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## **Breaking the Silence: Toward an Understanding of Speaking Up in the Workplace.**

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**BREAKING THE SILENCE: TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF  
SPEAKING UP IN THE WORKPLACE**

**A Dissertation**

**Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**in**

**The Interdepartmental Program in  
Business Administration (Management)**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Although management scholars and practitioners emphasize the importance of employee input to organizational success, research suggests that many workers are hesitant to express an opinion or voice a view because they fear repercussions. In this dissertation, I focus on the issue of employee workplace expression, introducing the concept of speaking up. I define speaking up as “openly stating one’s views or opinions about workplace issues.” Speaking up is distinguished from several related concepts that fall within a common construct space. Drawing on expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) and the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1988, 1991), I explain the process believed to underlie employees’ decisions to speak up or remain silent.**

**A conceptual scheme of willingness to speak up is introduced and tested. Several individual (viz., need for achievement, locus of control, self-esteem, self-monitoring, and need for approval) and situational (viz., top-management openness, norms for openness, trust in supervisor, perceived organizational support, and perceived risk of speaking up) antecedents to willingness to speak up are empirically investigated using a sample of telecommunication company employees. The role of one antecedent, the perceived risk of speaking up, is explored as a mediating link between each of the other antecedents and willingness to speak up. Moreover, self-esteem and self-monitoring are examined as possible moderators of these predicted mediated relationships.**

**The results of the investigation lead to a respecification of the conceptual scheme that more heavily incorporates the influence of self-monitoring. In the new conceptual scheme, self-monitoring interacts with two personal attributes (i.e., locus of control and**

self-esteem), and individual perceptions of three workplace characteristics (i.e., top-management openness, trust in supervisor, and dyadic duration) in predicting speaking up behavior. Results from a series of hierarchical regression analyses indicate that self-monitoring significantly interacts with each set of parent variables such that perceptions of top-management openness, supervisory trustworthiness, and dyadic duration, as well as high self-esteem and internality, are associated with speaking up. Results suggest a need to consider both personal attributes and workplace characteristics to better understand the willingness to speak up.

## CHAPTER 1: THE DISSERTATION TOPIC

I left one meeting thinking, my God, I've ruined my career, . . . I'd just told a guy four levels above me he was wrong (Shaunna Sowell, Texas Instruments team leader, quoted in Lancaster, 1994, p. B1).

Employee input has long been recognized as an important element of effective organizations (e.g., Likert, 1961; McGregor, 1960) and as a means for generating ideas for “doing things better” (Drucker, 1969). As a result, modern organizations have enacted numerous practices designed to involve employees in workplace decisions. Despite these efforts, however — as the opening epigraph illustrates — many employees believe that “speaking up” is a risky proposition. The phrase “shoot the messenger” paints a vivid picture of the mechanisms at work to keep employees from speaking up. Employees frequently believe that if they voice their views they will be punished for them or incur other negative consequences (Ryan & Oestreich, 1998). They, thus, may choose to remain silent even when able to offer suggestions about needed changes, possible improvements, or alternatives to improve organizational functioning (Glauser, 1984).

Although the management literature includes several other constructs that focus on breaking the “wall of silence” in organizations, speaking up has been all but ignored. Speaking up, in the current context, is defined as openly stating one's views or opinions about workplace issues. It is not necessarily meant to imply a challenge to or criticism of the status quo, but instead to highlight employees' willingness or lack thereof to candidly discuss workplace issues unhindered by a concern for retribution. Speaking up is conceptually distinct from other forms of workplace expression. It differs from principled organizational dissent (Graham, 1986), employee voice (Hirschman, 1970), whistle-

blowing (Miceli & Near, 1985), issue selling (Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998; Dutton & Ashford, 1993), taking charge (Morrison & Phelps, 1999), upward influence attempts (Waldron, 1999), verbal aggressiveness (Infante & Wigley, 1986), and argumentativeness (Infante & Rancer, 1982). Whereas these forms of expression are driven by dissatisfaction, a perceived violation of personal principles, or attempts to focus an organization's attention on strategic issues, speaking up evolves from a desire to improve an organization's internal policies, practices, and procedures by suggesting different approaches or different lines of reasoning (Ryan & Oestreich, 1998). This is not to suggest that speaking up is motivated totally by altruism on the part of those who do decide to voice their views. It does, however, focus the concept of speaking up on efforts to improve organizational functioning rather than on actions that may prove detrimental to an organization or that are undertaken for the sole benefit of those who speak up. Further, speaking up may be either proactive (e.g., making suggestions for improved performance or noting potential problems) or reactive (e.g., pointing out past problems or mistakes).

### Statement of the Problem

Fear is believed to be at the root of employees' unwillingness to speak up. In a study of 260 individuals in 22 organizations, "fear of repercussions" was the most frequently cited explanation offered for not speaking up (Ryan & Oestreich, 1998). Of those interviewed, 70 percent said they hesitated to speak up at least once in the last few years about issues or problems they encountered at work because they feared some type of repercussion. A survey of 845 line managers from companies of different sizes and from

varied industries revealed that only 29% of first-level supervisors and 38% of middle managers think that the management style of their organizations encourages the open expression of alternative views, despite an overwhelming belief by these same individuals that employee involvement offers benefits in the areas of productivity, customer service, and cost reduction (Moskal, 1991). In a separate study, interviews with 569 managers revealed several reasons individuals elected to withdraw from team discussions. The six most common causes, from most to least frequently cited, were the presence of someone with expertise; the presentation of a compelling, but inferior argument; lack of confidence in their ability to contribute; the decision to be made seems unimportant or meaningless; pressures from others to conform to a team decision; and a dysfunctional decision-making climate (Crowe, 1996). These causes, especially the last two, suggest that an element of fear or insecurity plays some role in the choice to remain silent.

Feeling free to speak up without fear of retaliation is a basic democratic ideal (Kassing, 1997). Abraham Lincoln once said, "To sin by silence when they should protest makes cowards of men" (Marino, 2000). Even organizations that have been organized around the tenets of democracy, however, are not immune to the problem of organizational members choosing to remain silent when they should speak up. Researchers have found that members of democratic cooperatives tend to soften criticism and minimize differences of opinion (Rothschild-Whitt, 1979), and that patterns of communication in democratically rich environments tend toward consensus-seeking, confrontation-avoidance, ambiguous feedback, little corrective feedback, and avoidance of difficult and embarrassing situations (Gorden, Holmberg, & Heisey, 1994).

Given the prevalence of the fear to speak up in organizations, the research question that this dissertation seeks to address is the following: What individual and situational factors predispose employees to speak up about organizational issues without concern for, or in spite of, the risk of repercussions? By identifying the antecedents that influence employees' willingness to speak up, and by understanding the process by which the decision about whether or not to do so is made, we may better comprehend and predict a phenomenon that is seemingly pervasive in organizations. Further, increased knowledge about speaking up may enable organizations to develop better mechanisms to facilitate employee participation. Thus, the purpose of this dissertation was to examine the empirical validity of theoretically relevant antecedents to speaking up.

#### Speaking Up in Relation to Other Similar Constructs

As noted, several other constructs also describe forms of workplace expression. As alternative means of employee input, these constructs may coexist with speaking up and with one another. Speaking up, however, is distinct from these other constructs in a number of ways (viz., motive served, form, and scope), as summarized in Table 1.

Graham (1986) defined principled organizational dissent (POD) as “the effort by individuals in the workplace to protest and/or to change the organizational status quo because of their conscientious objection to current policy or practice” (p. 2). POD is based on a violation of principles and is geared toward changing existing policies or practices. Speaking up, on the other hand, is not based on principled dissent, and may merely involve making suggestions or pointing out alternatives for improving current

Table 1  
Speaking Up Compared to Similar Constructs

	<b><u>Speaking up</u></b>	<b><u>Principled organizational dissent</u></b>	<b><u>Whistle-blowing</u></b>	<b><u>Employee voice</u></b>	<b><u>Issue-selling</u></b>	<b><u>Taking charge</u></b>	<b><u>Upward influence</u></b>
<b><u>Motive</u></b>	Improve intra-organizational functioning	Address perceived moral wrongs	Alert others to wrong-doing	Change to eliminate dissatisfaction	Strategic change	Change the status quo	Achieve personal or organizational objectives
<b><u>Form</u></b>	Verbal	Verbal	Verbal	Verbal/ Behavioral	Verbal	Behavioral	Verbal/ Behavioral
<b><u>Scope</u></b>	Internal -- all levels	Internal/ External	Internal/ External	Broad Internal/ External	Internal -- upper management	Internal	Internal -- aimed upward

**Note:** Internal -- involving those inside an organization; External -- involving those outside an organization; Internal/External -- involving those both inside and outside an organization; Broad -- involving a wide audience.



policies, practices, and procedures rather than attempting to change them altogether. In addition, POD may take various forms, from offering constructive criticism or internally expressed protests to reporting to audiences outside the organization, taking blocking actions, or even resigning in protest (Graham, 1986). In contrast, speaking up is merely the expression of one's opinion or point of view.

Whistleblowing is "organization members' disclosure of illegal, immoral, or illegitimate practices under the control of their employers, to parties who may be able to effect action" (Miceli & Near, 1985, p. 525). Whistleblowing differs from speaking up in several ways. First, whistleblowing is motivated by supraorganizational interests aimed at change regardless of the organizational consequences. Speaking up is motivated by a sincere desire to improve a workplace or organization. Second, whistleblowing often involves going to outsiders, whereas speaking up is undertaken only within the boundaries of the organization. Finally, whistleblowing is initiated by employees who believe that current organizational practices are immoral, illegal, or unethical. Speaking up is not rooted in the belief that current organizational policies, practices, or procedures are harmful or wrong, but rather is rooted in an earnest desire to improve them.

Speaking up can also be distinguished from employee voice (Rusbult, Farrell, Rogers, & Mainous, 1988; Withey & Cooper, 1989). Voice, defined originally as "any attempt at all to change, rather than to escape from, an objectionable state of affairs" (Hirschman, 1970, p. 30), is a much broader concept. It includes everything from grievance filing and union participation to complaining and external protest, and is aimed primarily at eliminating personal dissatisfaction. Whereas speaking up focuses on voicing

one's views internally, voice may include utilizing internal or external channels. In addition to actions such as individual or collective petition to those at higher levels in the organization, voice may encompass various other types of actions and protests, including those meant to mobilize public opinion (Hirschman, 1970). Speaking up does closely parallel a more recent conceptualization of voice that focuses on constructive opposition aimed at improving, rather than merely criticizing, the status quo in work groups (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998, 2001; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). As Van Dyne and LePine (1998) note, however, there is no universally-accepted definition of voice in the literature, which suggests a need to more clearly distinguish this form of employee expression.

Issue selling (Ashford et al., 1998; Dutton & Ashford, 1993) is another construct, like speaking up, that describes employee attempts to improve organizational functioning. A major difference between issue selling and speaking up is the level at which these influence attempts are aimed. Issue selling involves individuals' attempts to bring attention to key trends, developments, and events that have implications for organizational performance (Ashford et al., 1998). The issues raised through issue selling are strategic, whereas speaking up involves attempts at improving intraorganizational functioning through improvements in workplace practices. In addition, issue selling is typically undertaken by individuals with managerial responsibility (Ashford et al., 1998), whereas speaking up is germane to all organizational members.

Morrison and Phelps (1999) recently introduced a new construct, taking charge, that also resembles speaking up. Taking charge (TC) involves voluntary and constructive efforts to accomplish organizationally functional change with respect to how work is done

and may be seen as a form of informal leadership (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). Like several of the other constructs discussed here, however, TC is inherently change-oriented and involves attempts to alter the status quo. Similarly to speaking up, TC is aimed at improving the internal functioning of an organization, however, it differs significantly in its action orientation. Whereas speaking up deals with employees' expression of their views, TC deals with behavioral efforts aimed at changing the ways things are done. In some instances speaking up may also include recommending change. Speaking up, however, involves pointing out the need for change and/or engaging in open discussion of the issues at hand, not engaging in behaviors to bring about an actual change itself. Further, speaking up may also involve voicing opposition to proposed changes or to others' active attempts to implement change when those changes are not believed to be in the best interest of an organization. In this instance, TC and speaking up would be in direct opposition to one another.

Social scientists have given considerable attention to another similar construct, upward influence attempts. Upward influence is conceptualized as "a deliberate attempt by a subordinate to select tactics that will bring about change in a more powerful target and facilitate achievement of a personal or organizational objective" (Waldron, 1999, p. 253). Most studies depict upward influence as including both communicative and noncommunicative practices that are aimed up an hierarchical chain at a more powerful person. In contrast, speaking up is limited to communications that may be aimed at any hierarchical level, not just toward more powerful individuals further up an organizational ladder.

Two other constructs that may be remotely related to speaking up are verbal aggressiveness (Infante & Wigley, 1986) and argumentativeness (Infante & Rancer, 1982). Both of these constructs focus on individual responses to controversial issues and entail adopting a combative stance in response to adversity. Verbal aggressiveness is a personality trait that predisposes an individual to attack the self-concept of others instead of, or in addition to, their position on a subject under consideration (Infante & Wigley, 1986). Argumentativeness is a personality characteristic that leads an individual to advocate positions on controversial issues and to verbally attack the positions of others (Infante & Rancer, 1982). Speaking up, as conceptualized here, is not intended to include antagonistic standpoints undertaken to stir controversy or dissent. Instead, speaking up is conceptualized as an attempt to improve the operation and performance of an organization and does not involve attacking or engaging in undue criticism of others or their opinions.

### **Theoretical Background**

In conceptualizing speaking up and identifying its nomological network, no one theory seemed to adequately specify its relevant antecedents and the process at work in an employee's decision to speak up. Thus, I have drawn on the literatures of several related constructs concerning employee expression, including issue selling (Ashford et al., 1998; Dutton & Ashford, 1993), dissent (Graham, 1986; Parker, 1993), whistleblowing (Miceli & Near, 1992), upward influence (Mowday, 1978; Waldron, 1999), employee voice (Withey & Cooper, 1989), complaining (Alicke et al., 1992; Kowalski, 1996) and taking charge (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). These constructs all have some elements in common with speaking up, and share a common theoretical foundation that is well established in

various literatures. These works implicitly or explicitly draw on expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1988, 1991), or both, to explain the decision processes that individuals go through in deciding to engage in a specific behavior. A similar process is believed to occur in an employee's decision to speak up. Several individual (i.e., need for achievement, locus of control, self-esteem, self-monitoring, need for approval), and situational (i.e., top-management openness, norms of openness, trust in supervisor, perceived organizational support, perceived risk of speaking up) variables are expected to influence an individual's decision to articulate his/her views.

Like other forms of interpersonal interaction, speaking up can be placed within a theoretical framework that accounts for its occurrence. Within this framework, I presuppose that a key assessment, the perceived utility of speaking up, underlies the effect of individual and situational variables on the willingness to speak up. According to expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) and the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1988, 1991), if an action is expected to lead to desired consequences or to prevent undesired consequences, and an individual's subjective estimate of the probability of positive outcomes is high, the individual will have a positive attitude toward engaging in a specific behavior. Similarly, a positive assessment of articulating one's views will increase the likelihood of doing so. On the other hand, if individuals believe that speaking up will not prove conducive to positive outcomes, they will estimate a low instrumental value in doing so and, thus, will be less likely to speak up. The inclusion of expectancy beliefs in willingness to speak one's mind is consistent with the upward influence literature on the

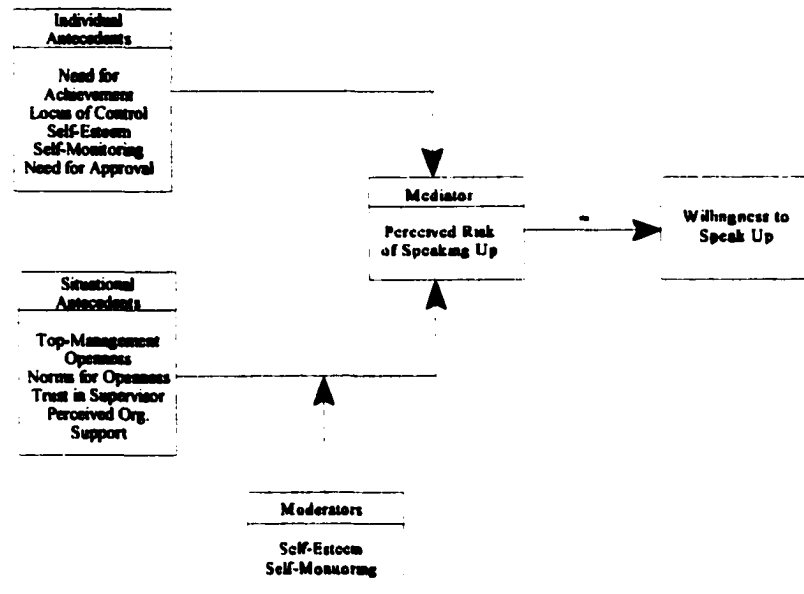
exercise of upward influence attempts (Mowday, 1978), willingness to dissent (Parker, 1993), issue selling (Ashford et al., 1998), and complaining (Kowalski, 1996).

Borrowing from the complaining literature (Kowalski, 1996), I define utility of speaking up as the belief that openly expressing one's views will be instrumental in achieving one's goals pertaining to improved organizational functioning. Consistent with a mini-max principle, individuals are seen as engaging in a cost-benefit analysis in which they weigh the likely costs of speaking up against the benefits that may be gained by doing so (Kowalski, 1996), attempting to minimize their costs while maximizing their benefits. Following expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), the motivation to speak up about organizational issues is arguably a function of the expected consequences of doing so. These consequences may include social costs. For employees to vocalize their views, they must believe that doing so will not be too personally costly (Ashford, et al., 1998; Miceli & Near, 1992; Withey & Cooper, 1989). Withey and Cooper (1989) point out that both direct and indirect costs are associated with employee voice. The same is true for speaking up. Direct costs are incurred through the time and energy expended (Withey & Cooper, 1989). Examples of indirect costs include potential loss of reputation or a diminished image, possible retaliation by those with opposing viewpoints, risk of spawning antagonistic relationships or conflict, and a wounded psyche if one's views are discounted or ignored.

Fear of negative consequences associated with selling an issue was the most frequently mentioned deterrent to issue selling in a recent qualitative study (Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, Hayes, & Wierba, 1997). Factors ranging from a damaged personal

image to job loss were mentioned by middle managers as contributors to the fear of attempting to sell an issue to top management. Similar perceived consequences may be associated with speaking one's mind about intraorganizational issues. The impression management literature (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Schlenker, 1980) offers insight into the mechanisms at work to encourage employees' to evaluate the image risk associated with speaking up before deciding to do so (Ashford et al., 1998; Dutton et al., 1997; Kowalski, 1996). People's desire to portray a positive image leads them to purposefully and actively manage their image and to consider the general impression management implications of voicing their views. As the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter further suggests, employees are well aware that challenging the thoughts and opinions of others or vocalizing their ideas subjects them to the scrutiny of others. In fact, Ashford and others (1998) found that subjects' perceptions of image risk associated with issue selling had a strong negative correlation with their perceived probability of selling success and their willingness to sell a particular issue. Thus, individuals' attempts to facilitate positive impression formation further influences their assessment of the utility of speaking up.

Drawing on the literatures of several constructs related to employee expression, and rooted in expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) and the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1988, 1991), this dissertation presents a conceptual scheme focused on exploring individual and situational predictors of employee willingness to speak up. The conceptual scheme, presented in Figure 1, proposes the effect of five individual (viz., need for achievement, locus of control, self-esteem, self-monitoring, need for approval) and five



**Figure 1: Willingness to speak up: A conceptual scheme**

situational (viz., top-management openness, norms of openness, trust in supervisor, perceived organizational support, perceived risk of speaking up) variables on willingness to speak up. Further, the effects of the individual predictors and four of the five situational predictors on willingness to speak up are expected to be mediated by the fifth situational factor, perceived risk of speaking up. To complete the conceptual scheme, two of the individual predictors, self-esteem and self-monitoring, are expected to interact with top-management openness, norms for openness, trust in supervisor, and perceived organizational support to predict perceived risk of speaking up. These relationships are developed in detail in Chapter 2.



This dissertation recognizes that, due to the newness of the willingness to speak up concept, the conceptual scheme presents only one of many possible sets of relationships involved in the decision to speak up or remain silent, and that the study, being neither longitudinal nor experimental, cannot infer causality (Cook & Campbell, 1979). The conceptual scheme is not intended to test a fully specified model, but rather to describe speaking up as a phenomenon, to examine the predictors, and to explore how and why the specified relationships develop. Thus, the term “conceptual scheme,” rather than model is used in the present discussion.

### Summary of Remaining Chapters

This chapter introduced the dissertation by defining the concept of speaking up and by introducing a conceptual scheme for examining willingness to speak up within a workplace. It also compared and contrasted speaking up to other similar constructs related to employee outspokenness and explained the theoretical framework serving as the foundation of this new construct. Chapter 2 further develops the nomological network of speaking up, proposing hypotheses concerning the relationships of several variables associated with speaking up. Chapter 3 delineates the measures and the statistical methodology used in testing these hypotheses. The analyses, results, and initial discussion are presented in Chapter 4, leading to the advancement of a conceptual respecification in Chapter 5. Finally, Chapter 6 presents a comprehensive discussion of the dissertation’s results, along with theoretical and practical implications of the findings, study limitations, and suggestions for future research.

