as recorded by their Give & Take self-report score. On the other hand, in the control condition, 84 percent were givers and 16 percent were takers. This unequal distribution of givers and takers between the two groups could be a result of simple randomization, wherein each participant had a 50-50 chance of being assigned to either the experimental or control group. As randomization results could be problematic in relatively small sample size research, recruiting only fifty participants in total for this experiment led to a greater number of givers in the control group than takers. Further, results showed that irrespective of their pre-existing giver/taker trait as measured by the Give & Take scale, participants in the experimental condition ended up sharing more counter-normative ideas (i.e., the number of positive qualities of Donald Trump) than those in the control condition.

Further, results revealed that takers changed their attitudes and indulged in nearly 32 percent more creative knowledge-sharing with group members when compared to their original knowledge-sharing as measured by the Give & Take scale. While, as a result of the manipulation of the Reciprocity Ring, givers became more energized and shared 30 percent more creative ideas than before. This novel finding— =increase by approximately the same percentage in willingness to share creative ideas by both takers and givers, could be the result of situationism.

Explaining the powerful effect of situation over personality, the manipulation of the environment equally affected each person irrespective of their giver or taker trait.

In fact, five participants in the experimental condition overshared their favorable views about Donald Trump. That is, they verbally shared more views as compared to the number of ideas they typed in the survey. While this could be due to recollecting more ideas later, it is assumed that high trust and vulnerability cultivated in the giver condition led participants to open up more and indulge in a high-risk situation. This is backed by McCarty et al.'s research⁵¹ on internet behavior, noting that teenagers who thought it was safe to reveal personal information and trust chat-site friends were more likely to take risks. Trust essentially involves remaining vulnerable to the actions of another individual, partly because of the discretion given to that individual within a domain of activity.⁵² We willingly increase our vulnerability to another as we become confident of the competence and goodwill of the other individual, although these factors are not often considered consciously. While vulnerability provides a link with risk, feelings of vulnerability are related with risk-perception.⁵³

Why is the Reciprocity Ring Effective in Fostering Trust and Risk-Taking Behaviors?

All individuals are endowed with the altruism gene that predisposes us to care for others. This genetic inclination or commitment to do right is usual among families. But what about a giving culture at work? Too often, “giving” implies financial donations in many organizations. The Reciprocity Ring evokes a giving culture that is similar to the one present in families. Here, trust and vulnerability facilitate openness to share diverse and risky ideas beneficial to the organization.⁵⁴

Trust is treated as a valuable commodity and has become the new currency, which lies at the heart of every single cohesive relationship. It has a soothing effect on exchange, both in

social and business environments. Cultivating trust sparks commitment among employees, who feel more connected to their colleagues and the organization. When someone trusts, they are in a vulnerable and uncertain position compared to a person who is the target of such trust. Based on trust, that is, on how the individual perceives gains and losses anticipated in a situation, the individual will be more or less likely to take risks (share counter-normative ideas). Previous literature has shown that the higher the trust an individual places on another person/entity, the fewer the perceived expected losses when taking a risk in that relationship.⁵⁵

In managing knowledge in an organization, trust is necessary to mobilize the tacit, and not easily copied knowledge, needed to stay competitive. It is also significant in managing cross-cutting issues and cross-functional teams in which alliances are short lived and uncertainty regarding others' motives and intentions is high. In today's rapidly changing environment, wherein socio-economic and technological changes outpace policy development and legislative processes, trust can substitute the regulatory and very costly legal contractual processes.⁵⁶ Trust leads to increased productivity, reduced absenteeism and turnover, and fosters a favorable environment to creativity and innovation.⁵⁷ Whereas lower levels of trust are related to increased stress in the organization, reduced productivity, lower level of commitment to the company and constraints to innovation.⁵⁸ In this case, communication is restricted because information is not openly shared and when it is, co-workers do not trust it. With no trust, there is no sense of belonging to a team and employees work toward their own benefit.⁵⁹ When company ideologies are governed with self-interest, there is no room for trust and creativity.

One area in which trust is of vital importance is creativity. By definition, creativity implies risk-taking and challenging norms. Hence, supporting the argument that compared to a taker culture, a giving culture will foster constructive deviance and individuals will be more open

to express their counter-normative ideas. This sense of collaboration creates a more engaged workforce, wherein every employees' purpose is aligned with the collective goal of the enterprise.

Bridging the gap between what is happening and what is possible is crucial for positive organizational change and success. While the traditional process for creating organizational change involves hiring experts or influential leaders, bringing a positive deviance mindset into the organization could serve as a more effective alternative strategy. Rather than believing that positive deviance is an inherent personality trait of courageous people, the Reciprocity Ring helps employees unleash their innovative uncommon practices. In the Reciprocity Ring, because everyone is making a request, there is little reason to be embarrassed. By making specific and explicit requests, participants provide clear directions about how to contribute effectively. This enables them to find better solutions to problems or improve the organization's current work methodology.

Relating this study with its impact to real-world organizations, creating a giver culture, where employees are motivated to display constructive deviance, promotes positive organizational change. Average financial benefits exceed \$50,000 in large organizations,⁶⁰ and employees become more willing to share creative ideas and help their colleagues. This practice forges group cohesiveness and high-quality connections.