## **CHAPTER 2: THE CONCEPTUAL SCHEME AND HYPOTHESES**

As noted in Chapter 1, employee participation in workplace issues is highly sought after and valued by organizations. To date, however, there has been little research reported on factors leading to employees' willingness to speak up about organizational issues. Drawing on the conceptual scheme presented in Figure 1, this chapter will further elaborate on the concept of speaking up presented in Chapter 1, and will propose hypotheses with respect to the antecedents of willingness to speak up.

To develop a theoretical framework, as noted, I drew from research on workplace expression that, like speaking up, involve articulating a viewpoint or opinion. Specifically, I looked at research on issue selling (Ashford et al., 1998; Dutton & Ashford, 1993), principled organizational dissent (Graham, 1986; Parker, 1993), whistleblowing (Miceli & Near, 1992), employee voice (Withey & Cooper, 1989), complaining (Alicke et al., 1992; Kowalski, 1996), upward influence (Farmer, Maslyn, Fedor, & Goodman, 1997; Maslyn, Farmer, & Fedor, 1996), and taking charge (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). The review of this research provided a basis for my framework and revealed two important points. First, discretionary behaviors, such as speaking up, are often preceded by deliberate and careful contemplation about the utility of doing so. Second, both individual and situational factors are apt to impact the decision to speak up.

From this research it is also evident that employees evaluate the utility of speaking up by assessing the probability that speaking up will be successful (i.e., the opinion expressed will be well received and will not be too personally costly). Consistent with expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) and the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1988,

1991), if speaking up is expected to lead to positive consequences or to prevent negative consequences, an employee will have a positive attitude toward speaking up and will be more likely to do so. Conversely, if employees believe that speaking up will not lead to positive outcomes, or will lead to negative outcomes, they will perceive a low instrumental value in expressing a view, and thus, will be less likely to do so. The judgments involved in the estimate of the utility of speaking up are believed to be dynamic, changing from one situation to another (Morrison & Phelps, 1999) and, as such, are used strictly as theoretical support for the conceptual framework. The specific antecedents that will predict an individual's willingness to speak up, however, are believed to be relatively stable from one incident to another. Several individual and situational factors are presumed to influence this decision making process and, ultimately, one's willingness to speak up.

The social science literature has witnessed an on-going debate concerning the validity of using dispositional variables in organizational research (Davis-Blake & Pfeffer, 1989, 1996; House, Shane, & Herold, 1996; Judge, 1992; Shane, Herold, & House, 1996). The controversy centers on the ability, or inability, of individual characteristics to explain variance in workplace attitudes and behaviors. Whereas one camp expresses skepticism about the true value of traits in explaining variance in such attitudes and behaviors (Davis-Blake & Pfeffer, 1989, 1996), another defends the use of these variables when supported theoretically and, especially, when used in conjunction with situational variables (House, Shane, & Herold, 1996; Shane, Herold, & House, 1996). This debate has sparked a flurry of research designed largely to address the predictive validity of

dispositional variables (Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997; Judge, Locke, Durham, & Kluger 1998; Steele & Rentsch, 1997). Overall, this research has supported the practice of jointly examining both individual and situational factors in the study of workplace attitudes and behaviors, and this practice has flourished in the organizational behavior literature.

Researchers examining employee expression are among those that have embraced this trend, utilizing both individual and situational characteristics to predict and explain what leads employees to undertake specific behaviors (Ashford et al., 1998; Graham, 1986; Morrison & Phelps, 1999; Withey & Cooper, 1989). Numerous studies have supported the inclusion of both individual and situational factors in examining what leads employees to behave in an outgoing manner and voice their views (Cheng, 1983; Keenan, 1990; Krone, 1992; Near & Miceli, 1996; Oldham & Cummings, 1996). Continuing with this trend, this dissertation examines both individual and situational antecedents to willingness to speak up, as well as several associated process effects.

### Hypotheses

#### Link Between Perceived Risk of Speaking Up and Willingness to Speak Up

Based on expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), the act of speaking up is believed to be the result of rational decision processes whereby people evaluate the expected ramifications of doing so. For employees to vocalize their views, they must believe that doing so will not be too costly. Perceived costs have been identified as a deterrent to several related work and non-work behaviors, including issue selling (Dutton et al., 1997), upward influence attempts (Maslyn et al., 1996; Schilit, 1986), participation in union activities (Klandersman, 1986), participation in social movements (Feather, 1982), and

feedback-seeking (Ashford, 1986; Fedor, Rensvold, & Adams, 1992; VandeWalle & Cummings, 1997).

In a study of how managers assess the context for selling issues to top management, several potential undesirable by-products were mentioned by participants, and were the most frequently cited stumbling blocks to issue selling attempts (Dutton et al., 1997). The same fear of negative outcomes seems to be at work in employees' decisions to engage in feedback-seeking behavior. In fact, the perceived cost of feedback-seeking is believed to be one of the primary determinants of the type of feedback-seeking strategy an individual chooses (Ashford & Cummings, 1983). Considerable empirical support, including both laboratory (Ashford & Northcraft, 1992; Northcraft & Ashford, 1990) and field (Ashford, 1986; Fedor et al., 1992; VandeWalle & Cummings, 1997) studies, has confirmed costs of the feedback-seeking strategy under consideration as a deterrent to use of that strategy. In addition, individuals appear to seek less feedback in public than in private conditions (Ashford & Northcraft, 1992), offering some additional evidence that individuals behave in a more conservative manner when risks are perceived high. Any attempts at feedback-seeking may result in ego costs due to the risk of hearing negative feedback about one's self (Ashford, 1989). In the case of feedback-seeking in public conditions, however, the perceived risk may be even higher because of the self-presentational costs of exposing one's uncertainty and need for help (Ashford, 1989). A similar phenomenon may have an effect in determining individuals' willingness to speak up. Speaking up exposes workers to the scrutiny of others, possibly leading to some of the same ego and self-presentational costs associated with feedback-seeking.

Mashyn and his colleagues (1996) established that perceived costs are positively related to participants' choosing to withdraw from upward influence attempts when initial upward influence efforts fail. They concluded that the decision to discontinue such attempts tended to be rational and calculative. Similar results were found in a study of managers' upward influence activity in strategic decisions (Schilit, 1986). Middle-level managers attempted to exert influence in less risky decisions more often than in more risky decisions. The same tendency to avoid risk is believed to impact an individual's willingness to speak up. Individuals assess the costs they are likely to incur if they decide to express their viewpoint, and take these perceived risks into consideration in deciding whether to speak up or remain silent. In the event that the risks associated with speaking up in any given situation are perceived too high, employees will be more likely to remain silent. Conversely, if the risks are perceived to be reasonable, workers will be more likely to speak up. Thus, in the workplace,

**Hypothesis 1:** Perceived risk of speaking up will be negatively related to willingness to speak up.

### **Mediation of Willingness to Speak Up**

A mediator "represents the generative mechanism through which [a] focal independent variable is able to influence [a] dependent variable of interest" (Baron & Kenny, 1986, p. 1173). As such, mediators specify the process through which independent variables act on a dependent variable (James & Brett, 1984). In the conceptual scheme presented in Figure 1, five individual variables and four situational variables are believed to be related, in a non-linear fashion, to willingness to speak up.

These variables are expected to influence the decision to speak up or remain silent indirectly through their effects on perceived risk of speaking up.

### **Individual Variables**

The individual-level predictors that I focus on are need for achievement, locus of control, self-esteem, self-monitoring, and need for approval. These variables were selected for inclusion in the study based on their theoretically and empirically supported relationships to the constructs (i.e., other forms of employee expression) discussed in Chapter 1.

Need for achievement. Individuals high in need for achievement (n Ach) are said to prefer moderately difficult goals, have a strong need for performance feedback, and prefer situations in which they can take personal responsibility for their success or failure and in which they can try new ways of doing things (McClelland, 1965, 1985). High achievers often differentiate themselves from others by their desire to do things better or more efficiently than has been done before (McClelland, 1961). Consistent with this drive to improve, Frese, Fay, Hilburger, Leng, and Tag (1997) found that n Ach is positively correlated with personal initiative, a behavior syndrome that is believed to lead an individual to take an active and self-starting approach to work and to go beyond formal job requirements. A high achievement motive is also common to entrepreneurs (McClelland, 1965) and positively influences individuals to self-set higher performance goals (Phillips & Gully, 1997).

Research has demonstrated the tendency of high n Ach individuals to exert personal influence over their work-related outcomes. Miller and Dröge (1986) found that

chief executive officers (CEOs) with a high achievement motive were more likely to monitor and control organizational performance through centralization of power and formalization of policies and procedures than CEOs with a low achievement need. The desire of those with a high *n Ach* to personally influence outcomes is evident in high *n Ach* individuals' preferences for outcome-oriented cultures (O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991), and for situations requiring individuals to attain success through their own efforts and abilities rather than through happenstance (Miner, 1980).

The desire for personal responsibility for success or failure related to a high *n Ach* may manifest itself through an employee's exercise of upward influence activities. Mowday (1978) argued that individuals with a high *n Ach* are usually more confident that the upward influence attempts they undertake will be more successful and, thus, they are more likely to initiate influence attempts. He further suggested that in instances where the exercise of influence is instrumental to task accomplishment, the relationship between *n Ach* and upward influence attempts is especially likely because individuals may gain intrinsic satisfaction from both the exercise of influence and from subsequent task accomplishment. Consistent with this line of reasoning, *n Ach* has been shown to impact both when and how employees attempt to exert upward influence (Chacko, 1990). In addition, middle-level managers who are high in *n Ach* have been shown to be more influential in strategic decisions than are middle-level managers who are low in *n Ach* (Schilit, 1986).

Based on these findings, it is plausible that individuals high on *n Ach* are also more likely to speak up than individuals low on *n Ach*. Those employees with a high



achievement motive may perceive greater instrumental value in voicing their opinions and may achieve more intrinsic satisfaction through the process of speaking up. By attempting to positively influence their work environment, high achievers may perceive an opportunity to gain control over their personal accomplishments and may perceive a greater probability of achievement. In pace with expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), individuals with a high n Ach should value the potential for greater benefits associated with speaking up, tempering their estimates of risk. It is reasonable, therefore, to expect that individuals with a high achievement motive will, on balance, perceive a lower cost and, thus, lower risk in speaking up than individuals with a low achievement motive, and, hence, will be more willing to express their views. Thus, in the workplace,

**Hypothesis 2a:** Need for achievement will be positively related to willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 2b:** Perceived risk of speaking up will mediate the effect of need for achievement on willingness to speak up.

**Locus of control.** Rotter (1966) posits that individuals vary in their perception of the extent to which they have control over their environment. According to social learning theory, an individual develops an expectancy that a particular behavior will lead to a certain outcome when the behavior has led to the outcome in the past (Rotter, 1966). When the outcome is not seen as contingent upon the individual's own behavior, however, the expectancy will not be as great as when it is seen as contingent upon the individual's own actions (Rotter, 1966). This learned expectancy is the theoretical basis for locus of control (LOC), "the degree to which people believe they exercise control over their lives

(internally controlled) or the degree to which they feel their destinies are beyond their own control and are determined by fate, chance, or powerful others (externally controlled)” (Levenson, 1974, p. 377). LOC involves a generalized expectancy that cuts across many situations such that an individual with an internal LOC is more likely to expect to have an influence on personal outcomes in many diverse situations (Rotter, 1992).

Externality is believed related to passivity and learned helplessness, whereas internality is believed related to more proactive concepts such as planning, coping, persistence, and other problem-solving techniques (Rotter, 1992). Consistent with these suppositions, individuals with an internal LOC (henceforth referred to as Internals) have been shown to have higher self-efficacy (Phillips & Gully, 1997), to have greater upward influence (Schilit, 1986), and to perform better under conditions of participation (Kren, 1992) than individuals with an external LOC (henceforth referred to as Externals). Internals have also been shown to see stronger relationships between what they do and what happens to them on the job (Mitchell, Smyser, & Weed, 1975).

Because Internals tend to believe that they can influence their work settings through their behavior, they attempt to exert more control than Externals. Kowalski (1996) has suggested that Internals may more readily engage in complaining behavior because they are more likely to expect complaining to bring about change. This argument may also pertain directly to willingness to speak up in that the attempt of Internals to control the work setting may be manifested in their willingness to voice their opinions. Employees with an internal LOC may be more willing to express their views because they believe that they can influence their work environment. Conversely, employees with an

external LOC will not see much instrumental value in expressing their opinions since they believe that outcomes are largely a matter of fate or are in the control of powerful others. It is plausible that Internals, because they believe that they control their own destiny, perceive less risk in speaking up than Externals and, hence, are more willing to express their views. Thus, in the workplace,

**Hypothesis 3a:** Locus of control will be positively related to willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 3b:** Perceived risk of speaking up will mediate the effect of locus of control on willingness to speak up.

**Self-esteem.** Self-esteem, “the favorability of individuals’ characteristic self-evaluations” (Brockner, 1988, p. 11), is an important predictor of attitudes and behavior both on and off the job. Although self-esteem has been described in both global and specific terms, I chose to include global self-esteem in the current study because of its importance in predicting behavior that may be viewed as somewhat personally risky (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998), and because it represents the overall evaluative valence of one’s self-evaluation as a context-free cognitive representation or process (Rosenberg, 1965). Those with high global self-esteem exhibit more initiative and assertiveness than those with low self-esteem (Crandall, 1973). Further, one’s global self-esteem is generally considered a stable disposition that affects individuals’ perceptions and responses to their environment (Ganster & Schaubroeck, 1991).

LePine and Van Dyne (1998) studied the impact of self-esteem on voice behavior in work groups. They found that self-esteem had a significant and positive influence on

individuals' willingness to challenge the status quo and that self-esteem interacted with situational factors such that individuals with low levels of self-esteem were more responsive to situational stimuli fostering voice. Self-esteem has also been positively linked to coping with organizational change (Ashford, 1988; Judge, Thoresen, Pucik, & Welbourne, 1999), and has bearing on the interpersonal influence strategy individuals choose to employ (Benson & Hornsby, 1988). Individuals with low self-esteem may not view themselves as generally effective and, therefore, may be less likely to express dissent (Graham, 1986). They may also be more apathetic and more likely to withdraw from situations, thus making them less likely to speak up (Miceli & Near, 1992).

By definition, speaking up requires behavior that is self-assured and that may be viewed as risky. Based on what is known about self-esteem, individuals with low levels of self-esteem may perceive that others are unlikely to listen to them or that, even if they do, they would be unable to motivate others to act on the issues they raise. Speaking up requires confidence in one's ability to favorably influence one's environment, a trait more likely found in individuals with high levels of self-esteem. One would expect, therefore, that individuals with high self-esteem would perceive less risk in speaking up than individuals with low self-esteem and, hence, be more willing to express their views. Thus, in the workplace,

**Hypothesis 4a:** Self-esteem will be positively related to willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 4b:** Perceived risk of speaking up will mediate the effect of self-esteem on willingness to speak up.

**Self-monitoring.** People learn from an early age to “put their best foot forward” in an attempt to present themselves in a positive light. This desire to attain and maintain a favorable image is stronger in some than in others. Self-monitoring measures the extent to which individuals vary in their sensitivity to social signals, and in their ability to adapt their behavior to the requirements of a situation (Snyder, 1974, 1979). Individuals high on self-monitoring ability are especially likely to consider the impact on their image of voicing their views. It is important to note that self-monitoring is not the same as impression management. Impression management involves attempts by individuals to manipulate attributions and impressions others have of them (Miller & Cardy, 2000). Although self-monitoring is also concerned with self-presentation, it is more an interpersonal style of high social awareness than a manipulations of others’ opinions (Miller & Cardy, 2000).

High self-monitors (HSM) are sensitive to social cues, can modify their behavior using those cues, are concerned with behaving in a situationally appropriate manner, and change their behaviors on the basis of what they believe is appropriate for a given situation (Snyder & Cantor, 1980). The prototypical HSM has been described as “someone who treats interactions with others as dramatic performances designed to gain attention, make impressions, and at times entertain” (Snyder, 1987, p. 178). Low self-monitors (LSM) are less likely to change their behavior to fit situations, rely less on social cues to regulate their behavior, and therefore, behave more consistently across situations (Snyder & Cantor, 1980). LSMs remain true to their authentic feelings and dispositions (John, Cheek, & Klohnen, 1996), and may actively attempt to cultivate reputations for sincerity (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000).

Individuals high on the self-monitoring trait tend to be very self aware and perceive a greater need to manage reputations (Gardner & Martinko, 1988). Ashford and her colleagues (1998), in a study of context and a willingness to sell, speculated that concern over a potential negative effect on one's image, consistent with high self-monitors, may have negatively impacted subjects' willingness to sell gender-equity issues. Further, self-monitoring has been shown to influence the types of strategies managers choose in their upward influence attempts (Farmer et al., 1997) and how they respond when their first such attempt fails (Maslyn et al., 1996).

A desire to portray a positive image leads individuals to purposefully and actively manage their image and to consider the general impression-management implications of voicing their views (Dutton et al., 1997). Because speaking up may expose an individual to the scrutiny of others, those who are dispositionally more sensitive to the image that others hold of them may be less likely to speak up than individuals who are less concerned about the image that they convey. LSMs tend to behave according to their own personal convictions, whereas HSMs are driven by interpersonal situations. Consequently, correspondence between dispositions and behavior tends to be low for HSMs and high for LSMs (Snyder, 1979). As a result, LSMs may be more likely to speak up. Thus, in the workplace,

**Hypothesis 5a:** Self-monitoring will be negatively related to willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 5b:** Perceived risk of speaking up will mediate the effect self-monitoring on willingness to speak up.

**Need for approval.** According to Schlenker's (1980) expectancy-value approach to self-presentation, every image that an individual might project differs in regard to its perceived value. A person's motivation to portray a particular image that has the highest value is tempered by the sanctions that may occur if one fails in achieving the desired image. Consistent with all human behavior, individuals wish to portray themselves in a positive light so as to garner desired outcomes and avoid undesired consequences (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Individuals with a high need for social approval (n App), however, may be especially sensitive to the potential negative evaluations that may result from voicing one's views.

People with a high n App more greatly desire and value others' acceptance and approval as compared to those who are low on this personality trait (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964). As a result, high n App is associated with generally high impression management motivation (Leary & Kowalski, 1990) leading these individuals to conform more in groups and to be less outgoing (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964). Kowalski (1996) proposes that those individuals high in n App are more hesitant to complain when dissatisfied for fear of being negatively evaluated. She suggests that because complaining may lead others to form a negative impression of them, people who are especially sensitive to others' opinions may be less likely to complain than individuals less involved with self-presentational concerns. This same argument may be applied to speaking up. Individuals high in n App are likely to view such behavior as more risky than individuals who score lower in this regard. The cost/benefit analysis that individuals undertake before acting may lead those with a high approval motive to avoid putting themselves in the position of

possibly receiving a negative evaluation. Some conceivable costs of speaking up (mentioned previously) include, potential loss of reputation or a diminished image, possible retaliation by those with opposing viewpoints, risk of spawning antagonistic relationships or conflict, and a wounded psyche if one's views are discounted or ignored, all of which may be potentially too costly for those with a high *n* App. When individuals with a high approval need do not believe that a certain behavior will lead to a desired impression, they may adopt a protective stance that leads them to behave in an inhibited, shy manner (Schlenker & Leary, 1982). It would therefore be expected that individuals high in *n* App would perceive more risk in speaking up than individuals low in *n* App and, hence, be less likely to express their views. Thus, in the workplace,

**Hypothesis 6a:** Need for approval will be negatively related to willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 6b:** Perceived risk of speaking up will mediate the effect of need for approval on willingness to speak up.

### **Situational Variables**

Although individual attributes are expected to play a prominent role in assessing the risk associated with speaking up and, thus, in a willingness to express one's views, one's environment provides the context for individual behavior (Rousseau & Fried, 2001) and, therefore, is also expected to play a central role in the decision to speak up. The situational (i.e., contextual) predictors I focus on are top-management openness, norms for openness, trust in supervisor, and perceived organizational support. These variables were selected for inclusion in the study because of their potential relevance to



understanding speaking up as suggested by the other forms of workplace expression discussed in Chapter 1.

**Top-management openness.** Consistent with issue selling and taking charge, one environmental cue that employees attend to in deciding whether to express their views is top-management openness (Ashford et al., 1998; Morrison & Phelps, 1999). Borrowing from Morrison and Phelps (1999), top-management openness is defined as the degree to which top management is believed to encourage employees to offer input and make suggestions. Ashford and her colleagues (1998) have argued that if employees believe that top management will react positively to their proactive attempts to enhance the workplace, or at least not react negatively, they will perceive a greater chance of success and will view their actions as less risky. Their assertion is supported by the work of Morrison and Phelps (1999) who found top-management openness to be positively related to taking charge, and by Scott and Bruce (1994) who found top-management openness to be positively related to employees engaging in innovative behavior. Furthermore, Schilit and Locke (1982) found that subordinates most often blamed their failed upward influence attempts on the closed-mindedness of their superiors.

More than half of the respondents in a study of the factors that underlie middle managers' decisions to engage in issue selling cited top management's willingness to listen as a key determinant in their analysis of the context's favorability for selling an issue (Dutton et al., 1997). These findings are consistent with the upward influence and impression management literatures that suggest that target characteristics are an important

consideration in employees' decisions (Chacko, 1990; Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Dutton et al., 1997; Gardner & Martinko, 1988; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Schilit & Locke, 1982).

Individuals' perceptions of top-management openness are also believed to play an important part in their assessment of the utility of speaking up. Top-management openness may serve as a cue to the probability of successfully voicing one's views without repercussions. In particular, open communication, whereby managers freely engage in information exchange with employees, may enhance willingness to speak up through diminished perceptions of risk (Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard, & Werner, 1998). Therefore, in contexts in which top-management is perceived to be open to employees' opinion expression, individuals are expected to perceive less risk associated with voicing their views and, hence, to be more willing to speak up. Thus, in the workplace,

Hypothesis 7a: Top-management openness will be positively related to willingness to speak up.

Hypothesis 7b: Perceived risk of speaking up will mediate the effect of top-management openness on willingness to speak up.

Norms for openness. When employees attempt to read their surroundings for clues about how speaking up may be received, one potentially influential factor may be their work units' norms for openness. Norms are "shared standards of behavior that emerge within a group" (Morrison & Phelps, 1999, p. 406). When norms geared toward a certain behavior exist, they provide employees direction about the appropriateness of engaging in the behavior. According to the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1988, 1991), subjective norms play an important role in individuals' decisions to undertake a

particular action because individuals attach a positive value to meeting others' expectations.

Research on innovation (Bunce & West, 1995; Scott & Bruce, 1994) and issue selling (Ashford et al., 1998; Dutton et al., 1997) suggests that work-group norms geared toward change motivate employees to undertake change-oriented behavior. Ashford and her colleagues (1998) partially attribute the willingness to sell gender-equity issues to the guidance provided by norms for issue selling. Their results indicate that norms favoring issue selling translate into a lower perceived risk to one's image associated with attempting to sell an issue. These findings are consistent with those of Dutton and her associates (1997) who found that norm violation was seen as creating the greatest risk of potential image loss to an issue seller. Individuals are aware of norm conformity and are conscious of comporting with the social context of a work group. In the Dutton et al. study (1997), where selling issues implied norm violations, managers were likely to hold back rather than undertake this noncompulsory activity.

Because a desire for harmony and unity tends to create conditions that make conformity the norm (Gorden, 1988), work-group norms supportive of openness are expected to influence individual estimates of the utility of speaking up. Work-group norms favorable of opinion expression should lead workers to estimate a lower risk associated with speaking up. When individuals' work units are supportive of speaking up, individuals will perceive that expressing their views is not only acceptable, but possibly expected and, thus, their likelihood of doing so will increase. In contrast, when keeping quiet is the norm, individuals will perceive a greater risk in speaking up, will estimate a

lower instrumental value in doing so and, ultimately, will be less willing to speak up.

Thus, in the workplace,

**Hypothesis 8a:** Norms for openness will be positively related to willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 8b:** Perceived risk of speaking up will mediate the effect of norms for openness on willingness to speak up.

**Trust in supervisor.** Trust is defined as a state “involving confident positive expectations about another’s motive with respect to oneself in situations entailing risk” (Boon & Holmes, 1991, p. 194). As an important element in workplace behavior, trust has been shown to manifest itself in workplace attitudes and actions (Brockner, Seigel, Daly, Tyler, & Martin, 1997). By their very nature, organizations are characterized by interdependence. Trust involves accepting the risks associated with the interdependence inherent in work relationships.

Although trust is important in many work relationships (see, e.g., McAllister, 1995), the risks assumed by engaging in trusting behavior may be especially salient when the individual in whom one places one’s trust is one’s supervisor. Due to the power that supervisors hold over employee outcomes, and due to the proximal nature of the supervisor-subordinate relationship (Pierce, Dunham, & Cummings, 1984), trust in one’s supervisor may play an especially important role in an employee’s decision to speak up. This is true for two reasons. First, employees are generally more supportive of and committed to superiors, and the organizations that the superiors represent, when trust is relatively high (Brockner et al., 1997). Thus, not surprisingly, trust in one’s supervisor

has revealed itself to be a potent influence on worker behavior. For example, trust in one's supervisor has been shown to be positively related to organizational citizenship behavior (Konovsky & Pugh, 1994), subordinates' innovative behavior (Tan & Tan, 2000), frequency and accuracy of upward communication (Gaines, 1980; O'Reilly & Roberts, 1974; Roberts & O'Reilly, 1974a, 1974b), and subordinates' perceptions of being able to communicate openly with their supervisor about job-related problems without fear of negative sanctions (Fulk, Brief, & Barr, 1985). Likewise, trust in management has been negatively linked to anxiety such that anxiety decreases as trust increases (Cook & Wall, 1980). By definition, speaking up involves attempts to improve organizational functioning, an act that may be seen as supportive of one's supervisor and organization.

A recent meta-analysis (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001) examined trust in different organizational referents (direct leaders vs. top management) and discovered differential relationships between trust and outcomes depending on who was the target of trust. Of particular interest was the relationship between trust and discretionary behavior (i.e., altruism). This relationship was significantly stronger when the referent was a direct leader (e.g., supervisor) as opposed to top management. Speaking up may be expected to exhibit a similar relation to trust in one's supervisor because it, like altruism, is a discretionary behavior. Employees are also more likely to engage in innovative behaviors when trust in supervisor is high (Tan & Tan, 2000), providing further evidence of a positive relationship between discretionary behaviors and trust in supervisor. Thus, when trust in one's supervisor is high, this type of discretionary behavior is logically more likely.

Second, the risks associated with speaking up will not be as salient when employees trust their supervisors. By definition, trust entails risk, that is a willingness on the part of a trustor to be vulnerable to a trustee (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). In such instances, the former has judged that the latter will not likely engage in actions that will be detrimental to the trustor's best interests. Accordingly, when subordinates trust their supervisor, their fear of repercussions associated with voicing a view should be vitiated, leading to a lower perceived cost, a higher estimated instrumental value, and, thus, to a greater willingness to speak up. Support for this line of reasoning is evident from a recent study of trust in organizations that found higher levels of employee assertiveness associated with trust in one's supervisor (Costigan, Ilter, & Berman, 1998). Further, Zand (1972) developed and tested a model of trust and managerial problem-solving based on the premise that trust facilitates interpersonal acceptance and openness of expression. He argued that in joint problem-solving situations involving low trust, parties attempt to decrease their vulnerability by withholding or even distorting information, allowing problems to go undetected or to be avoided, and making inappropriate solutions difficult to identify. On the other hand, where a high level of trust exists, individuals are less fearful and, hence, more likely to offer valuable information conducive to problem resolution. In support of his model, Zand (1972) found that trust did significantly alter managerial problem-solving effectiveness such that in low-trust groups, interpersonal relationships and members' attempts to minimize their vulnerability interfered with and distorted problem perceptions. In high-trust groups, there was less socially generated uncertainty and, subsequently, more effective problem-solving.

Accordingly, in situations where high levels of trust exist between a supervisor and subordinates, the subordinates can be expected to perceive low risk in speaking up, and to more willingly express their views. Those high in trust will have positive expectations that their attempts at organizational improvement through speaking up will lead to reciprocal cooperation (De Cremer, Snyder, & Dewitte, 2001). In contrast, where little or no trust exists, subordinates are more likely to avoid the vulnerability inherent in speaking up. Thus, in the workplace,

**Hypothesis 9a:** Trust in supervisor will be positively related to willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 9b:** Perceived risk of speaking up will mediate the effect of trust in supervisor on willingness to speak up.

**Perceived organizational support.** Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) suggested that “employees develop global beliefs concerning the extent to which [an] organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being” (p. 501). They base their arguments for the existence and effects of what they term “perceived organizational support” (POS) on social-exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and norms of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). Social-exchange theory (Blau, 1964) suggests that as one party acts in ways that benefit another party, an implicit obligation for future reciprocity is created (Gouldner, 1960). POS has been shown to strengthen employees’ effort-outcome expectancies and affective organizational commitment, ultimately leading to greater efforts to achieve an organization’s goals due to a perceived obligation to repay the organization for benefits received (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

POS has been positively related to several work-related outcomes in addition to affective organizational commitment (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996; Shore & Tetrick, 1991) and effort-reward expectancies (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990), including both objective and subjective measures of in-role job performance (Eisenberger et al., 1986, 1990), organizational citizenship behavior (Shore & Wayne, 1993; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997), constructive suggestions for improving the operations of an organization (Eisenberger et al., 1990), influence tactics designed by employees to make supervisors aware of their dedication and accomplishments (Shore & Wayne, 1993), and safety communication (Hofmann & Morgeson, 1999). In addition, POS has been negatively related to absenteeism (Eisenberger et al., 1986) and intentions to turnover (Wayne et al., 1997).

Research on POS suggests that employees direct their reciprocating actions toward the target from which benefits accrue (Hofmann & Morgeson, 1999; Settoon et al., 1996; Wayne et al., 1997). For example, one recent study revealed that POS led employees to raise concerns about safety (Hofmann & Morgeson, 1999), actions that could possibly benefit an organization by bringing potential problem areas to the attention of management. Another study found that human-resource policies that suggest an investment in employees were more likely to lead to employee citizenship behaviors (Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Tripoli, 1997). The citizenship measure used in this study included items such as “calls management attention to dysfunctional activities,” “informs management of potentially unproductive policies and practices,” and “suggests revisions in work to achieve organizational or departmental objectives” (Tsui et al., 1997). These



items very closely parallel the concept of speaking up and suggest that employees may reciprocate POS by expressing concerns and making suggestions. Because speaking up stems from a desire to enhance an organization, it may be one means through which employees fulfill their perceived obligation to an organization.

Support for POS as an antecedent to willingness to speak up is further evidenced by its positive impact on effort-reward expectancies (Eisenberger et al., 1990). The social exchange between employee and employer is believed reciprocal. That is, not only do employees feel an obligation to reciprocate when they perceive that an organization takes actions that are favorable to the employees, they also appear to judge the potential gain that would result from engaging in activities advocated by the organization (Eisenberger et al., 1990). Employees with high POS express stronger expectancies that high effort will produce material and social rewards. Therefore, in the event of high POS, an employee may expect that speaking up about issues that could improve organizational functioning will result in benefits to the employee him/herself, decreasing the perceived risk of speaking up, increasing the instrumental value of speaking up and, ultimately, increasing the willingness to speak up. Thus, in the workplace,

**Hypothesis 10a:** Perceived organizational support will be positively related to willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 10b:** Perceived risk of speaking up will mediate the effect of perceived organizational support on willingness to speak up.

### **Moderated Mediation of Willingness to Speak Up**

Two individual antecedents in Figure 1, self-esteem (Brockner, 1988) and self-monitoring (Snyder, 1974, 1979), are especially susceptible to contextual conditions and, as such, are expected to also moderate the effects of the identified situational antecedents on perceived risk of speaking up. That is, it is expected that the mediational effects of perceived risk of speaking up on the focal situational antecedents will vary across levels of self-esteem and self-monitoring. These linkages are subsumed under what has been dubbed “moderated mediation” (Barron & Kenny, 1986; James & Brett, 1984). Self-esteem and self-monitoring are believed to be related in a nonlinear fashion to the perceived risk of speaking up (i.e., a moderating relationship), and the effects of these two individual variables on willingness to speak up to be conveyed through perceived risk of speaking up (i.e., a mediating relationship). The mediational relationships between perceived risk of speaking up and the situational variables in Figure 1 are, thus, anticipated to be contingent upon the levels of an individual’s self-esteem and self-monitoring.

**Self-esteem as a moderating mediator.** Research indicates that low self-esteem individuals, as compared to high self-esteem individuals, tend to rely more on cues from their surrounding environment to guide their work behaviors (Tharenou, 1979). This phenomenon, referred to as behavioral plasticity, has been empirically supported across different research sites (laboratory and field), across a variety of organizational stimuli (peer-group interaction, evaluative feedback, socialization practices, leadership behaviors, role strains, and work layoffs), and across many dimensions (job performance, job

commitment, hierarchical communication, role-taking tendencies, leadership style, job satisfaction, and work motivation; see Brockner, 1988, for a review).

Brockner (1988) offers several explanations as to why low self-esteem individuals' behavior tends to be more plastic. One possible explanation is that these individuals are more likely to engage in social comparison processes due to uncertainty surrounding the appropriateness of their own beliefs and behaviors. Another plausible explanation is that because low self-esteem individuals often do not like themselves, they look to others to provide them with positive evaluations. One strategy that individuals use to win favor with significant others is conforming to significant others' behaviors and attitudes. Thus, in attempting to win favor, low self-esteems may respond more readily to social cues. Finally, because low self-esteems are more sensitive to negative feedback than high self-esteems, they yield more to social cues in an attempt to avoid negative evaluations.

Regardless of the underlying processes at work to make low self-esteem individuals more susceptible to social cues, research supports this phenomenon as playing an important role in work behaviors. Low self-esteem may play a particularly salient role in one's willingness to speak up because low self-esteems lack confidence in their ability to influence their environment. Therefore, self-esteem is expected to interact with each of the contextual variables such that individuals with low self-esteem will be more susceptible to these environmental cues. Thus, in the workplace,

**Hypothesis 11:** The mediational role of the perceived risk of speaking up in the relationship between (a) top-management openness, (b) norms for

openness, (c) trust in supervisor, and (d) perceived organizational support and willingness to speak up is conditional upon level of self-esteem.

Self-monitoring as a moderating mediator. As previously discussed, high self-monitors, by their very nature, pay close attention to social signals from their environment and adjust their behavior to what they believe is appropriate for the situation (Snyder & Cantor, 1980), largely in an attempt to elicit positive reactions from others. Thus, as hypothesized, high self-monitoring is expected to lead to a perception of high risk of speaking up, and to a lower overall level of willingness to express one's views. The willingness of HSMs to speak up, however, should vary considerably from one situation to another because these individuals rely heavily on social signals or cues to regulate their behavior (Snyder & Cantor, 1980), and because they have a stronger tendency to concern themselves with self-presentation than LSMs (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Gardner & Martinko, 1988). HSMs tend to be more responsive to social information with respect to both evaluative criteria and actual choices (Kilduff, 1992). They tend to decide in each unique circumstance who the situations call them to be and how to be that person (Snyder, 1979). Therefore, self-monitoring is expected to interact with each of the situational variables such that high self-monitors will be more susceptible to contextual characteristics than low self-monitors. Thus, in the workplace,

Hypothesis 12: The mediational role of perceived risk of speaking up in the relationship between (a) top-management openness, (b) norms for openness, (c) trust in supervisor, and (d) perceived organizational support and willingness to speak up is conditional upon level of self-monitoring.

## Summary

To summarize, this chapter presented a conceptual scheme that identified individual (viz., need for achievement, locus of control, self-esteem, self-monitoring, need for approval) and situational (viz., top-management openness, norms of openness, trust in supervisor, perceived organizational support) antecedents of willingness to speak up. The conceptual scheme also identified perceived risk of speaking up as a potential link between the antecedents and willingness to speak up (i.e., perceived risk of speaking up will mediate the effects of the antecedents on willingness to speak up), and it identified self-esteem and self-monitoring as moderating-mediators of the effects of the situational antecedents. A summary of the hypotheses appears in Table 2.

Table 2  
Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** Perceived risk of speaking up will be negatively related to willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 2a:** Need for achievement will be positively related to willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 2b:** Perceived risk of speaking up will mediate the effect of need for achievement on willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 3a:** Locus of control will be positively related to willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 3b:** Perceived risk of speaking up will mediate the effect of locus of control on willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 4a:** Self-esteem will be positively related to willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 4b:** Perceived risk of speaking up will mediate the effect of self-esteem on willingness to speak up.

Table 2 continued

**Hypothesis 5a:** Self-monitoring will be negatively related to willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 5b:** Perceived risk of speaking up will mediate the effect self-monitoring on willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 6a:** Need for approval will be negatively related to willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 6b:** Perceived risk of speaking up will mediate the effect of need for approval on willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 7a:** Top-management openness will be positively related to willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 7b:** Perceived risk of speaking up will mediate the effect of top-management openness on willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 8a:** Norms for openness will be positively related to willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 8b:** Perceived risk of speaking up will mediate the effect of norms for openness on willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 9a:** Trust in supervisor will be positively related to willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 9b:** Perceived risk of speaking up will mediate the effect of trust in supervisor on willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 10a:** Perceived organizational support will be positively related to willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 10b:** Perceived risk of speaking up will mediate the effect of perceived organizational support on willingness to speak up.

**Hypothesis 11:** The mediational role of perceived risk of speaking up in the relationship between (a) top-management openness, (b) norms for openness, (c) trust in supervisor, and (d) perceived organizational support and willingness to speak up is conditional upon level of self-esteem.

**Table 2 continued**

**Hypothesis 12:** The mediational role of perceived risk of speaking up in the relationship between (a) top-management openness, (b) norms for openness, (c) trust in supervisor, and (d) perceived organizational support and willingness to speak up is conditional upon level of self-monitoring.

## CHAPTER 3: METHOD

### Sample and Procedures

The focal sample for the dissertation consisted of 291 employees of a telecommunications company located in the southern United States. The company, like many others in the telecommunications industry, has experienced phenomenal growth over the last decade, swelling from a family-owned business with twelve employees operating in a local market to a publicly-traded corporation with over one thousand employees operating in several states. This growth in number and widened geographical dispersion requires daily interactions among employees, making the organization especially suitable for addressing this dissertation's research question. Further, given the dynamic nature of the organization's internal and external environments, speaking up (especially as it involved making innovative suggestions for improved performance or noting potential problems) was highly prized. The free expression of one's views or opinions about workplace issues has been observed to be important for sustained success in fast changing and competitive markets (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). These conditions were confirmed by the organization's human-resource manager. Nonetheless, as also noted by the human-resource manager, certain efforts by some top managers in the organization to solicit employee input had been rejected by other top managers, indicating that varying degrees of speaking up behavior likely exist across the organization, thus, partially obviating concerns related to range restriction in the study's dependent variable (Bobko, 1995).

Data for hypothesis testing were gathered through surveys sent to company employees via intraoffice mail with a cover letter explaining the purpose and importance of



the study, as well as instructions for completing and returning the survey. To provide an incentive to participate, potential respondents were told that all completed surveys would be entered into a random drawing for three \$100 cash prizes. The surveys were followed by reminder postcards and by letters requesting additional information from those who returned incomplete surveys after four weeks. Replacements were sent to those who had not returned a completed survey after seven weeks. Participants were assured confidentiality and were informed that their responses would be used for research purposes only. To maintain confidentiality respondents' names were not printed on the surveys. Rather, each respondent was assigned a unique identification number that was individually printed on the surveys. All surveys, which were printed and scanned electronically by the Louisiana State University Testing Service, were returned via the U.S. mail in accompanying postage-paid business reply envelopes.

The employee survey assessed the ten identified predictor variables and requested demographic information pertaining to respondents' gender, age, race, job title, education, and tenure with the organization, in their current job, and with their present supervisor. The dependent variable, willingness to speak up, was assessed by a different survey sent to coworkers. The final section of the employee survey asked respondents to provide the names, phone numbers, and departments of up to three coworkers with whom they worked closely and who they thought might be willing to independently complete a short survey and return it directly to me. Participants were told that they could list as coworkers their supervisors, peers, or subordinates — anyone who worked closely with them and was familiar with their work. For convenience, I refer to all those listed as

**“coworkers,” even though some may have held either supervisory authority or subordinate positions.**

**The survey sent to the identified coworkers asked them to assess the relevant employee’s speaking up behavior. Employee names and identification numbers were printed on the surveys to ensure matching of independent and dependent variable responses. Assessing the dependent variable through coworker surveys avoids common method variance and limits social desirability bias that may distort self-reports of speaking up. In addition to the willingness to speak up scale, coworkers were asked for the same demographic information as the study’s focal employees, to indicate their hierarchical position relative to the focal employee, how frequently they interact with the focal employee, and how long they have been acquainted. Coworker surveys were distributed and collected using the same procedure as that for employee surveys. Coworkers were likewise assured confidentiality and told that their responses would be used solely for research purposes. They, too, were told that all completed coworker surveys would be entered into a random drawing for three \$100 cash prizes. The surveys were followed by a reminder email after approximately four weeks. Copies of the employee cover letter, employee survey, coworker cover letter, coworker survey, reminder postcard, letter requesting additional information, letter accompanying replacement surveys, and coworker reminder email are included in Appendices A through H, respectively.**

**Exactly 169 of the employee surveys were returned for a response rate of 58%. Of those, 25 failed to provide coworker names, reducing the useable responses to 144. A total of 422 coworker surveys were distributed for these 144 participants. Exactly 209 of**

the coworker surveys (49.5%) were returned for 118 participants, representing 81.9% of the employee participants returning the initial surveys and 40.5% of the original sample. Of these 118 participants, 53 were rated by one coworker, 39 were rated by two coworkers, and 26 were rated by three coworkers. Of the coworkers returning surveys: 15% were supervisors, 73% were coworkers, and 12% described their relationship as other. Approximately 61.5% of the responding coworkers indicated that they saw the employee participants they were asked to rate several times a day, and 71.3% that they had known one another for over one year. To alleviate concerns about possible systematic differences in speaking up ratings between the ratings gathered from multi-sources and those gathered from only one coworker I performed an analysis of variance comparing the three groups on willingness to speak up. There was no significant difference in ratings across the groups.