Goldman Sachs used the positive deviance approach to radically improve the methods of the nationwide force of investment advertisers, while engineers at Hewlett-Packard used it to transform an intractable computer design problem into a competitive advantage. Moreover, at Genentech, two positive deviants outperformed the median results of the company's national

sales by a ratio of 20:1.⁶¹ When change agents work together, they focus on identifying and removing obstacles, not killing messengers.

Newton stated that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. In organizations, this reaction stems from avoidance, resistance and exceptionalism. But when existing employees can be primed into being change agents, hiring outside experts is unnecessary. Internally developed solutions are beneficial in the long-run as employees align with the common goal of advancing the organization. The trick is to introduce already existing counter normative ideas into the mainstream.

Limitations

While the Reciprocity Ring is usually used among groups ranging from 12 to 500 members, for this study, groups of three participants were formed. Larger groups increase diversity and are a closer approximate to the real population. They also give us more power, the probability of retaining the alternative hypothesis. With a large group size, the standard error would be lower, and it would be more likely to find an interaction effect between the giver index and culture of giving.

Another limitation is the sample of participants. As the experiment consists of students from Soka University of America, results are generalizable only to the population at this university. However, there are no ethical concerns in this procedure.

Nonetheless, to build a strong causal relationship between the giver culture and willingness to share counter-normative ideas, the sample size of total participants and group participants should be increased. To make the experiment generalizable and increase external validity, a representative population from off-campus should be recruited. However, time and budget restrictions are crucial to consider.

Directions for Future Research

A post-experiment survey will be helpful to compare those with conviction (Trump supporters) and those without on the basis of the Giver & Taker criteria. Future studies can focus on the relationship between trust, vulnerability and risk-taking, and the degree to which each of these variables affects the others. Researchers can also investigate the time frame within which a participant's behavior can be manipulated as a result of using the Reciprocity Ring. Specific research questions include: Will the induced giver culture be long-lasting or temporary? How often would a company have to conduct the Reciprocity Ring? Due to repetition and redundancy, would employees eventually become unresponsive to the Reciprocity Ring? Cultural differences are also crucial to consider.

Moreover, as liberal individuals tend to be more open minded to counter normative ideas, a similar study can be done in reverse: potentially a sample of students from a conservative university pulling out the name Bernie Sanders. Lastly, research can focus on alternative ways or activities to strengthen the manipulation of a giver culture.

Conclusion

The culture of giving fosters a culture of trust, collaboration and change as well as generates new sources of value creation, creativity and innovation. By tapping into the group's social capital, the Reciprocity Ring unleashes group members' generosity and helps them meet their actual needs, both personal and professional. This employee vulnerability creates an environment conducive to risk-taking. When employees feel valued and comfortable to take risks, they openly share diverse ideas and challenge outdated organizational norms. Employees use constructive deviance to propose novel ideas that facilitate organizational advancement and success. The findings from our experiment strongly support the idea that to help the organization

thrive and become more lucrative, rather than trying to identify and recruit only the givers as their employees, the management and administration should cultivate the culture of giving so that both takers and givers are energized to share counter-normative ideas.

Appendix

Give and Take Assessment

Please read the following hypothetical situations and pick the best option that are concurrent with your beliefs and actions.

1. You and a stranger will both receive some money. You have two choices about what you and the stranger will receive, and you'll never see or meet the stranger. Which option would you choose?
 - a. I get \$8, the stranger gets \$4 (T)
 - b. I get \$5, the stranger gets \$7 (G)
2. You're applying for a job as a manager, and a former boss writes you a glowing recommendation letter. What would you be most likely to do?
 - a. Offer to write a recommendation for one of my own employees, so I can pay it forward (G)
 - b. Go out of my way to make a good impression on my boss, so I can line up another strong recommendation for the future (T)
3. A new colleague joins your organization in a different department. When you meet her, she mentions that her husband is searching for a job and doesn't have many contacts in the area. She asks if you happen to know anyone at Kramerica Industries, a local firm, and you say yes. The next day, you remember that you have connections at three other local companies that do very similar work to Kramerica's. What would you do?
 - a. Put her husband in touch with all four companies (G)
 - b. Find out if there are ways that she or her husband can do me a favor, and then decide whether to connect her with only Kramerica or the other three as well (T)
4. You've signed a deal on new office space, and you're scheduled to move in three months. You receive a call from the leasing agent stating that the previous tenant moved out early, and the space is open now. You would be happy to move now: the new office space is nicer than your current space, and it only costs \$10 more per month. However, the leasing agent assumes that your preference is to wait, and you know the agent doesn't want to leave the property vacant for three months. What would you be most likely to say?
 - a. I really prefer to wait, but I'm willing to move now if you give me a significant discount (T)
 - b. I'd love to move now, so I'll be glad to accommodate (G)
5. You're working on a project with two colleagues, and there are three tasks that need to get done. As you discuss how to divide the tasks, it becomes clear that all three of you are extremely interested in two of the tasks, but view the third as quite boring. What would you do?