To allay concerns about whether there were systematic differences between respondents with coworker data and those without I performed t-tests comparing the two groups on the following variables: race, age, gender, education, and tenure in present job, with present organization, and with present supervisor, as well as social desirability bias. The only significant difference between the groups was on age, with those for whom coworker data were received being slightly older on average than those for whom coworker data were not received (mean difference = 3.7 years,  $t = 19.582$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This difference may limit the generalizability of the following findings. The similarity of the comparison groups on the aforementioned variables, however, diminishes the potential confounding of results based on sampling.

The final sample was predominantly female (86.4%) and Caucasian (80.5%) with an average age of 31.16 years ( $SD=10.79$ ). Average tenure with the present organization was 2.45 years ( $SD=2.58$ ), and average tenure in the present job was 2.22 years ( $SD=2.92$ ). The sample was fairly well-educated with 19.5% having completed high school, 45.8% having completed some college, 25.4% with a college degree, 5.1% having done some graduate work, and 1.7% with masters degrees. Whereas no claims are made that the final sample is representative of employees in other settings, these background characteristics confirm that the reported study sampled experienced male and female employees with considerable education, and they had worked with one another for some time.

### Willingness to Speak Up Measure Development

Being a new construct, a three phase process was followed in developing a speaking up measure. In the initial phase, following suggestions made by Reckase (1996), items were generated to represent the full range of the speaking up domain. Fourteen knowledgeable judges, acting alone, served as a review panel to assess the items for clarity and meaningfulness. A total of eight items were retained on the basis of being assessed by all fourteen judges to best reflect the target domain.

In Phase 2, the eight surviving items were pilot tested with a sample of 60 executive masters of business administration students, all of whom were employed full-time. The students were provided the following instructions: "Please read over the following statements and indicate the degree to which each statement characterizes a person with whom you work or have worked closely." Responses were on a five-point

continuum (1=~~strongly disagree~~, 5=~~strongly agree~~). Respondents were then asked to comment on the clarity and applicability of the items and to suggest additional items. Based on respondent feedback, six additional items were generated.

In Phase 3, the six additional items, together with the original eight items, were administered to 107 upper-level undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in advanced management courses, following the same procedure as employed in Phase 2. All respondents were prescreened to assure prior or current working experience. Before analyzing the pool of 14 items defined as input data from Phase 2, preliminary tests were conducted to determine if respondent scores were appropriate for factor analysis (Norusis, 1985). Bartlett's test of sphericity was performed and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olin measure of sampling adequacy was calculated. In addition, the data's correlation matrix and off-diagonal elements of the anti-image covariance matrix were examined. Results indicated that the data were suitable for further analysis.

The pool of 14 items was then examined with principal axis factor analysis, using communalities in the primary diagonal and a varimax rotation. Two factors were extracted having eigenvalues greater than one. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3. (An oblique rotation performed on the data yielded similar results.) With individuals factors being identified by those items loading  $\geq |.30|$  on a single factor, seven items (#s 3, 5, 6, 7, 11, 13, 14) were removed from further analysis due to cross-loadings. Factor 1 loaded on four items (#s 1, 2, 4, 9) characterized by the judges as Willingness to Speak Up. Factor 2 was defined by three items (#s 8, 10, 12), all with negative loadings. The observation that all three items loading on Factor 2 had negative loadings, whereas

**Table 3**  
**Factor Loadings, Means, and Standard Deviation for**  
**Fourteen Item Speaking Up Measure**

Item <sup>a</sup>	Factor 1	Factor 2	Item	Item
	Loading	Loading	M	SD
1. Speaks up when workplace happenings conflict with his/her sense of what is appropriate.	<u>77</u>	23	4.04	.95
6. Stands up to the actions or ideas of others when warranted.	<u>78</u>	22	3.79	1.04
3. Tells others how he/she feels about workplace issues regardless of what others may think.	45	61	3.92	1.01
4. Can be counted on to say things that need to be said.	<u>76</u>	21	3.86	1.02
5. Challenges others on matters of process and policy when necessary.	66	30	3.67	1.07
6. Openly takes a stand on an issues even when the vast majority of others disagree.	48	61	3.77	.99
7. Keeps his/her opinions to himself/herself when they differ from others. <sup>b</sup>	-34	-70	2.12	1.14
8. Is careful not to express ideas that may be contrary to what others believe. <sup>b</sup>	28	<u>-75</u>	2.11	.98
9. Speaks up if he/she feels a plan or idea won't work.	<u>74</u>	24	4.03	.86

Table 3 continued

10.	Remains quiet rather than say what's on his/her mind in discussion of controversial issues. <sup>b</sup>	00	<u>-74</u>	3.87	1.12
11.	Says the hard things that need to be said when discussing tough issues.	64	45	3.63	1.03
12.	Is reluctant to bring up ideas that others may disagree with. <sup>b</sup>	-29	-74	2.19	1.06
13.	Willingly risks rejection to challenge workplace policies or decisions that are inconsistent with his/her judgment.	47	47	2.40	1.03
14.	Speaks up for what may be unpopular positions.	66	43	3.73	.95
Eigenvalues for Factors 1 and 2		7.12	1.18		
% item variance explained			59.27		

---

**Note.** n = 107. Decimals omitted for factor loadings. Salient loadings that served to define Willingness to Speak Up are underlined.

<sup>a</sup>Order of items presentation is based on source factor.

<sup>b</sup>Reverse scored.

---

Factor 1 had no loadings similar in sign, raised concern that the separation of factors resulted from an artifact of measurement. To further explore this possibility, the items

identified as comprising Factors 1 and 2 were subjected to a second factor analysis. First, however, because items 8 and 12 were similar in wording, item 12 was dropped from further analysis to avoid item redundancy (Boyle, 1991). Results of the second factor analysis of the six surviving items are presented in Table 4 and indicated that all items loaded on a single factor (eigenvalue = 3.25) that accounted for over 54% of the variance. The mean factor loading for the six items was 0.73, demonstrating their homogeneity. A mean inter-item correlation of 0.40 supported the presence of a unidimensional construct. Examination of the item frequency distributions and item standard deviations (see Table 4) revealed that restriction of range was not a concern. The alpha coefficient was 0.82. (A forced one-factor solution of all 14 items was also examined, but did not aid in drawing conclusions about the appropriateness of including individual items in the final solution.)

The alpha coefficient attained in the main study for the six items was .81. An item analysis, however, led to closer scrutiny of item 4. Although item 4 is reverse-coded, many respondents did not treat it as such. A consequent exploratory factor analysis revealed a two-, rather than one-factor solution. The second factor consisted solely of item 4, thus, this item was excluded from subsequent data analysis. Upon removal of this item, the coefficient alpha increased from .81 to .87. Thus, the final Willingness to Speak Up measure used in the main study consisted of the remaining five items (See Appendix I).

### Other Measures

Appendix I also lists the other primary measures, all widely applied in organizational behavior research, selected to assess the remaining study variables. All items were



**Table 4**  
**Factor Loadings, Means, and Standard Deviation for**  
**Six Item Speaking Up Measure**

Item	Factor loadings	Item M	Item SD
1. Speaks up when workplace happenings conflict with his/her sense of what is appropriate.	79	4.04	.95
2. Stands up to the actions or ideas of others when warranted.	79	3.79	1.04
3. Can be counted on to say things that need to be said.	80 68	3.86 3.89	1.02 .98
4. Is careful not to express ideas that may be contrary to what others believe.*	77	4.03	.86
5. Speaks up if he/she feels a plan or idea won't work.	54	3.87	1.12
6. Remains quiet rather than say what's on his/her mind in discussions of controversial issues.*			
Coefficient $\alpha$	.82		
Eigenvalue	3.25		
% item variance explained	54.19		

**Note.**  $n = 107$ . Decimals omitted for factor loadings.

\*Reverse scored.

anchored by a 5-point response continuum ranging from strongly agree (=5) to strongly disagree (=1), and were summed and coded such that a high score indicates a positive level of agreement. Cronbach's alpha was computed on each measure.

### Independent Variables

Need for achievement. The degree to which an individual prefers moderately difficult goals, has a strong need for performance feedback, and prefers situations in which they can take personal responsibility for success or failure and in which they can try new ways of doing things was quantified with five items from the Manifest Needs Questionnaire (Steers & Braunstein, 1976). Sample items include: "I do my best work when my job assignments are fairly difficult;" "I take moderate risks and stick my neck out to get ahead at work;" "I try to perform better than my co-workers." Steers and Braunstein (1976) report a .72 test-retest reliability for this measure.

Locus of control. LOC, the extent to which individuals believe they exercise control over their lives, was measured with six items from Levenson's (1974) Locus of Control Scale. Sample items include: "My life is determined by my own actions;" "When I get what I want, it's usually because I worked hard for it;" "I can pretty much determine what will happen in my life," with agreement indicative of an internal locus of control.

Self-esteem. The extent to which individuals make favorable self-evaluations was assessed with Rosenberg's (1965) ten item self-esteem measure, the most widely used self-esteem instrument (Ganster & Schaubroeck, 1991). Sample items include: "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself;" "At times I think I am no good at all" (reverse scored); "I feel that I have a number of good qualities."

**Self-monitoring.** Individuals high on self-monitoring ability have a strong desire to attain and maintain a positive image in the eyes of others. Self-monitoring was substantiated with the thirteen item Revised Self-Monitoring Scale (RSMS; Lennox & Wolfe, 1984). This measure was developed in response to criticisms concerning the psychometric properties of Snyder's (1974) original Self-Monitoring Scale. Sample items include: "In social situations, I have the ability to alter my behavior if I feel that something else is called for;" "I have the ability to control the way I come across to people, depending on the impression I wish to give them;" "I am often able to read people's true emotions correctly through their eyes;" "In conversations, I am sensitive to even the slightest change in the facial expression of the person I'm conversing with." Lennox and Wolfe attained a coefficient alpha .75 for the measure. A recent examination of the robustness and fit of the RSMS attained an alpha of .87 (O'Cass, 2000), and a recent meta-analysis of self-monitoring (Day, Schleicher, Unckless, & Hiller, in press) indicated a higher average reliability for the Lennox and Wolfe 13-item scale (.81), than for either the 25-item Snyder scale (.71) or the revised 18-item version (.73).

**Need for approval.** An individual's level of need for approval indicates the extent to which the individual desires and values others' acceptance and approval. Need for approval was measured with the ten item Demand for Approval Scale of the Jones Irrational Beliefs Test (Cramer, 1993). Sample items include: "It is important that others approve of me;" "I like the respect of others, but I don't have to have it;" "I find it hard to go against what others think."

**Top-management openness.** The degree to which top management is believed to welcome employees' input and suggestions, top management openness, was assessed with a six-item measure developed by Ashford and colleagues (1998). Sample items include: "Good ideas get serious consideration from upper management;" "Upper management is interested in ideas and suggestions from people at my level in the organization;" "I feel free to make recommendations to upper management to change existing practices."

**Norms for openness.** Norms for openness, a work group's shared standards geared toward openness, were tapped with a three-item measure developed by Ashford and colleagues (1998). Sample items include: "People in my work unit are typically willing to raise issues important to them;" "In my work unit, controversial issues are kept under the table" (reverse scored). Ashford and colleagues provide strong support for the reliability of this measure ( $\alpha = .87$ ).

**Trust in supervisor.** Trust in supervisor, the extent to which individuals are willing to be vulnerable to the actions of their supervisor, was gauged with a six-item measure. Items were selected/adapted from several sources (Brockner et al., 1997; Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1983; Cropanzano & Prehar, 1999; Likert, 1967). Sample items include: "I can usually trust my supervisor to do what is good for me;" "When my supervisor says something, you can really believe that it is true;" "My supervisor will take advantage of you if you give him/her a chance" (reverse scored).

**Perceived organizational support.** Employees' beliefs about the extent to which an organization values their contributions and is concerned with their well-being (i.e., perceived organizational support) was assessed with eight items from the Survey of

**Perceived Organizational Support** (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Sample items include: “The organization strongly considers my goals and values;” “Help is available from the organization when I have a problem;” “The organization cares about my opinions.”

### **Mediating Variable**

**Perceived risk of speaking up.** Individuals’ assessment of the perceived risk of speaking up was measured with four items ( $\alpha = .93$ ) (Maslyn et al., 1996). Respondents rated their level of agreement with the statement “Speaking up on issues in my work unit would . . .” Sample items include: “Hurt my relationship with my supervisor;” “Make me appear unprofessional to my supervisor’s boss;” “Cause my supervisor to be harder on me in the future.”

### **Control Variable**

**Social-desirability bias.** Social-desirability bias (SDB), the tendency of individuals to present themselves in a favorable light relative to social norms and standards (King & Bruner, 2000), was included as a control variable to partial out any potential response bias resulting from the use of self-report measures. For this purpose, thirteen items from the short form of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Ballard, 1992) were incorporated into the survey instrument. Sample items include: “I sometimes feel resentful when I don’t get my way” (reverse scored); “No matter who I’m talking to, I’m always a good listener;” “I’m always willing to admit it when I make a mistake.”

## CHAPTER 4: ANALYSES, RESULTS, AND INITIAL DISCUSSION

This chapter reports the initial findings of the study. Interclass correlation coefficients to test the agreement among coworkers' ratings of participants' willingness to speak up, and statistical analyses used to test the proposed hypotheses, followed by the ensuing results, are presented. Descriptive statistics and coefficient alpha for all study variables are presented in Table 5. Intercorrelations, also included in Table 5, ranged from  $-.63$  to  $.60$ , providing some evidence of discriminant validity among the constructs examined. Contrary to expectations, willingness to speak up was uniquely correlated with only one predictor variable,  $n$  Ach ( $r=.21$ ,  $p<.05$ ). As expected, perceived risk of speaking up was significantly, and negatively, correlated with  $n$  Ach, internal LOC, top-management openness, trust in supervisor, and perceived organizational support ( $r$ s ranging from  $-.17$  to  $-.63$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

Social-desirability bias did not appear to be problematic. Prior research has suggested that a lack of social desirability bias is evidenced by correlations in the range of  $\pm.10$  to  $\pm.40$  (i.e., Carson, Carson, & Bedeian, 1995; Morrow & Goetz, 1988). In this study, the correlations with social desirability bias ranged from  $\pm.02$  through  $\pm.33$ , indicating that the data are not substantially contaminated by efforts of employee participants to present themselves in a favorable way.

With the notable exception of  $n$  Ach, LOC, and norms for openness, reliability estimates were generally good, ranging from  $.77$  to  $.94$ . Not reported in Table 5 were the skewness of the study variables, which ranged from  $.17$  to  $-.62$  with a mean of  $-.19$ , or the kurtosis, which ranged from  $2.33$  to  $-.25$  with a mean of  $.27$ , which together indicated that

**Table 5**  
**Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Intercorrelations for All Study Variables**

Variables	n	M	SD	r											
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b><u>Dependent Variable</u></b>															
1. Willingness to speak up	118	19.49	3.63	(.87)											
<b><u>Mediating Variable</u></b>															
2. Perceived risk of speaking up	168	9.93	3.98	.05	(.94)										
<b><u>Independent Variables</u></b>															
3. Need for achievement	167	18.98	2.61	.21	-.17	(.59)									
4. Locus of control	168	23.65	2.94	.05	-.35	.39	(.65)								
5. Self-esteem	167	42.29	4.70	-.02	-.15	.40	.43	(.84)							
6. Self-monitoring	168	47.13	6.38	.02	-.06	.41	.25	.31	(.83)						
7. Need for approval	168	27.18	5.48	.04	-.12	-.02	-.17	-.26	-.08	(.77)					
8. Top-management openness	168	20.72	5.08	-.04	-.48	.14	.31	.08	.00	-.01	(.91)				
9. Norms for openness	168	10.99	1.99	.13	-.12	.08	.18	.13	.18	-.16	.05	(.59)			
10. Trust in supervisor	168	23.10	5.28	-.10	-.67	.16	.37	.10	.10	.16	.44	.04	(.84)		
11. Perceived organizational support	168	28.14	6.15	-.02	-.63	.17	.35	.08	.04	.14	.73	-.01	.60	(.93)	

Table 5 continued

Control Variable

12. Social desirability bias	167	44.74	6.47	.02	-.23	.11	.13	.33	.08	.06	.12	-.07	.20	.26	(75)
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Supplemental Variable

13. Dyadic duration	164	1.43	.91	.13	-.02	.04	-.09	.01	.07	.01	.08	-.02	.04	.09	.12
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Note. For  $r$  at and above  $|.16|$ ,  $p \leq .05$  (two-tailed). Coefficient alpha reliability estimates are in parentheses.



the distributions were sufficiently normal for appropriate application of multiple regression analysis. Visual inspection of the variables' Q-Q probability plots confirmed acceptable levels of normality.

To further confirm the value of using all ten predictors in my analyses, I examined the strength of their linear relationships. Tolerance statistics for the predictors placed in a complete equation with speaking up as the dependent variable and social desirability as a covariate ranged from .35 for POS to .82 for norms for openness, with  $M = .64$  and  $SD = .07$ , indicating that multicollinearity among the predictors was not a concern (Norusis, 1997).

#### Intraclass Correlation Coefficients

The dependent variable, willingness to speak up, was computed for each subject by averaging coworkers' responses to the willingness to speak up items. For 65 of the focal employees, I had multiple measures of willingness to speak up. To determine whether it was appropriate to create an average rating for each coworker set, I computed an intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC). Because the data consisted of ratings from different judges for each focal employee, ICC(i,j) was employed (Shrout & Fleiss, 1979). ICC(i,j) provides a point estimate of the agreement of ratings made by two or more judges on the chosen objects of measurement (McGraw & Wong, 1996). ICC computations indicated a moderate, and not quite significant, level of agreement ( $ICC = .21$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Given the modesty of the ICC, following Morrison and Phelps (1999), I searched the raw data for cases in which coworkers provided highly discrepant ratings for the same subject. Five cases were identified where the difference between coworkers' measures exceeded

2.00 on the five-point rating scales, making averaging of their ratings inappropriate.

These five cases were more closely examined to ascertain which ratings were more likely to be accurate assessments of focal employees' speaking up behavior. Coworkers' relationships to the participants, how long they have known the participants, and how frequently they see the participants were all appraised. In all five cases, it was adjudged that a valid inference could be made as to which coworkers' ratings were most likely to be reliable. In four of the five cases, the discrepant measure was provided by a coworker who had known the subject for less than one year, a considerably shorter time period than the other coworkers providing ratings. In the fifth case, the coworker providing the discrepant rating no longer worked directly with the subject. The discrepant ratings were removed and the ICC recalculated. This new ICC, .50 ( $p < .05$ ), compares favorably with other reported ICC values (James, 1982), indicating that it was appropriate to average the coworker ratings.

### Hypotheses Tests

Preliminary analyses revealed no significant social-desirability effects for any of the study's predictors; therefore, social desirability was excluded as a factor in the reported analyses in the interest of parsimony and to maximize the power of my statistical tests.

Hypothesis 1 suggested that perceived risk of speaking up would be negatively related to willingness to speak up. The zero-order correlation ( $r = .05$ ) between perceived risk of speaking up and willingness to speak up, however, was nonsignificant ( $p > .05$ ; one-tailed).

Thus, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Hypotheses 2a through 4a predicted that three of the individual variables (n Ach, LOC, and self-esteem) would be positively related to willingness to speak up. N Ach was positively and uniquely correlated with willingness to speak up ( $r=.21$ ,  $p<.05$ ; one-tailed), thus, supporting Hypothesis 2a. In contrast, the simple correlations between LOC and willingness to speak up ( $r=.05$ ), and between self-esteem and willingness to speak up ( $r=-.02$ ), were nonsignificant at  $p>.05$  (one-tailed). Thus, Hypotheses 3a and 4a were not supported.

Hypotheses 5a and 6a predicted negative relationships between two individual variables (self-monitoring and need for approval) and willingness to speak up. Neither the coefficient for self-monitoring and willingness to speak up ( $r=.02$ ) nor for need for approval and willingness to speak up ( $r=.04$ ) were significantly different from zero ( $p>.05$ ; one-tailed). Therefore, neither Hypothesis 5a nor Hypothesis 6a were supported.

Hypotheses 7a through 10a predicted positive relationships between the situational variables (top-management openness, norms for openness, trust in supervisor, and perceived organizational support) and willingness to speak up. None of these bivariate correlations ( $-.04$ ,  $.13$ ,  $-.10$ ,  $-.02$ ) were statistically significant at  $p<.05$  (one-tailed). Thus, Hypotheses 7a through 10a were not supported.

Hypotheses 2b through 10b predicted that perceived risk of speaking up would mediate the effects of various individual and situational antecedents of willingness to speak up. Each hypothesis was tested separately using the three-step mediation regression suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986). On Step 1, perceived risk of speaking up was regressed on an antecedent variable; on Step 2, willingness to speak up was regressed on an antecedent

variable; and on Step 3, willingness to speak up was regressed simultaneously on an antecedent variable and perceived risk of speaking up. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), complete mediation is demonstrated if the antecedent variable significantly influences perceived risk of speaking up on Step 1; the antecedent variable significantly influences willingness to speak up on Step 2; and, finally, perceived risk of speaking up, but not the antecedent, significantly influences willingness to speaking up on Step 3. Partial mediation is evidenced if, on Step 3, the antecedent's effect on willingness to speak up is smaller, but still significant.

The mediated regression results for willingness to speak up are presented in Table 6. On Step 1, results were significant ( $p < .05$ ) for five of the antecedents (viz., n Ach, LOC, top-management openness, trust in supervisor, perceived organizational support) and approached conventional significance ( $p < .10$ ) for self-esteem. On Step 2, however, only one of the predictors, n Ach, was significant ( $\beta=.21$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Thus, Hypotheses 3b through 10b were not supported. Finally, on Step 3, n Ach's effect on willingness to speak up was larger ( $\beta=.23$ ;  $p < .05$ ), not smaller, than on Step 2, indicating that n Ach impacts the willingness to speak up directly, not indirectly through perceived risk. Hypotheses 2b, therefore, was likewise not supported.

Hypotheses 11 and 12, that self-esteem and self-monitoring would moderate the mediated relationships between each of the situational antecedents and willingness to speak up was tested following the multiple-regression procedure outlined by Bedeian, Kemery, and Pizzolatto (1991). The moderated-mediation regression results for self-esteem and self-monitoring are presented in Tables 7 and 8, respectively. As indicated, on

**Table 6**  
**Results of Mediated Regression Analysis for Willingness to Speak Up**

Antecedents (IV)	Perceived risk of speaking up (PR) (M)	Willingness to speak up (DV)
	$\beta$	$\beta$
<b>Individual Variables</b>		
<b>Need for achievement (n Ach)</b>		
Step 1 n Ach	-.17*	
Step 2 n Ach		.21*
Step 3 PR (M)		.09
n Ach		.23*
		Adj. R <sup>2</sup> .037
		E 3.210*
<b>Locus of control (LOC)</b>		
Step 1 LOC	-.35***	
Step 2 LOC		.05
Step 3 PR (M)		.08
LOC		.08
		Adj. R <sup>2</sup> -.009
		E .480
<b>Self-esteem (SE)</b>		
Step 1 SE	-.15*	
Step 2 SE		-.02
Step 3 PR (M)		.05
SE		-.01
		Adj. R <sup>2</sup> -.015
		E .151
<b>Self-monitoring (SM)</b>		
Step 1 SM	-.06	
Step 2 SM		.02
Step 3 PR (M)		.05
SM		.02
		Adj. R <sup>2</sup> -.014
		E .184
<b>Need for approval (n App)</b>		
Step 1 n App	-.12	
Step 2 n App		.04
Step 3 PR (M)		.06
n App		.05
		Adj. R <sup>2</sup> -.012
		E .293

Table 6 continued

Antecedents (IV)	Perceived risk of speaking up (PR) (M)	Willingness to speak up (DV)
	$\beta$	$\beta$
<b>Situational Variables</b>		
<b>Top-management openness (TMO)</b>		
Step 1 TMO	-.49***	
Step 2 TMO		-.04
Step 3 PR (M)		.04
TMO		-.03
		Adj. R <sup>2</sup> -.014
		F .181
<b>Norms for openness (NO)</b>		
Step 1 NO	-.12	
Step 2 NO		.13
Step 3 PR (M)		.07
NO		.13
		Adj. R <sup>2</sup> .003
		F 1.176
<b>Trust in supervisor (TS)</b>		
Step 1 TS	-.67***	
Step 2 TS		-.10
Step 3 PR (M)		-.03
TS		-.13
		Adj. R <sup>2</sup>
		F
<b>Perceived organizational support (POS)</b>		
Step 1 POS	-.63***	
Step 2 POS		-.02
Step 3 PR (M)		.07
POS		.02
		Adj. R <sup>2</sup> -.014
		F .168

**Note.** Step 1 represents the regression of perceived risk of speaking up on the antecedents and does not include the dependent variable. Step 2 represents the regression of willingness to speak up on the antecedents and does not include the mediator variable. Step 3 represents the simultaneous regression of willingness to speak up on both the mediator and the antecedents. (IV) = independent variable. (M) = mediator. (DV) = dependent variable. \*p < .05 \*\*p < .01 \*\*\*p < .001.

Step 1, willingness to speak up was regressed on perceived risk of speaking up to control for the latter's hypothesized mediating effect on subsequent steps; on Step 2, the predicted moderating and the situational variables were entered, in turn, followed by their cross-products on Step 3. Moderated-mediation is supported if the cross-product is significant.

As can be seen in Table 7, none of the cross-products were significant for self-esteem. Thus, Hypothesis 11 was not supported. One possible explanation for the lack of the hypothesized effect for self-esteem is the relatively high level of the participants' self-esteem. The mean rating of self-esteem was 42.29 ( $SD=4.70$ ) out of a possible 50. Behavioral plasticity is expected for those with low, not high, levels of self-esteem.

As regards Hypothesis 12, the cross-product for top-management openness and self-monitoring, shown in Table 8, was significant ( $p < .05$ ), supporting the belief that the mediated relationship between top-management openness and perceived risk of speaking up is conditional upon level of self-monitoring. Hypothesis 12a, therefore, was supported. In contrast, no support was found for the belief that such a conditional relationship existed between norms for openness, trust in supervisor, and perceived organizational support and perceived risk of speaking up. Hypotheses 12b - 12d, thus, were not supported.

### Discussion

This dissertation predicted that the antecedents of willingness to speak up would operate both directly and indirectly through the perceived risk of speaking up. The prediction of indirect relationships between the antecedents in Figure 1 and willingness to speak up, however, were not supported. Perceived risk of speaking up was not significantly correlated with willingness to speak up, negating any possibility of a

**Table 7**  
**Results of Moderated-Mediation Regression Analysis for Self-esteem**

Antecedents (IV)	Willingness to speak up (DV)		
	$\beta$		
<b>Top-management openness (TMO)</b>			
Step 1 PR	.07		
Step 2 PR	.05		
TMO	-.03		
SE	-.06		
Step 3 PR	.04		
TMO	.40		
SE	.13		
TMO $\times$ SE	-.49		
		Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	-.024
		F	.318
<b>Norms for openness (NO)</b>			
Step 1 PR	.07		
Step 2 PR	.07		
NO	.11		
SE	-.07		
Step 3 PR	.07		
NO	.35		
SE	.33		
NO $\times$ SE	.55		
		Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	-.013
		F	.635
<b>Trust in supervisor (TS)</b>			
Step 1 PR	.07		
Step 2 PR	-.04		
TS	-.15		
SE	-.06		
Step 3 PR	-.03		
TS	-.69		
SE	-.32		
PR $\times$ SE	.64		
		Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	-.012
		F	.669



Table 7 continued

Antecedents ( <i>IV</i> )	Willingness to speak up ( <i>DV</i> )		
	$\beta$		
<b>Perceived organizational support (POS)</b>			
Step 1 PR	.07		
Step 2 PR	.06		
POS	.00		
SE	-.06		
Step 3 PR	.06		
POS	-.25		
SE	-.20		
POS $\times$ SE	.30		
		Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	-.026
		F	.267

**Note.** Step 1 represents the regression of willingness to speak up on the mediator variable (perceived risk of speaking up; PR). Step 2 represents the simultaneous regression of willingness to speak up on the mediator variable, the antecedents, and the moderator variable (self-esteem; SE). Step 3 represents the simultaneous regression of willingness to speak up on the mediator variable, the antecedents, the moderator variable, and the interaction term. (*IV*) = independent variable. (*DV*) = dependent variable.

mediating relationship. The one predictor, *n Ach*, that was significant for both steps 1 and 2 in the mediated regression analysis, was shown to operate directly on willingness to speak up, not indirectly through perceived risk of speaking up. The predicted moderating mediated effect for self-esteem in Figure 1 also received no support, although there was some support for self-monitoring as a moderating mediator with respect to top-management openness. Overall, these results offer little support for the proposed conceptual scheme as depicted in Figure 1. More specific comments follow.

**Table 8**  
**Results of Moderated-Mediation Regression Analysis for Self-monitoring**

Antecedents (IV)	Willingness to speak up (DV)	$\beta$		
<hr/>				
<b>Top-management openness (TMO)</b>				
Step 1 PR		.07		
Step 2 PR		.05		
TMO		-.03		
SM		-.01		
Step 3 PR		.04		
TMO		1.53*		
SM		.82*		
TMO $\times$ SM		-1.82*		
			Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.016
			F	1.474
<b>Norms for openness (NO)</b>				
Step 1 PR		.07		
Step 2 PR		.08		
NO		.11		
SM		-.03		
Step 3 PR		.08		
NO		-.27		
SM		-.28		
NO $\times$ SM		.50		
			Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	-.015
			F	.560
<b>Trust in supervisor (TS)</b>				
Step 1 PR		.07		
Step 2 PR		-.03		
TS		-.15		
SM		-.01		
Step 3 PR		-.02		
TS		1.42		
SM		.86		
PR $\times$ SM		-1.87		
			Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.012
			F	1.340

Table 8 continued

Antecedents ( <i>IV</i> )	Willingness to speak up ( <i>DV</i> )		
	$\beta$		
<b>Perceived organizational support (POS)</b>			
Step 1 PR	.07		
Step 2 PR	.07		
POS	.00		
SM	-.01		
Step 3 PR	.07		
POS	.89		
SM	.50		
POS $\times$ SM	-1.07		
		Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	-.016
		F	.550

**Note.** Step 1 represents the regression of willingness to speak up on the mediator variable (perceived risk of speaking up; PR). Step 2 represents the simultaneous regression of willingness to speak up on the mediator variable, the antecedents, and the moderator variable (self-monitoring; SM). Step 3 represents the simultaneous regression of willingness to speak up on the mediator variable, the antecedents, the moderator variable, and the interaction term. (*IV*) = independent variable. (*DV*) = dependent variable. \* $p < .05$ .

**Perceived risk of speaking up and willingness to speak up.** Hypothesis 1 had predicted that perceived risk of speaking up would be negatively related to speaking up. Perceived risk, however, was not significantly correlated with willingness to speak up. One possible explanation for the nonsignificant effect is the relatively low perceptions of perceived risk in the present sample. The mean (9.93,  $SD=3.98$ ) is fairly low given that the median of perceived risk is ten. There was, apparently, little perceived risk of speaking up in the study sample. Another possible explanation for the failure to support the predicted relationship is low statistical power. Power was negatively effected by the

study's small sample size (Aguinis, 1995). Coupled with the small effect of perceived risk, this made detecting differences especially difficult. It is also possible that no relationship was found between perceived risk of speaking up and willingness to speak up because the conceptual scheme in Figure 1 is misspecified. Given the proposed scheme's theoretical foundation, however, further research into its validity is warranted before a null relationship can be supported.

Moreover, perceived risk of speaking up may not be powerful enough, in the current sample, to overcome the anticipated rewards associated with speaking up. According to expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), if an individual's estimate of the probability of a positive outcome is high, the individual will have a positive attitude toward engaging in a specific behavior, and will be more likely to do so. Otherwise a low instrumental value is associated with the behavior, and the individual will choose not to engage in said behavior. Perhaps the expected outcomes associated with speaking up outweigh the perceived risks associated with voicing one's views.

A final explanation for a failure to support the negative relationship between perceived risk and speaking up is that there may be a discrepancy between participants' speaking up behavior and coworkers' perceptions and, subsequent ratings, of those behaviors. Employees may choose to remain silent more frequently than not because the perceived risks are just too high. Coworkers are unlikely to be aware of these instances where participants would like to express a view, but remain silent instead. These incidents would not show up in the current study due to a reliance on coworker ratings of speaking up behavior.

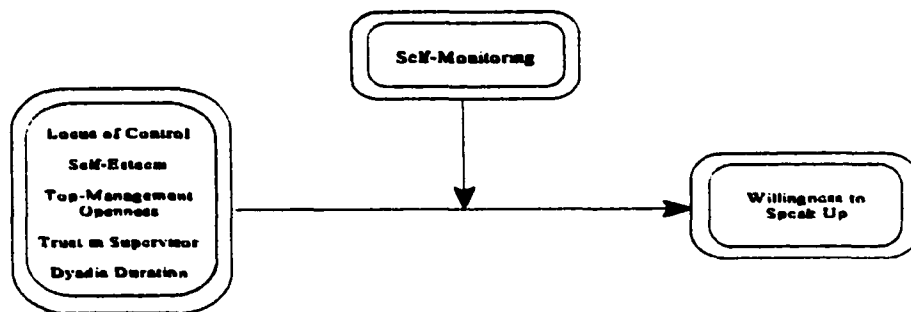
Predictor variables and willingness to speak up. In addition to low statistical power, low effect sizes may have compounded the reported results. With the exception of need for achievement, the correlations between the hypothesized predictor variables and willingness to speak up were nonsignificant. This lack of significance could be due to a number of reasons. First, there may actually be little correlation between the predictor variables and willingness to speak up. Given the strong relation between several of these variables and the perceived risk of speaking up, and the strong theoretical basis for such relationships, however, this explanation is suspect. A second potential explanation is the coarseness of the response categories used to quantify study variables. Russell and colleagues (Bobko & Russell, 1994; Russell & Bobko, 1992; Russell, Pinto, & Bobko, 1991) have shown that the use of an insufficient number of response categories may result in information loss, preventing certain effects from being detected. As the number of response categories increases, however, the percentage of overlap in adjacent judgments increases. Because five-point response continua do not exhibit a great deal of overlap (Bass, Cascio, & O'Connor, 1974), they were used in this study. Finally, in the case of n Ach, LOC, and norms for openness, the reliabilities of the measures employed were below the minimum threshold (i.e.,  $\alpha = .70$ ) usually recommended (see, e.g., Streiner, 1993), possibly attenuating results for these predictors.

As regards the significant relationship between n Ach and speaking up, given the conceptualization of speaking up as a behavior motivated by a desire to improve organizational functioning, higher levels of speaking up by those scoring high on n Ach makes sense. Individuals high on n Ach are driven to do things better, and often take a

proactive approach to work (Frese et al., 1997). Moreover, they have been shown to prefer to exert personal influence over their work-related outcomes (Miller & Dröge, 1986). By exerting what they believe to be a positive influence on their work environment, high achievers may thus hope to improve their chances of success (Miner, 1980). For this reason, consistent with expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), high achievers may perceive a high instrumental value in voicing their views. Those with a high achievement motive appear to place greater weight on the potential benefits associated with speaking up than the risks they perceive associated with doing so. Furthermore, those with a high n Ach may attain some sense of intrinsic satisfaction from the process of speaking up due to their drive to do things better, as well as, more efficiently (McClelland, 1965, 1985), further increasing their motives for expressing their opinions.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCEPTUAL RESPECIFICATION

Given the failure to support a majority of my a priori hypotheses, a reinspection of both the correlation matrix in Table 5 and the results of the hierarchical regression analyses, suggested a possible respecification of the conceptual scheme presented in Figure 1. In particular, the fact that self-monitoring was not associated with speaking up, but moderated top-management openness, intimated that self-monitoring may also serve as a moderator variable for other relationships. To explore this possibility, a set of supplementary analyses was performed in which self-monitoring was hypothesized to interact with two personal attributes (viz., LOC and self-esteem), and three workplace characteristics (viz., top-management openness, trust in supervisor, and dyadic duration) to influence willingness to speak up, as depicted in Figure 2. This chapter presents the new conceptual scheme, new hypotheses, and the results of the subsequent analyses.



**Figure 2:** A conceptual scheme for understanding willingness to speak up

**Self-monitoring as a moderator.** The previous discussion of self-monitoring suggests that HSMs tend to be more responsive to social information with respect to both evaluative criteria and actual choices (Kilduff, 1992), and they tend to decide in each unique circumstance who the situation calls on them to be, and how to be that person (Snyder, 1979). LSMs, however, tend to behave more consistently across situations, and to remain true to their dispositions (John et al., 1996; Snyder & Cantor, 1980). Further, a recent reappraisal of the self-monitoring literature (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000) suggests that high and low self-monitors may have different orientations toward status enhancement. HSMs may strive to advance public images that insinuate social status and strive to forge social environments that serve as effective instruments of social aggrandizement (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). HSMs, therefore, can be expected to speak up only when they feel it is opportunistic to do so. LSMs, on the other hand, may be more inclined toward developing close social relationships based on trust, and in nurturing reputations as “genuine and sincere people” (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000, p. 547). As a result, they tend to forge deep emotional attachments (Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 2001).

The fact that LSMs will speak up across situations, however, does not mean that their level of speaking up behavior is constant across situations. LSMs are more readily influenced by personal dispositions, and will speak up even more freely when conditions are favorable. Self-monitoring would be expected, therefore, to interact with each of the personal attributes and workplace characteristics. Thus, the speaking up behavior of LSMs would be expected to be more responsive to their dispositional properties (LOC, self-esteem) and other interpersonal attributes and states (top-management openness, trust



in supervisor), whereas the speaking up behavior of HSMs would be expected to be more responsive to social cues (dyadic duration).

**Self-monitoring and locus of control.** In the initial conceptual scheme of willingness to speak up (Figure 1), internal LOC was expected to positively influence willingness to speak up. This willingness of Internals to express their views is expected to be moderated, however, by their orientation toward self-monitoring. As mentioned previously, LSMs tend to express behaviors that are truer reflections of their inner attitudes, emotions, and dispositions than HSMs (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). As a result, self-monitoring theory suggests that the behavior of LSMs is more readily predicted from their traits than HSMs. When these dispositions reinforce opinion expression, speaking up is even more likely. It is reasonable to expect that individuals with an internal LOC will use speaking up behaviors more readily because they believe in their ability to influence outcomes. The tendency of LSMs to be true to themselves would arguably further reinforce this tendency to speak up. HSMs, on the other hand, are more readily responsive to environmental cues. Therefore, the tendency of Internals to speak up about organizational issues would likely be tempered by a strong self-monitoring orientation. Thus, in the workplace,

**Hypothesis 13:** Self-monitoring will moderate the relationship between locus of control and willingness to speak up, such that this relationship will be stronger for LSMs than for HSMs when locus of control is high.

**Self-monitoring and self-esteem.** Self-esteem measures capture not only beliefs about the self, but also patterns and styles of self-presentation (Baumeister, Tice, &

Hutton, 1989). Individuals with low levels of self-esteem are oriented toward self-protection, and thus, are not likely to put themselves in positions of vulnerability (Baumeister et al., 1989). Although speaking up, if successful, exposes one to the chance of enhancing one's status, it also presents the risk of losing face if one fails. Therefore, low self-esteem individuals are likely to avoid the self-presentational risks associated with speaking up to protect themselves from potential public humiliation. The refusal to speak up, however, should not be taken as a reluctance to disclose information about one's self, but rather as an attempt to avoid drawing attention to oneself and to elude possible failure and rejection (Baumeister et al., 1989). This characterization of low self-esteem individuals is consistent with recent literature describing these individuals as "more cautious than incapacitated, more self-protective than self-loathing, and more conservative than risk-taking, because they wish to preserve the self-esteem they have and not because they hate themselves or life" (Mruk, 1995, p. 73).

Although low self-monitoring individuals are usually more likely to speak up, when they have low self-esteem they may be more likely to take a protective stance and remain silent. LSMs who are also low on self-esteem may be deterred from speaking up by the potential risk of public failure. As self-esteem increases, however, so too does the likelihood of speaking up. In the case of LSMs, who are most likely to be themselves across situations, speaking up would seem especially likely when self-esteem is also high. The self-enhancing tendencies of individuals with high self-esteem occur mainly in public settings (Baumeister et al., 1989). The desire of LSMs to cultivate a reputation for earnestness and sincerity, coupled with the opportunity of public success desired by high

self-esteems, would arguably increase the likelihood of low self-monitoring, high esteem individuals speaking up. Thus, in the workplace,

**Hypothesis 14:** Self-monitoring will moderate the relationship between self-esteem and willingness to speak up, such that this relationship will be stronger for LSMs than for HSMs when self-esteem is high.

**Self-monitoring and top-management openness.** A top management characterized as open, not only welcomes, but also encourages, employee input, thus reducing the perception of risk associated with speaking up. This free exchange between managers and employees may have a somewhat different effect depending on an employee's self-monitoring orientation. As noted, LSMs will speak up across situations whereas HSMs will speak up only when they believe that it is opportunistic to do so. LSMs may view the receptiveness of top management as an opportunity to more readily express who they are.