- a. Volunteer for the boring task without asking anything in return (G)
- b. Try to convince one of my colleagues to do the boring task (T)

6. It's 1pm, and you're heading to the airport at 2pm for a business trip out of the country. You receive three requests from people who are looking for your feedback on presentations, and you only have time to grant one. The first request is from your boss's boss, who is seeking your immediate input on a slide deck that he'll be presenting next week. The second request is from a coworker who gave you insightful comments on a major presentation last week. The coworker is a gifted speaker, and has asked for your assistance in fine-tuning some of the language on his slides for a presentation tomorrow. The third request is from a junior colleague, who is nervous about giving his first presentation at the company this afternoon and is hoping for your feedback. Who would you be most likely to help?

- a. My boss' boss (T)
- b. My junior colleague (G)

7. A colleague leaves your company and starts a software business that is doing quite well. In search of advice for expanding the business, he asks if you can introduce him to the CEO of a successful technology company, who happened to be your neighbor growing up. You haven't spoken to the CEO in five years, and you were hoping to reach out to him in a few months for advice on your own startup ideas. What would you do?

- a. Tell him I'll make the introduction (G)
- b. Tell him I don't feel comfortable making the introduction, since I'm no longer in touch with the CEO (T)

8. Unexpectedly, a former boss of yours writes you a positive recommendation on LinkedIn. What would be your first response?

- a. Add my former boss to my list of references (T)
- b. Write a recommendation for someone else (G)

9. You receive a call out of the blue from an NYU senior who's interested in your field, and you spend 20 minutes on the phone providing some career advice. At the end of the call, the student asks if you have any connections who might be able to help with preparation for job interviews at Google. You tell the student that you'll think about it and get back with an answer. After the call, you look through your LinkedIn connections and see that an acquaintance from college is now working at Google. Later that night at a family dinner, your cousin, who's in high school, tells you that NYU is her dream school and she's just starting to work on her application. You sit down to write an email to the NYU student. How would you respond?

- a. Ask the NYU student to help my cousin, but don't make the introduction to my Google contact — I've already given 20 minutes of my time (T)
- b. Make the introduction to my Google contact, but don't ask the NYU student for help — I know job search can be hectic and stressful (G)

10. You work in advertising, and you're leading the development of a commercial to encourage people to drink milk. An intern suggests the tag line, "Got milk?" You decide to use it, and spend the next eight months creating the commercial. You manage to get famous people to wear milk mustaches, and it's a huge hit. One day, the intern makes a comment

about not being creative enough to generate a line as creative as “Got milk?” and tells you that he has been accepted to medical school. A few months later, after the intern has left the firm and started medical school, you learn that the commercial will be receiving a major advertising award. You know the intern doesn’t remember generating the line, and you’re up for a major promotion. You need to list the authorship of the commercial for the awards ceremony. What would you do?

- a. List the intern as the first author and myself as the second author, since the intern was the one who generated memorable slogans (G)
- b. List myself as the sole author of the commercial, since I did the work and the intern won’t ever know or be affected by it (T)

11. In January, you offer a job to a very impressive candidate, with a start date of June. You ask the candidate to make a decision by March, with an early signing bonus of \$5,000. In February, the candidate calls you and asks for an extension until April, expressing a desire to finish interviewing with other companies to make an informed decision. You know that if you extend the deadline, you’ll run the risk of losing the candidate, and your next best candidate is not as strong. What would you do?

- a. Decline the candidate’s request for an extension, and ask for a decision by March as originally requested (T)
- b. Grant the candidate’s request for an extension until April, and extend the signing bonus as well (G)

12. After growing up in a poor city in El Salvador, Pat earned a scholarship to Stanford. In an essay, Pat expressed the desire to become the president of El Salvador. After graduating from Stanford, Pat returned to El Salvador and helped former teachers improve their lesson plans based on knowledge from Stanford. What is the most likely reason for Pat’s decision?

- a. To improve educational opportunities for the students (G)
- b. To begin building a strong reputation for political advancement (T)

13. A few years ago, you helped an acquaintance named Jamie find a job. You’ve been out of touch since then. All of a sudden, Jamie sends an email introducing you to a potential business partner. What’s the most likely motivation behind Jamie’s email?

- a. Jaime genuinely wants to help me (G)
- b. Jaime wants to ask me for help again (T)

14. In 2006, after the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, a U.S. bank executive led a team of employees on a trip to help rebuild New Orleans. Why do you think he did this?

- a. He felt compassion for the victims and wanted to do whatever he could to help (G)
- b. He wanted to make headlines for being a generous, giving organization (T)

15. A colleague is writing an article on how workplaces are changing. The colleague needs to add some information about social media, which happens to be one of your areas of expertise. You spend several hours making a list of relevant resources and readings. A few weeks later, the colleague finishes writing the article, and it appears in a major newspaper. A

section of the article is based on your recommendations, but you're never mentioned, let alone thanked or acknowledged. What would your first reaction be?

- a. I should approach the colleague and ask for a correction to be printed (T)
- b. It's not a big deal; I was glad to be helpful (G)

ENDNOTES

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