Conversely, seemingly closed-minded managers may discourage individuals who are driven by consistency between their attitudes, behavior, and beliefs, like LSMs, to offer their views. They may fear the possible negative repercussions of voicing views inconsistent with those of their superiors or saying what superiors may not want to hear. At the same time, however, LSMs are unlikely to express what they don't truly believe (Snyder, 1979). As a result, when top management is not seen as open, they would be more likely to remain silent. On the other hand, HSMs would seemingly be more apt to speak up even when top management is not seen as particularly open because their opinions are more likely to mirror those of management. HSMs are likely to espouse views they believe conducive to image enhancement, even when those views are not

necessarily completely consistent with their inner dispositions (Snyder, 1979). HSMs are more prone to behave opportunistically and to engage in information manipulation (Fandt & Ferris, 1990). LSMs are more likely to voice their views when they believe that they can freely express what they truly believe (Snyder, 1979). Therefore, in the workplace,

**Hypothesis 15:** Self-monitoring will moderate the relationship between top-management openness and willingness to speak up, such that this relationship will be stronger for LSMs than for HSMs when top-management openness is high.

**Self-monitoring and trust in supervisor.** Trust has been shown to be an important ingredient in individuals' decisions to contribute to the common good in interdependence situations (De Cremer et al., 2001). It reflects a willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the expectation that he or she will act benevolently (Mayer et al., 1995). LSMs, as opposed to HSMs, may be especially responsive to the trustworthiness of parties in their interpersonal interactions. LSMs are believed to be concerned with the development of positive social relations (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000), and prefer social situations that allow them the freedom to be themselves (Snyder & Gangestad, 1982), conditions that are more likely when one's supervisor is viewed as trustworthy. HSMs, on the other hand, tend to behave more opportunistically (Fandt & Ferris, 1990), and therefore, are less likely to be influenced by interpersonal factors such as trust.

The LSM orientation is believed facilitated by situations that permit people to be themselves and, if possible, LSMs will choose situations in which expressing their true attitudes, feelings, and dispositions is agreeable (Snyder, 1987). Whereas both HSMs and

LSMs choose circumstances conducive to their orientations, HSMs choose situations in service to a pragmatic self, and LSMs choose situations in service to a principled self (Snyder, 1987). LSMs will assess the situation for the potential to “be themselves,” and once they find such conditions will respond to their own proclivities (Snyder, 1987). Relationships characterized by trust are just the kind of relationships LSMs seem to seek because they facilitate their need to be themselves. Thus, in the workplace,

**Hypothesis 16:** Self-monitoring will moderate the relationship between trust in supervisor and willingness to speak up, such that this relationship will be stronger for LSMs than for HSMs when trust in supervisor is high.

**Self-monitoring and dyadic duration.** The length of time a subordinate has worked with the same immediate supervisor is recognized as a key contextual variable in understanding workplace dynamics at the dyadic level of analysis (Mossholder, Bedeian, Niebuhr, & Wesolowski, 1994). This variable, labeled dyadic duration by Mossholder, Niebuhr, and Norris (1990), reflects a temporal quality inherent in all supervisor-subordinate dyads. Such dyadic exchanges are, by definition, evolutionary in nature, consisting of varying levels of action and reaction across time. Reflecting what Baudry (1993) has referred to as the “vicissitudes” of the supervisor-subordinate relationship, Mossholder et al. (1994) have suggested that the dynamic give and take underlying such interactions resembles a learning curve, requiring the active participation of both dyad members as they become familiar with one another’s desires, value systems, and personal idiosyncrasies. Supervisor-subordinate exchanges necessarily mirror such familiarity. Over time, as a function of having a history of interactions, dyadic duration can thus be

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expected to influence subordinates' willingness to speak up (Fosha, 2001). This follows logically because dynamics that impede supervisor-subordinate exchanges would eventually be expected to affect subordinates' perceptions of the instrumentality and perceived risk of speaking up. Moreover, subordinates who must continue in uncomfortable or dysfunctional dyadic relationships with an immediate supervisor may experience a sense of futility with regard to speaking up about work-related issues. For them, speaking up simply may not be worth the effort (Wesolowski & Mossholder, 1997).

In the case of HSMs, who are more skilled at social interactions than LSMs (Furnham & Capon, 1983), this may be especially true. HSMs attend more to contextual cues, including the behavior and attitudes of supervisors (Anderson & Tolson, 1989). Apparently, as subordinates' tenure with their supervisors lengthens, they become more familiar with and develop a deeper understanding of the behaviors seen as desirable by their supervisors (Mossholder et al., 1990). Over time, through this observation and their superior social skills, HSMs would be more likely to learn when and how to use speaking up as an opportunity to enhance their image and, thus, be more likely to do so. The characteristics of HSMs enable them to better understand the behaviors and techniques necessary to enhance their image through speaking up, and make them more likely to engage in opportunistic behavior (Fandt & Ferris, 1990). Therefore, in the workplace,

**Hypothesis 17:** Self-monitoring will moderate the relationship between dyadic duration and willingness to speak up, such that this relationship will be stronger for HSMs than for LSMs when dyadic duration is longer.

A summary of supplementary Hypotheses 13 through 17 appears in Table 9.

Table 9  
Supplemental Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 13:** Self-monitoring will moderate the relationship between locus of control and willingness to speak up, such that this relationship will be stronger for LSMs than for HSMs when locus of control is high.

**Hypothesis 14:** Self-monitoring will moderate the relationship between self-esteem and willingness to speak up, such that this relationship will be stronger for LSMs than for HSMs when self-esteem is high.

**Hypothesis 15:** Self-monitoring will moderate the relationship between top-management openness and willingness to speak up, such that this relationship will be stronger for LSMs than for HSMs when top-management openness is high.

**Hypothesis 16:** Self-monitoring will moderate the relationship between trust in supervisor and willingness to speak up, such that this relationship will be stronger for LSMs than for HSMs when trust in supervisor is high.

**Hypothesis 17:** Self-monitoring will moderate the relationship between dyadic duration and willingness to speak up, such that this relationship will be stronger for HSMs than for LSMs when dyadic duration is longer.

#### Measure

**Dyadic duration.** The length of time participants had reported to their immediate supervisors was assessed by a single self-report item: "Including this year, how long have you worked for your present supervisor?" Though self-provided and not objective, such information is noncontroversial and generally expected to be accurately reported (Mossholder et al., 1994). Mean dyadic duration was 1.43 years ( $SD=.91$ ). (See Table 5 for dyadic duration intercorrelations with other study variables.)

### Analyses and Results of Respecification

As with the original hypotheses, moderated multiple regression was used to test Hypotheses 13 through 17. Results of these regression analyses are given in Table 10. The nature and direction of all interactions were examined graphically. Separate regression lines were computed and subsequently plotted based on a mean  $\pm 1$  SD split for self-monitoring. That is, regression lines were plotted for the interactive relationships for individuals who scored high on self-monitoring and for those who scored low on self-monitoring.

Hypothesis 13 suggested that when LOC was high, individuals with a low self-monitoring orientation would be more likely to speak up than those with a high self-monitoring orientation. The interaction of LOC and self-monitoring is significant ( $\beta = -2.12, p < .05$ ), supporting self-monitoring as a moderator of the LOC — willingness to speak up relationship. Because the interaction is significant, it was plotted and interpreted (Figure 3). A negative sloped regression line was plotted for internal HSMs; internal LSMs had a positive and more steeply sloped regression line, supporting Hypothesis 13. As LOC increases, so too does LSMs' likelihood of speaking up. In contrast, as LOC increases for HSMs, the willingness to speak up declines so that internal LSMs are more willing to speak up than internal HSMs.

Likewise, the interaction of self-esteem and self-monitoring is also supported ( $\beta = -2.81, p < .05$ ), lending preliminary support to Hypothesis 14, which stated that LSMs would be more willing to speak up than HSMs when self-esteem was also high. Figure 4 confirmed this relationship. As in Figure 3, a negative sloped regression line was plotted



**Table 10**  
**Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Willingness to Speak Up**

<b>Variables</b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b>p</b>	<b>R</b>	<b><math>\Delta R^2</math></b>
<b>Step 1: Locus of control (LOC)</b>	.050	.589	.003	.003
<b>Step 2: Locus of control</b>	.049	.610	.003	.000
<b>Self-monitoring (SM)</b>	.006	.948		
<b>Step 3: Locus of control</b>	1.376	.043	.036	.033
<b>Self-monitoring</b>	1.372	.050		
<b>LOC x SM</b>	-2.118	.049		
<b>Step 1: Self-esteem (SE)</b>	-.021	.825	.000	.000
<b>Step 2: Self-esteem</b>	-.021	.829	.000	.000
<b>Self-monitoring</b>	.001	.992		
<b>Step 3: Self-esteem</b>	1.681	.038	.040	.040
<b>Self-monitoring</b>	1.832	.035		
<b>SE x SM</b>	-2.811	.034		
<b>Step 1: Top-management (TMO)</b>	-.043	.640	.002	.002
<b>Step 2: Top-management</b>	-.044	.636	.002	.000
<b>Self-monitoring</b>	.019	.837		
<b>Step 3: Top-management</b>	1.518	.030	.046	.044
<b>Self-monitoring</b>	.844	.025		
<b>TMO x SM</b>	-1.809	.024		
<b>Step 1: Trust in supervisor (TS)</b>	-.104	.263	.011	.011
<b>Step 2: Trust in supervisor</b>	-.107	.255	.012	.001
<b>Self-monitoring</b>	.028	.768		
<b>Step 3: Trust in supervisor</b>	1.602	.066	.045	.033
<b>Self-monitoring</b>	.969	.046		
<b>TS x SM</b>	-2.036	.048		

Table 10 continued

Step 1: Dyadic duration (DD)	.127	.178	.016	.016
Step 2: Dyadic duration	.128	.175	.016	.000
Self-monitoring	-.022	.819		
Step 3: Dyadic duration	-1.629	.022	.070	.054
Self-monitoring	-.357	.029		
DD x SM	1.831	.013		

**Note.** Step 1 represents the regression of willingness to speak up on the antecedent. Step 2 represents the simultaneous regression of willingness to speak up on both the antecedent and the moderator variable (self-monitoring). Step 3 represents the simultaneous regression of willingness to speak up on the antecedent, the moderator variable, and the interaction term.  $n = 115 - 118$ .

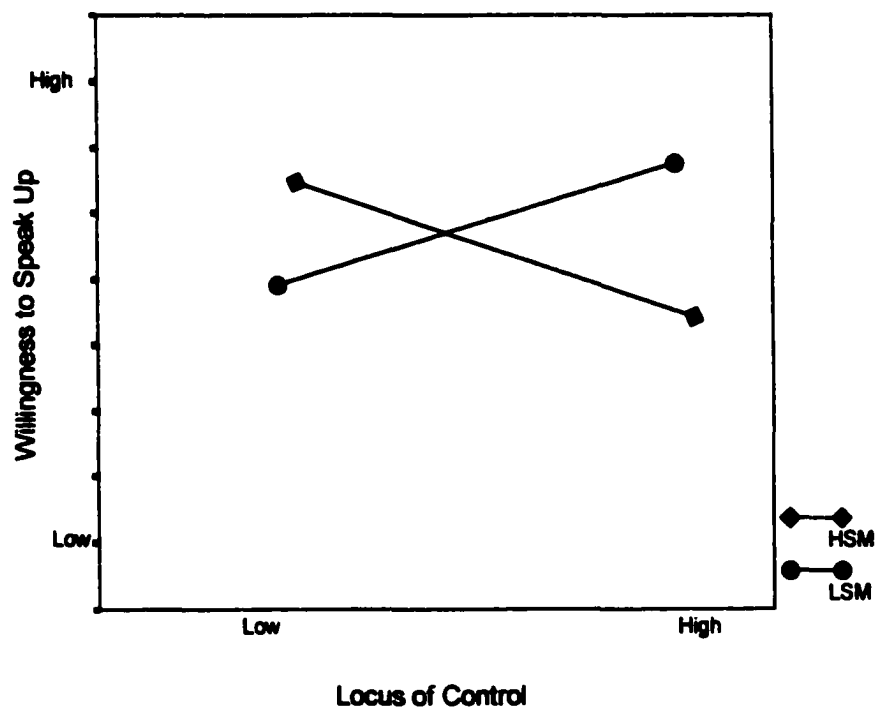
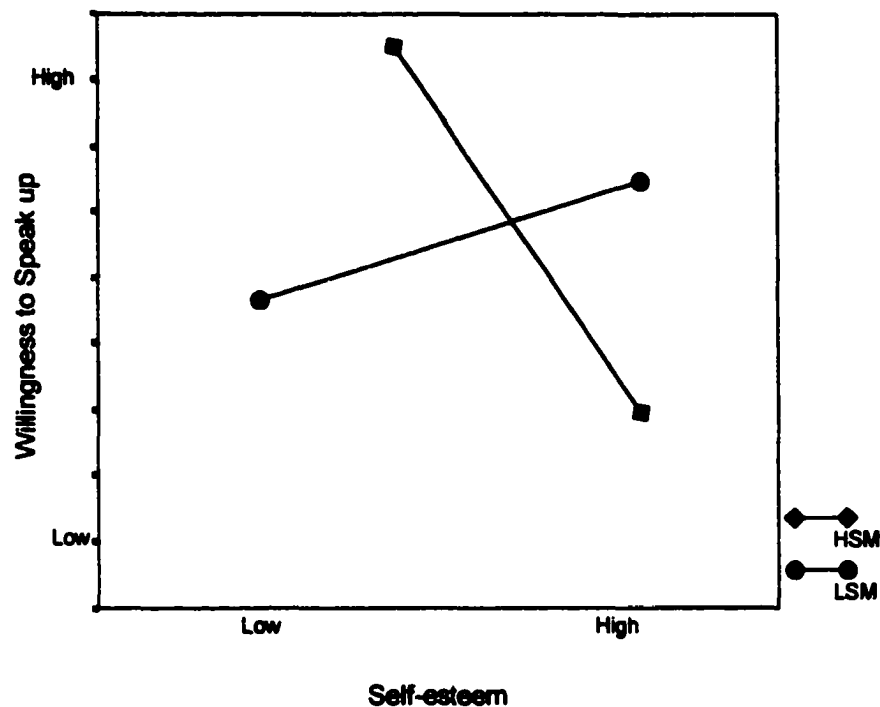


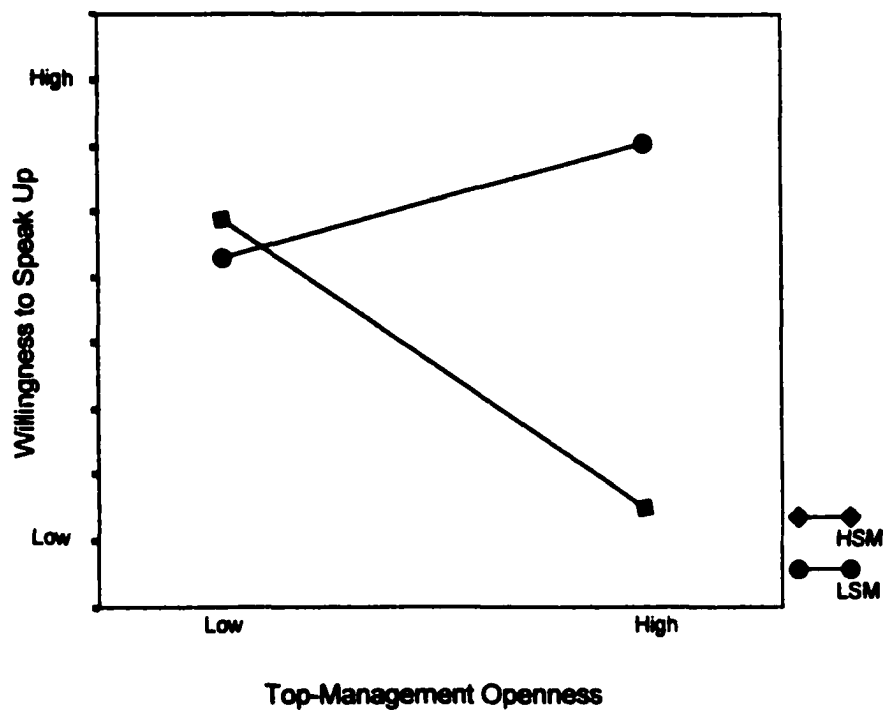
Figure 3: Plot of locus of control interaction with self-monitoring



**Figure 4:** Plot of self-esteem interaction with self-monitoring

for HSMs, and a positive sloped regression line was plotted for LSMs. As self-esteem increases, LSMs become more willing to speak up than HSMs, confirming Hypothesis 14.

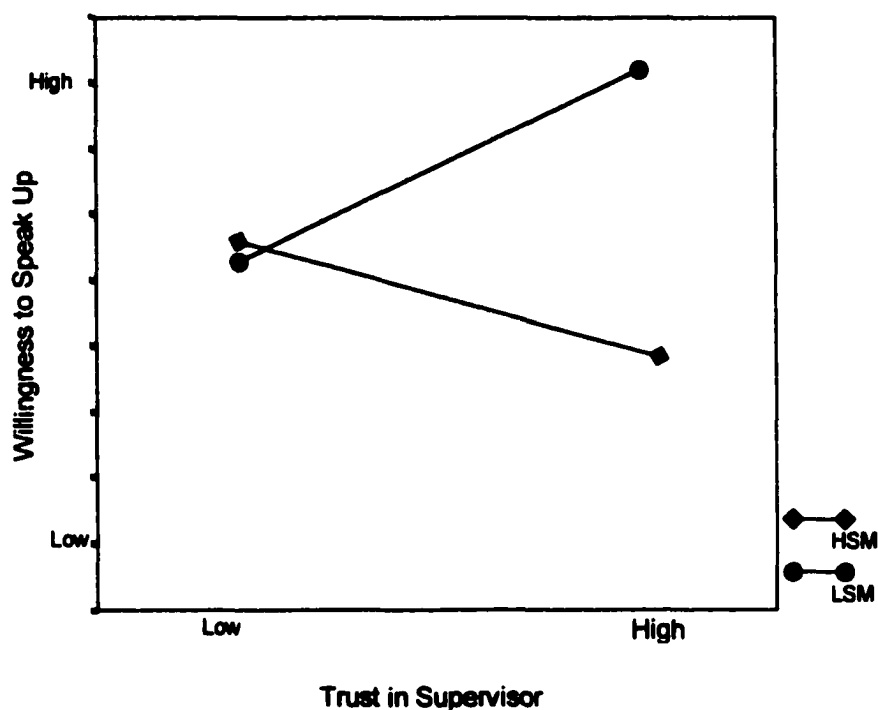
Hypotheses 15 and 16 predicted that LSMs would be more likely to speak up than HSMs when top-management was perceived to be open to employees' views and when supervisors were perceived trustworthy. Both hypotheses receive initial support from the interactions of top-management openness ( $\beta = -1.81$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and trust in supervisor ( $\beta = -2.04$ ,  $p < .05$ ) with self-monitoring. Figure 5 shows that for participants high on self-monitoring there is a negative relationship between willingness to speak up and top-management openness. In other words, those participants who were high on self-monitoring, and who perceived top-management to be open to employees' opinion



**Figure 5:** Plot of top-management openness with self-monitoring

expression, were less likely to speak up than high self-monitors who did not perceive top-management to be open. As evidenced by the disordinal interaction, the opposite was true for low self-monitors. Individuals who scored low on self-monitoring were more likely to speak up when they perceived top-management to be open, as indicated by the positive slope of the low self-monitors' regression line. The relationship between willingness to speak up and trust in supervisor mimics this pattern with those low on self-monitoring more likely to speak up as trust in supervisor increases (Figure 6). Figures 5 and 6, thus, support Hypotheses 15 and 16.

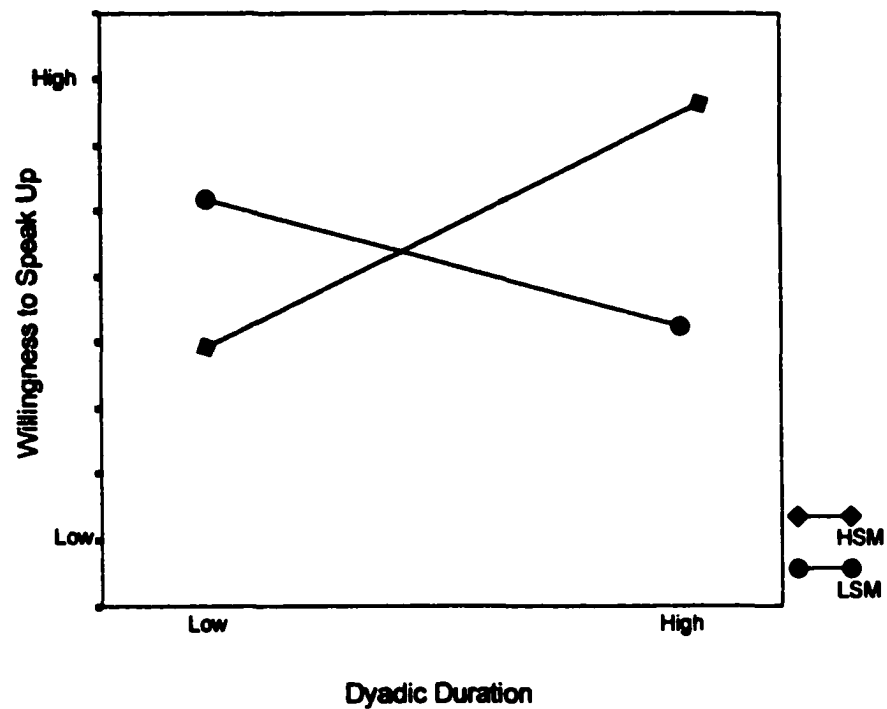
In the case of dyadic duration, willingness to speak up was expected to be higher for HSMs than for LSMs as tenure with one's supervisor increased (Hypothesis 17).



**Figure 6:** Plot of trust in supervisor interaction with self-monitoring

Evidence from the moderated regression analyses reported in Table 10 supports this interactive effect ( $\beta=1.83$ ,  $p<.05$ ). The plot of the regression lines for high and low self-monitors confirms this relationship (Figure 7). In this instance, the regression line for HSMs is positively sloped, indicating that as dyadic duration increases, so too does the willingness of HSMs to speak up. The slope of the line is steeper for HSMs than for LSMs, reflecting a stronger relationship between dyadic duration and willingness to speak up for HSMs than for LSMs. The negatively sloped regression line for LSMs reveals that as dyadic duration increases their willingness to speak up actually declines.

The conceptual respecification in Figure 2 predicted that self-monitoring would interact with several antecedents to predict willingness to speak up. All of the interactive



**Figure 7:** Plot of dyadic duration interaction with self-monitoring

relationships depicted in Figure 2 were corroborated by the subsequent data analyses, providing support for Hypotheses 13 through 17. Individuals' orientations toward high or low self-monitoring seems to play a major role in their decision to voice their views.

## CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this dissertation was to develop a conceptual scheme (Figure 1) that advances understanding of speaking up in the workplace. It reports an investigation into ten theoretically relevant individual and situational antecedents to speaking up. The role of one of these antecedents, the perceived risk of speaking up, was explored as a mediating link between each of the other antecedents and willingness to speak up. Moreover, self-esteem and self-monitoring were examined as possible moderators of these predicted mediated relationships. Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory and Ajzen's (1988, 1991) theory of planned behavior provided the theoretical underpinnings for the series of hypothesized relationships.

Unfortunately, the empirical examination of these relationships was hindered by a small sample and small effect sizes, making it impossible to confirm the conceptual scheme presented in Figure 1. The results of an initial investigation did, however, facilitate a respecification of the conceptual scheme that more heavily incorporated the influence of one of its hypothesized predictor variables, self-monitoring (Figure 2). In this new conceptual scheme, self-monitoring was hypothesized to interact with two personal attributes (viz., LOC and self-esteem), two interpersonal relationship characteristics (viz., top-management openness and trust in supervisor), and one workplace characteristic (viz., dyadic duration) to influence willingness to speak up.

### Self-Monitoring as a Moderator of Willingness to Speak Up

Snyder (1987) contends that although LSMs are highly responsive to dispositional influences, and only minimally so to situational influences, they are not totally

unconcerned with contextual cues. This contention is supported by the results of this dissertation, the first research to show the effects of self-monitoring on the willingness to speak up. Apparently, LSMs are attentive to the situational considerations that allow them to assess the potential of situations to “be themselves.” Once in a situation, however, they respond to their own dispositions (Snyder, 1987). The low self-monitoring participants did appear to appraise the workplace characteristics before deciding whether to speak up. They were much more willing to express their views when top-management was perceived as open and supervisors were seen as trustworthy. Moreover, LSMs remained true to their own dispositions, as evidenced by a greater willingness to speak up when they also had internal LOCs, and positive self-concepts.

These results flow logically from the interpersonal nature of the situational cues to which LSMs seem to attend. LSMs have closer interpersonal relationships and place more importance on these relationships than HSMs (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 1987). In this study, they were indeed more attentive to situational circumstances (viz., top-management openness, trust in supervisor) that were indicative of the quality of the relationships that they had with their superiors. LSMs were less influenced than HSMs, however, by the time spent working with their supervisor (i.e., dyadic duration), a factor that may or may not be a maker of either high or low relationship quality. HSMs, on the other hand, have been known to study the self-presentational behavior of their peers for longer periods than LSMs as a guide to their own behavior (Snyder, 1974, 1987). This inclination to delay acting, and HSMs’ tendency to behave opportunistically when they do



act, explains the greater degree of speaking up for HSMs in supervisor-subordinate dyads of longer duration.

### **Personal Attributes**

As predicted, self-monitoring interacted with locus of control and self-esteem to significantly influence speaking up. The expectation of individuals with an internal LOC to influence personal outcomes (Rotter, 1992), and their subsequent proactive behaviors, may be accented by a low orientation toward self-monitoring. An external LOC, however, leads an individual to behave in a passive manner. This would explain why LSMs, who usually are quite willing to speak their mind, may at times choose to remain silent. A LSM with an external locus would likely expect organizational issues to be beyond their control and, thus, not worth mentioning.

This does not explain, though, why HSMs who are also Internals spoke up less frequently. Intuitively, one would expect internal HSMs to speak up more frequently than external HSMs. HSMs are, however, amenable to changing their behavior and statements to fit what they deem to be appropriate for a given situation (Osborn, Feild, & Veres, 1998). Perhaps high self-monitoring Internals, who tend to be proactive in their attempts to influence their environment, choose to cultivate their image through taking charge (Morrison & Phelps, 1999) or other behaviors rather than through speaking up. If successful, actions may speak louder than words when it comes to image enhancement. For example, HSMs have been shown to more successfully use exemplification (i.e., engaging in behaviors designed to cultivate an image of dedication; Turnley & Bolino, 2001), than LSMs. External HSMs, on the other hand, may find it more prudent to say

what they think is appropriate in a particular situation rather than take actions which, if unsuccessful, could be harmful to their image. This explanation is consistent with Externals' doubts about their ability to influence their work outcomes (Mitchell, Smyser, & Weed, 1987).

The attempt to control one's work outcomes is enhanced by a positive self identity. Individuals with low levels of self-esteem will estimate their ability to influence their work environment as low. Thus, even when these individuals are LSMs, they are unlikely to bother speaking up because they do not expect to be successful and would prefer to avoid the embarrassment of public failure. LSMs with positive self-images, however, are especially likely to speak up because they prefer to do so, and because they expect to be successful. Speaking up is a behavior that one would expect to be part of the low self-monitoring, high self-esteem individual's usual behavioral repertoire. The reported results suggest that speaking up in the workplace is no exception.

HSMs spoke up less often as self-esteem increased, a finding that is not easily explained. Consistent with the behavioral plasticity phenomenon (Brockner, 1988; Tharenou, 1979), one would expect high self-monitoring, low self-esteem individuals to choose to remain silent more often than HSMs with high self-esteem because both traits lead individuals to pay close attention to social cues as a guide to their own behavior. One possible explanation for this unexpected result is that HSMs with low self-esteem avoid negative evaluations by adjusting their own beliefs to match those of others even more frequently than HSMs with high self-esteem. Low self-esteems tend to respond more readily to social cues (Brockner, 1988). Voicing opinions consistent with others in one's

workplace may be a way low self-esteems with a high level of self-monitoring attempt to win favor and bolster their self-concept.

### **Interpersonal Relationship Characteristics**

LSMs are likely to view a top management that welcomes the voicing of views as an open invitation to speak up about organizational issues. LSMs are believed to actively seek situations that allow them to express who they are (Snyder, 1987), and an organization with an open top management fits this characterization. Although LSMs behave more consistently across situations, they do not ignore situational cues that indicate the appropriateness of openly expressing opinions. The reported results may suggest that they are more likely to keep their opinions to themselves when they believe that important others are uninterested in hearing them. HSMs, on the other hand, will not only look for cues as to whether speaking up is the right thing to do, they may also alter their personal views to be more in line with what they deem appropriate to the situation. Thus, it is not surprising that LSMs speak up only when top management seems willing to really listen to what they have to say. This suggests that if LSMs feel that they cannot express their true beliefs, they would prefer to say nothing at all, whereas HSMs will frame their views in light of what they think will offer the greatest advantage to their image.

Another important factor used to determine the appropriateness of forthright opinion expression is the level of trust one has in one's supervisor. The risk of vulnerability inherent in supervisor-subordinate relationships may be especially salient to LSMs. These individuals seem to have a stronger desire for close interpersonal

relationships than do HSMs (Snyder, 1987). As such, they can be expected to pay greater attention to interpersonal factors and to place more emphasis on participating in relationships that allow them the leeway to be themselves (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000), such as relations with their supervisors characterized by trust.

The length of a relationship, however, does not appear to influence LSMs toward more speaking up behaviors. In the present study, in contrast to HSMs, LSMs did not speak up more frequently as dyadic duration increased, and actually spoke up less frequently when tenure with their supervisor was longer. Two possible explanations for this effect are plausible. First, LSMs may speak up less often as dyadic duration increases due to fewer opportunities to do so. Over time, as familiarity between supervisor and subordinate increases, and subordinates become better acquainted with job requirements, less contact between dyads is necessary (Mossholder et al., 1990). Because LSMs are less concerned with social status than HSMs, they are less likely to seek out opportunities for self-aggrandizement. Thus, as dyadic duration increases, LSMs may have fewer opportunities to speak up and, as a result, speaking up behavior may decline.

Second, LSMs may speak up less frequently as dyadic duration increases due to increases in their perceptions of risk associated with speaking up. As noted previously, some of the risks inherent in speaking up may include the chance of spawning antagonistic relationships or a wounded psyche if one's views are discounted or ignored. Although LSMs tend to be true to their attitudes, feelings, and dispositions (Snyder, 1987), they also tend to form deeper emotional attachments than HSMs (Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 2001). Thus, behaviors that may interfere with or threaten these emotional attachments would be

avoided by LSMs, if possible. Rather than express views that are inconsistent with their own beliefs, in order to promote harmony, as dyadic duration increases and deeper emotional bounds with their supervisors are formed (assuming a supervisor-subordinate relationship is positive), LSMs would remain silent rather than risk negative relational outcomes.

HSMs, as noted, spend more time studying the behavior of others before acting (Snyder, 1974, 1987). As HSMs' time with their supervisors increased, so too did their speaking up behavior. Seemingly, as HSMs become better acquainted with their supervisors they are better able to recognize, and take advantage of, opportunities for image enhancement. Because HSMs are willing to change their behaviors and comments to win approval of others (Osborn, Feild, & Veres, 1998), as they spend more time in a relationship, they would become more familiar with what actions and opinions are most likely to enhance their image and, thus, would be more willing to speak up.

### **Theoretical Implications**

The results of this dissertation have both theoretical and practical implications. Foremost, the conceptualization, and subsequent empirical verification, of the concept of speaking up makes a meaningful contribution to the literature on the human experience in organizations. Although deemed important in the popular press, speaking up has received little scientific investigation. This dissertation takes a step toward addressing this gap by providing insight into the personal and situational antecedents associated with employees voicing their views, as well as into the interactional effects of self-monitoring on the willingness to speak up. Except for limited research on supervisors' performance ratings

of employees who make constructive suggestions to improve their work group (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998), no other results relating to speaking up have been published. This study broadens the current conceptualizations of workplace expression within organizations by focusing on a behavior that may occur at any level, but that is directed inward and is motivated by a desire to improve organizational functioning.

Moreover, this dissertation further validates self-monitoring as an important personal orientation that should continue to be incorporated into organizational behavior research. To date, research on self-monitoring suggests that LSMs, unlike HSMs, may be particularly devoted to close social relationships in which they and their partners exhibit mutual trust (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). The current findings substantiate this propensity for LSMs. Although much self-monitoring research has focused on the behavior of HSMs, and their penchant for using situational cues to guide behavior, consistent with Snyder's (1987) conjectures, LSMs in this study also seemed to use situational cues as a guide to behavior, but toward a different end. LSMs appeared to speak up most often when a situation was conducive to their true dispositions. HSMs, on the other hand, appeared to be behaving more opportunistically.

Although intuitively one might expect subordinates' level of speaking up to rise as time with supervisor increases, this was not the case, at least not for those low on self-monitoring. This finding emphasizes the need to incorporate familiarity with one's supervisor into the study of workplace behaviors. Few studies have incorporated dyadic duration (see Mossholder et al., 1990; Mossholder et al., 1994, for exceptions) into their theoretical framework. This is surprising, especially in areas of research such as leader-

follower exchange theory (Graen & Scandura, 1987), that focus heavily on interactive exchanges. Most studies that have incorporated measures of dyadic duration have included them as control variables in their methods sections with little or no explanation as to why they may be important (see Dirks & Ferrin, 2001, for a review). The present study demonstrates the potential influence that dyadic duration has for some employees, and the lack of influence it appears to have for others. In the future, researchers should more closely examine the effects of dyadic duration on their variables of interest rather than removing them in their statistical analyses.

This dissertation may also make a contribution to future leadership research by providing insight into what factors contribute to the emergence of informal leaders. Like taking charge (Morrison & Phelps, 1999) and expressions of anger (Tiedens, 2001), speaking up may be viewed as a form of informal leadership. Speaking up behavior is not dependent on hierarchical level or position authority. Individuals who speak up about organizational issues may do so from any level of an organization, and are not expected to do so as part of their formal job requirements. The factors that lead an individual to speak up may provide clues to the factors that lead to emergent leadership or the act of speaking up itself may partially determine who becomes influential within an organization. When speaking up is successful, an individual may be viewed by coworkers as worthy of leadership status.

The willingness to speak up measure developed and tested in this dissertation also makes a contribution. A rigorous, multi-step process was used to develop and validate the measure. Steps were taken to assure a set of items with high face and construct validity.

Subsequent empirical verification attests to the usefulness of this measure for future investigations of speaking up. The use of coworker ratings to gauge employees' speaking up behavior further serves to reinforce the methodological process used in this study, and provides an empirical precedent for the study of workplace expression through the eyes of coworkers.

### **Practical Implications**

The findings of this dissertation also have practical implications. In organizations where innovation and change are necessary conditions for a competitive advantage, the findings of this study can serve to guide employee selection. It is apparent from these findings that individuals with an internal LOC, high self-esteem, and a low orientation toward self-monitoring are those most likely to speak up, and to do so with candor. HSMs, on the other hand, are likely to say what they think they are supposed to say, or what they think others want to hear. Organizations that want to encourage their employees to offer suggestions and to actively seek to improve intraorganizational functioning should incorporate these dispositions into their screening devices.

Managers can further influence employees' willingness to speak up through their reactions when workers choose to do so, and by actively soliciting employees' ideas about how to improve their work unit (Newstrom, Gardner, & Pierce, 1999). Recognition for their initiative, regardless of the merit of their views, should serve to reinforce this type of behavior and condition employees to repeat it. On the other hand, if employees' views are met with skepticism, ridicule, or even punishment, these behaviors will be discouraged in the future. A recent high-profile military tragedy illustrates this phenomenon. A U.S.



Navy submarine sank a Japanese fishing boat, killing nine people and ending the promising career of the vessel's commander. An investigation into the cause of the accident revealed that crew members had many concerns about hurried safety checks done just prior to the submarine's surfacing; however, they failed to voice them (Fitzgerald, 2001). Although most organizations never face this type of life or death situation, their degree of success may hinge on employees' honest opinion expression.

One top-management consultant claims that many false decisions, decisions that eventually get undone by unspoken factors and inaction, result from "silent lies" (Charan, 2001). According to Charan (2001), employees at all levels fail to engage in honest dialogue due to intimidation, formality, and lack of trust, and that a culture of indecisiveness results. This observation further substantiates the prevalence of fear in employees' decisions to remain silent (Ryan & Oestreich, 1998). The findings of the current study can help top managers identify and address the individual and situational factors that engender silence, rather than open, honest dialogue. Further, they imply that aside from individual dispositions, certain workplace characteristics influence employees' decisions to speak up, namely top-management openness and trust in one's supervisor.

According to this study, employee silence does not have to be. Organizations can train those in supervisory and other management positions to engender open, honest communication with their employees by actively seeking employees' opinions, and by developing relationships with their employees built on trust. As top managers gain a reputation for interest in employees' opinions, and trust between superiors and subordinates increases, so too should employees' speaking up behavior. For example,

Jack Welch, the former CEO of General Electric (GE), believes that to be vital, an organization has to constantly renew itself with new ideas ("Ultimate Manager," 1999). It is his belief that these new ideas, and GE's competitive advantage, come from individuals. Toward this end, he launched GE's workout process in which employees at all levels gather for "town meetings" with their bosses and ask questions or make proposals about how the place could run better. The result has not only been huge time and cost savings for the company, but employees also now know that they will be taken seriously when they speak up.

Finally, related research also suggests that other workplace characteristics such as group size and the style of group management have an effect on group members' willingness to make constructive suggestions for change (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998). These are additional considerations with practical implications for workgroup design related to workplace expression.

### Limitations and Future Research

The contributions of this study should be considered in light of its limitations. At the same time, these limitations, coupled with its findings, produce fertile ground for future research. The most obvious need in terms of the conceptual schemes presented here is replication in a larger sample. The sample size of the present study limited its ability to find effects. Repeating the study in a larger sample would allow further validation of the relationships that were found and would enable other possible relationships to emerge. Use of improved construct measures may also aid in the confirmation of hypothesized relationships that were not supported. The reliability level of

at least two variables, locus of control and norms for openness, may have negatively affected the study's ability to uncover effects. Future research should attempt to improve the reliability associated with the assessment of these variables.

The cross-sectional nature of this study is a further limitation. Cross-sectional studies do not allow for a true test of causality or rule out the possibility of reverse causality (James & Brett, 1984). Future research should attempt to study how speaking up behaviors unfold over time. A longitudinal investigation into the decision to speak up may also serve to uncover additional variables that impact employees' willingness to speak up.

In the future, researchers may want to incorporate self-assessments of speaking up, in addition to coworker ratings, into their empirical investigations. Although self-assessments of speaking up would be subject to socially desirable responding and common-method variance, they would also allow researchers to assess the level of agreement between employee participants' and coworkers' ratings of this behavior. One potential limitation to this study is that coworkers' perceptions of participants' speaking up behavior may not be entirely accurate. Individuals that speak up frequently may be perceived by others as uninhibited in their opinion expression, but in reality these people may "bite their tongue" just as frequently. The difference between self and worker ratings may provide valuable insights into when and why individuals speak up.

By allowing employee participants to identify the coworkers who subsequently rated their speaking up behaviors, selection bias may have been introduced (Cook & Campbell, 1979). These participants were unaware of the purpose of the study, so one

can be reasonably sure that this method of selecting coworkers did not unduly bias the reported results. By randomly selecting coworkers, or by including all coworkers when possible, future researchers may be even more confident that selection bias is absent.

A research methodology that incorporates the use of the critical incident technique may also further our knowledge concerning speaking up. The current study approached the investigation of speaking up from a very broad perspective, looking at it as a general tendency, which may well be the case. It is also possible, however, that there are specific triggers operating in individuals' decisions to speak up or remain silent that can only be uncovered by focusing on specific speaking up incidents. Critical incident reporting would serve to help participants recall what exactly influenced their decision to speak up or not, allowing scholars to further their understanding of this phenomenon.

Finally, this study could be limited by the sample used. Although there is no reason to suspect that these results are specific to the sample studied, generalizability of findings would be verified by replication in different samples. For example, this sample was highly educated, with most participants having at least some college education, and included only one organization. Future studies may want to include workers of different educational levels and in different organizations and, perhaps, different industries.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **EMPLOYEE COVER LETTER**

#### **LSU Workplace Survey**

**Dear Survey Participant:**

**As a doctoral student in the College of Business Administration at Louisiana State University, I am currently working on my dissertation. As part of the dissertation process, I am conducting a research study which focuses on employees' attitudes about their jobs and work environment. You are among a group of employees at US Unwired chosen to participate in this study. Your completion of the enclosed survey is important because you have been selected to represent the views of all US Unwired employees, as well as employees in general. For the survey to be helpful in advancing the existing knowledge of workplace relations, it is important that you provide honest and candid responses, and that you "tell it like it is."**

**The enclosed survey should only take about 20-25 minutes to complete. Your responses will be seen by the researchers only and will be kept in the strictest of confidence. Responses will be analyzed in aggregate through general trends and statistical relationships. Although US Unwired will receive a summary report of my findings, no individual responses will be seen by anyone other than the researchers.**

**When you have completed the survey, please check to be sure you have responded to all items. *Please return the survey in the envelope provided within seven days of receipt.***

**Whereas I know I cannot pay you enough for your time, to show my appreciation, all completed surveys returned to me will be entered into a random drawing for three \$100 cash prizes. Your time and cooperation are greatly appreciated. If you have any concerns, please feel free to contact me at 337-475-5517 or via e-mail at [premeaux@mail.mcneese.edu](mailto:premeaux@mail.mcneese.edu).**

**Sincerely,**

**Sonya Premeaux  
Ph.D. Candidate**

## APPENDIX B

### EMPLOYEE SURVEY

- I. Each of the following statements is something people might say about their supervisor. Considering your supervisor, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I can usually trust my supervisor to do what is good for me.	5	4	3	2	1
2. When my supervisor says something, you can really believe that it is true.	5	4	3	2	1
3. My supervisor will take advantage of you if you give him/her a chance.	5	4	3	2	1
4. My supervisor can be counted on to look after the well-being of our work unit.	5	4	3	2	1
5. My supervisor can be trusted to make decisions that are also good for me.	5	4	3	2	1
6. I can trust my supervisor.	5	4	3	2	1

- II. Each of the following statements is something people might say about their work unit. Considering your work unit, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. People in my work unit are typically willing to raise issues important to them.	5	4	3	2	1
2. In my work unit, controversial issues are kept under the table.	5	4	3	2	1
3. People seldom raise controversial issues in this work unit.	5	4	3	2	1

- III. Each of the following statements is something people might say about their work organization's upper management. Considering your organization's upper management, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Good ideas get serious consideration from upper management.	5	4	3	2	1

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2. Upper management is interested in ideas and suggestions from people at my level in the organization.	5	4	3	2	1
3. When suggestions are made to upper management, they receive fair evaluation.	5	4	3	2	1
4. Upper management takes action on recommendations made from people at my level.	5	4	3	2	1
5. I feel free to make recommendations to upper management to change existing practices.	5	4	3	2	1
6. Good ideas do not get communicated upward because upper management is not very approachable.	5	4	3	2	1

IV. Each of the following statements represents possible feelings that individuals might have about the company or organization for which they work. With respect to your own feelings about your organization, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The organization strongly considers my goals and values.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Help is available from the organization when I have a problem.	5	4	3	2	1
3. The organization really cares about my well-being.	5	4	3	2	1
4. The organization is willing to extend itself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability.	5	4	3	2	1
5. Even if I did the best job possible, the organization would fail to notice.	5	4	3	2	1
6. The organization cares about my general satisfaction at work.	5	4	3	2	1
7. The organization shows very little concern for me.	5	4	3	2	1
8. The organization cares about my opinions.	5	4	3	2	1

V. Each of the following statements describes how speaking up on workplace issues might be viewed by a person's supervisor. Considering your supervisor, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

Speaking up on issues in my work unit would:

	Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Neutral 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1
1. Hurt my relationship with my supervisor.					
2. Make me appear unprofessional to my supervisor's boss.	5	4	3	2	1
3. Cause my supervisor to react negatively when I need or want something later.	5	4	3	2	1
4. Cause my supervisor to be harder on me in the future.	5	4	3	2	1

VI. Each of the following statements relates to how people might feel about themselves. With respect to your own feelings about yourself, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Neutral 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1
1. Whether or not I get to be a leader depends mostly on my ability.	5	4	3	2	1
2. When I make plans, I am almost certain to make them work.	5	4	3	2	1
3. I can pretty much determine what will happen in my life.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I am usually able to protect my personal interests.	5	4	3	2	1
5. When I get what I want, it's usually because I worked hard for it.	5	4	3	2	1
6. My life is determined by my own actions.	5	4	3	2	1
7. It is important for me that others approve of me.	5	4	3	2	1
8. I like the respect of others, but I don't have to have it.	5	4	3	2	1
9. I want everyone to like me.	5	4	3	2	1
10. I can like myself even when many others don't.	5	4	3	2	1
11. If others dislike me, that's their problem, not mine.	5	4	3	2	1
12. I find it hard to go against what others think.	5	4	3	2	1
13. Although I like approval, it's not a real need for me.	5	4	3	2	1

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
14. I often worry about how much people approve of and accept me.	5	4	3	2	1
15. I have considerable concern with what people are feeling about me.	5	4	3	2	1
16. It is annoying but not upsetting to be criticized.	5	4	3	2	1
17. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.	5	4	3	2	1
18. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	5	4	3	2	1
19. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	5	4	3	2	1
20. I am able to do things as well as most other people.	5	4	3	2	1
21. I feel that I do not have much to be proud of.	5	4	3	2	1
22. I take a positive attitude toward myself.	5	4	3	2	1
23. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	5	4	3	2	1
24. I wish I could have more respect for myself.	5	4	3	2	1
25. I certainly feel useless at times.	5	4	3	2	1
26. At times I think I am no good at all.	5	4	3	2	1
27. I do my best work when my job assignments are fairly difficult.	5	4	3	2	1
28. I try very hard to improve on my past performance at work.	5	4	3	2	1
29. I take moderate risks and stick my neck out to get ahead at work.	5	4	3	2	1
30. I try to avoid any added responsibilities on my job.	5	4	3	2	1
31. I try to perform better than my co-workers.	5	4	3	2	1
32. In social situations, I have the ability to alter my behavior if I feel that something else is called for.	5	4	3	2	1
33. I have trouble changing my behavior to suit different people and different situations.	5	4	3	2	1

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
34. Once I know what the situation calls for, it's easy for me to regulate my actions accordingly.	5	4	3	2	1
35. I have the ability to control the way I come across to people, depending on the impression I wish to give them.	5	4	3	2	1
36. I have found that I can adjust my behavior to meet the requirements of any situation I find myself in.	5	4	3	2	1
37. When I feel that the image I'm portraying isn't working, I can readily change it to something that does.	5	4	3	2	1
38. Even when it might be to my advantage, I have difficulty putting up a good front.	5	4	3	2	1
39. I am often able to read people's true emotions correctly through their eyes.	5	4	3	2	1
40. In conversations, I am sensitive to even the slightest change in the facial expression of the person I'm conversing with.	5	4	3	2	1
41. My powers of intuition are quite good when it comes to understanding others' emotions and motives.	5	4	3	2	1
42. I can usually tell when others consider a joke to be in bad taste, even though they may laugh convincingly.	5	4	3	2	1
43. I can usually tell when I've said something inappropriate by reading it in the listener's eyes.	5	4	3	2	1
44. If someone is lying to me, I usually know it at once from that person's manner of expression.	5	4	3	2	1
45. I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way.	5	4	3	2	1
46. On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability.	5	4	3	2	1
47. There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.	5	4	3	2	1
48. No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener.	5	4	3	2	1



	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
49. I can remember "playing sick" to get out of something.	5	4	3	2	1
50. There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone.	5	4	3	2	1
51. I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake.	5	4	3	2	1
52. I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.	5	4	3	2	1
53. I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.	5	4	3	2	1
54. I have never been irked by people who ask favors of me.	5	4	3	2	1
55. There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others.	5	4	3	2	1
56. I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favors of me.	5	4	3	2	1
57. I have never deliberately said something to hurt someone's feelings.	5	4	3	2	1

#### VII. General Information

1. What is your sex?  
Male                  Female
2. How old were you on your last birthday?  
Years:
3. Please indicate your race:  
White                  Hispanic  
African American      Asian  
American Indian      Others
4. What is your job title?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Including this year, how long have you worked for your current employer? Years:
6. Including this year, how long have you worked in your present job? Years:
7. Including this year, how long have you worked with your present supervisor? Years:

## 8. How much education have you had?

Less than high school

High school graduate

Some college

College graduate

Some graduate work

Master's degree

Doctor's degree

Other (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

VIII. It is very important to the success of this project that we ask a few questions of two or three of your co-workers. Below, please provide the names, departments, and daytime phone numbers of three persons with whom you work closely and who might be willing to complete a very short survey. You may list your direct supervisor, peers, or people who work under you — anyone who works with you and is familiar with your work. You might also want to let those persons know that we will be contacting them. This is a very important part of this project, so please make sure that you complete it. **THANK YOU!!**

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR RETURNING COMPLETED SURVEYS**

When you have completed the survey, please check to be sure that you have responded to all the items. To further ensure confidentiality, place your survey in the envelope provided and seal it. Please return the sealed envelope within seven days of receipt.

**THANK YOU** for completing this survey. Please feel free to add any comments on the back of this sheet.

\*\*\*\*\*

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND INPUT!!!**

## APPENDIX C

### COWORKER COVER LETTER

#### LSU Workplace Survey

Dear \_\_\_\_:

Your colleague \_\_\_\_ is participating in a research study that is part of my doctoral dissertation. The project is aimed at understanding what factors encourage individuals to openly engage in developing and exchanging ideas that relate to their work situation. \_\_\_\_ provided me with your name as someone who would be able to assist me in this project.

The first part of the survey asks that you comment on various aspects of \_\_\_\_'s workplace behavior. Your answers will be used for research purposes only, so for them to be most helpful, it is important that you are as honest and accurate as possible. The second part of the survey asks a few items about yourself and your working relationship with \_\_\_\_.

I assure you that all the information you provide will be *completely* confidential. Results will be analyzed in the aggregate and will deal with general trends and statistical relationships. Your survey will only be seen by the researchers involved in this project, and no one at US Unwired will have access to your individual responses.

When you have completed the survey, please check to be sure that you responded to all the items. ***Please return the survey in the envelope provided within seven days of receipt.*** Because your participation is so important, and to show my appreciation, all surveys that are completed and returned will be entered into a ***random drawing for three \$100 cash prizes.*** If you have received multiple surveys, each one that you complete will be entered into the drawing, increasing your opportunity to win one of the cash prizes.

Please help me complete this research project and graduate! My future and the success of this study are in your hands.

Sincerely,

Sonya F. Premeaux  
Ph.D. Candidate

Enclosure

## APPENDIX D

### COWORKER SURVEY

Please read each of the following statements and indicate the degree to which each statement characterizes \_\_\_\_\_'s behavior as an employee.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Speaks up when workplace happenings conflict with his/her sense of what is appropriate.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Stands up to the actions or ideas of others when warranted.	5	4	3	2	1
3. Can be counted on to say things that need to be said.	5	4	3	2	1
4. Is careful not to express ideas that may be contrary to what others believe.	5	4	3	2	1
5. Speaks up if he/she feels a plan or idea won't work.	5	4	3	2	1
6. Remains quiet rather than say what's on his/her mind in discussions of controversial issues.	5	4	3	2	1

Please complete the following three statements relative to the individual about whom you completed the above items:

1. I am:  
his/her immediate supervisor  
a co-worker  
other (Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_)
2. I see him/her:  
several times a day  
not every day, but several times a week  
not every week, but several times a month
3. I have know him/her:  
less than a year  
1 to 2 years  
3 to 5 years  
more than 5 years

#### General Information

1. What is your sex?  
Male          Female
2. How old were you on your last birthday?  
Years:

3. Please indicate your race:  
 White                      Hispanic  
 African American      Asian  
 American Indian      Others
4. What is your job title?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
5. Including this year, how long have you worked for your current employer? Years:
6. Including this year, how long have you worked in your present job? Years:
7. Including this year, how long have you worked with your present supervisor? Years:
8. How much education have you had?
- |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Less than high school | Some graduate work    |
| High school graduate  | Master's degree       |
| Some college          | Doctor's degree       |
| College graduate      | Other (explain) _____ |

\*\*\*\*\*

#### INSTRUCTIONS FOR RETURNING COMPLETED SURVEYS

When you have completed the survey, please check to be sure that you have responded to all the items. To further ensure confidentiality, place your survey in the envelope provided and seal it. Please return the sealed envelope within seven days of receipt.

THANK YOU for completing this survey. Please feel free to add any comments on the back of this sheet.

\*\*\*\*\*

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND INPUT!!!

APPENDIX E  
REMINDER POSTCARD

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Recently I sent you a letter asking for your participation in a research study. To date I have not received your completed survey. Your response is vital to the success of the study and to the completion of my doctorate. Please help me graduate!

It is not too late to have your completed survey entered into a *random drawing for three \$100 cash prizes*. If you have misplaced the survey, please phone (475-5517) or e-mail (premeaux@mail.mcneese.edu), and I will send you a replacement.

Thank you for your help.

Sonya Premeaux  
Doctoral Candidate  
Louisiana State University

## APPENDIX F

### LETTER REQUESTING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Thank you for filling out and returning the survey that I sent you recently. Your kindness in helping me complete my doctorate is greatly appreciated.

For the survey to be a useful contribution to my research, however, I do require some additional information. On the last page of the survey I asked for the names of three persons with whom you work closely and who might be willing to complete a very short survey. *Without this information, your survey cannot be used.* The survey that these individuals will be asked to complete *is not* the same survey that you completed. It consists of only six questions.

I have provided room at the bottom of this page for you to list the names and departments of three coworkers who are familiar with your work. Please complete this form and return it in the envelope provided. Receipt of this information will complete your survey and will make you eligible for the *random drawings for three \$100 prizes.*

Your time and cooperation are greatly appreciated. If you have any concerns, please feel free to contact me at 475-5517 or via e-mail at [premeaux@mail.mcneese.edu](mailto:premeaux@mail.mcneese.edu).

Sincerely,

Sonya Premeaux  
Doctoral Candidate

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Department: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX G

### LETTER ACCOMPANYING REPLACEMENT SURVEYS

#### LSU Workplace Survey

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Recently I sent you a survey as part of a research study that I am undertaking for my doctoral studies at Louisiana State University. I am conducting a study that focuses on employees' attitudes about their jobs and work environment. You are among a select group of individuals chosen to participate in the study, therefore, your response is very important to the success of the study, and to the completion of my doctorate. Because I have not yet received your completed survey, I thought it might have been misplaced. I am sending you another copy.

Your response will be completely confidential and will only be analyzed in sum with all others received through general trends and statistical relationships. US Unwired managers and staff will not have access to individual responses. When you have completed the survey, please return it in the envelope provided within seven days.

I know that your time is valuable, however, the survey will only take about 20-25 minutes to complete. Because your participation is so important, and to show my appreciation, all surveys that are completed and returned will be entered into a *random drawing for three \$100 cash prizes*.

Please help me graduate! My future and the success of this study are in your hands.

Sincerely,

Sonya F. Premeaux  
Ph.D. Candidate

Enclosure



## APPENDIX H

### COWORKER REMINDER EMAIL

Recently I sent you a survey(s) asking for your participation in a research study. Your response is vital to the success of the study and to the completion of my doctorate. If you have already completed and returned the survey(s), THANK YOU. If not, please consider doing so right away. To date I do not have enough surveys back to complete the study. EVERY SURVEY COUNTS. I realize that completing the survey(s) is an inconvenience, but each survey is *very short*, should take little time to complete, and is *completely confidential*.

Remember that every completed survey will be entered into a *random drawing for three \$100 cash prizes*. I must hold the drawing soon. If you have any questions or comments, please phone (475-5517) or e-mail ([premeaux@mail.mcneese.edu](mailto:premeaux@mail.mcneese.edu)).

Please help me complete this study and my doctorate.

Sonya Premeaux

## APPENDIX I

### MEASURES

#### Need for achievement (Steers & Braunstein, 1976)

1. I do my best work when my job assignments are fairly difficult.
2. I try very hard to improve on my past performance at work.
3. I take moderate risks and stick my neck out to get ahead at work.
4. I try to avoid any added responsibilities on my job.®
5. I try to perform better than my co-workers.

#### Locus of control (Levenson (1974)

1. Whether or not I get to be a leader depends mostly on my ability.
2. When I make plans, I am almost certain to make them work.
3. I can pretty much determine what will happen in my life.
4. I am usually able to protect my personal interests.
5. When I get what I want, it's usually because I worked hard for it.
6. My life is determined by my own actions.

#### Self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965)

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.®
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I feel that I do not have much to be proud of.®
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.®
9. I certainly feel useless at times.®
10. At times I think I am no good at all.®

#### Self-monitoring (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984)

1. In social situations, I have the ability to alter my behavior if I feel that something else is called for.
2. I have trouble changing my behavior to suit different people and different situations.®
3. Once I know what the situation calls for, it's easy for me to regulate my actions accordingly.
4. I have the ability to control the way I come across to people, depending on the impression I wish to give them.
5. I have found that I can adjust my behavior to meet the requirements of any situation I find myself in.
6. When I feel that the image I'm portraying isn't working, I can readily change it to something that does.

7. Even when it might be to my advantage, I have difficulty putting up a good front.®
8. I am often able to read people's true emotions correctly through their eyes.
9. In conversations, I am sensitive to even the slightest change in the facial expression of the person I'm conversing with.
10. My powers of intuition are quite good when it comes to understanding others' emotions and motives.
11. I can usually tell when others consider a joke to be in bad taste, even though they may laugh convincingly.
12. I can usually tell when I've said something inappropriate by reading it in the listener's eyes.
13. If someone is lying to me, I usually know it at once from that person's manner of expression.

**Short Form of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Ballard, 1992)**

1. I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way.®
2. On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability.®
3. There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.®
4. No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener.
5. I can remember "playing sick" to get out of something.®
6. There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone.®
7. I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake.
8. I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.®
9. I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.
10. I have never been irked by people who ask favors of me.®
11. There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others.®
12. I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favors of me.®
13. I have never deliberately said something to hurt someone's feelings.

**Need for approval (Jones, 1969)**

1. It is important for me that others approve of me.
2. I like the respect of others, but I don't have to have it.®
3. I want everyone to like me.
4. I can like myself even when many others don't.®
5. If others dislike me, that's their problem, not mine.®
6. I find it hard to go against what others think.
7. Although I like approval, it's not a real need for me.®
8. I often worry about how much people approve of and accept me.
9. I have considerable concern with what people are feeling about me.
10. It is annoying but not upsetting to be criticized.®

**Top-management openness** (Ashford et al., 1998)

1. Good ideas get serious consideration from upper management.
2. Upper management is interested in ideas and suggestions from people at my level in the organization.
3. When suggestions are made to upper management, they receive fair evaluation.
4. Upper management takes action on recommendations made from people at my level.
5. I feel free to make recommendations to upper management to change existing practices.
6. Good ideas do not get communicated upward because upper management is not very approachable.®

**Norms for openness** (Ashford et al., 1998)

1. People in my work unit are typically willing to raise issues important to them.
2. In my work unit, controversial issues are kept under the table.®
3. People seldom raise controversial issues in this work unit.®

**Trust in supervisor** (Brockner et al., 1997; Cammann et al., 1983)

1. I can usually trust my supervisor to do what is good for me.
2. When my supervisor says something, you can really believe that it is true.
3. My supervisor will take advantage of you if you give him/her a chance.®
4. My supervisor can be counted on to look after the well-being of our work unit.
5. My supervisor can be trusted to make decisions that are also good for me.
6. I can trust my supervisor.

**Perceived organizational support** (Eisenberger et al., 1986)

1. The organization strongly considers my goals and values.
2. Help is available from the organization when I have a problem.
3. The organization really cares about my well-being.
4. The organization is willing to extend itself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability.
5. Even if I did the best job possible, the organization would fail to notice.®
6. The organization cares about my general satisfaction at work.
7. The organization shows very little concern for me.®
8. The organization cares about my opinions.

**Perceived risk of speaking up** (Maslyn et al., 1996)

Speaking up on issues in my work unit would:

1. Hurt my relationship with my supervisor.
2. Make me appear unprofessional to my supervisor's boss.
3. Cause my supervisor to react negatively when I need or want something later.
4. Cause my supervisor to be harder on me in the future.

**Willingness to speak up**

1. Speaks up when workplace happenings conflict with his/her sense of what is appropriate.
2. Stands up to the actions or ideas of others when warranted.
3. Can be counted on to say things that need to be said.
4. Is careful not to express ideas that may be contrary to what others believe.®
5. Speaks up if he/she feels a plan or idea won't work.
6. Remains quiet rather than say what's on his/her mind in discussions of controversial issues.®

®Reverse scored

Responses to all items were recorded on the following 5-point verbally anchored rating continuum: 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree.

## **VITA**

**Sonya Fontenot Premeaux received her bachelor of science degree in management from McNeese State University in Lake Charles, Louisiana, in December, 1986. She continued her affiliation with McNeese State University, receiving a master's degree in business administration in May, 1988, and joining the faculty there in 1989. While on the faculty at McNeese, Sonya was awarded several faculty excellence and teaching awards by the College of Business, published several scholarly manuscripts, and served on several college and university committees. She received the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in business administration (management) with a concentration in Organizational Behavior - Human Resource Management from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in August, 2001. Upon completion of her degree, Sonya was employed as Assistant Professor of Management at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, Arkansas. She has been, and continues to be, active in the Academy of Management, the Southern Management Association, and the Southwest Academy of Management, as a presenter, session chair, and reviewer. Sonya is also a member of Phi Kappa Phi and Beta Gamma Sigma Honor Societies.**


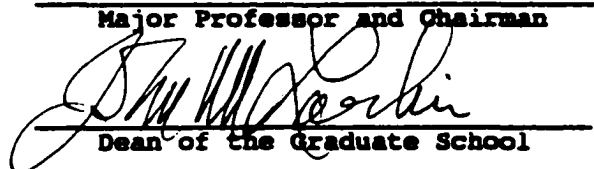
# DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

**Candidate:** Sonya Fontenot Premeaux

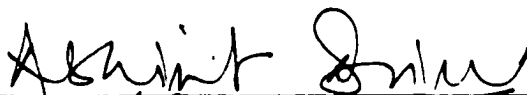
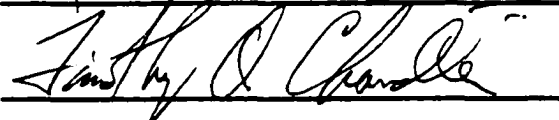
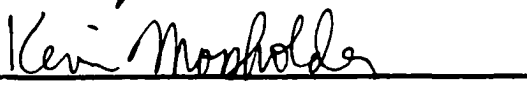
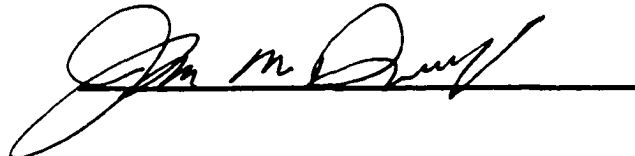
**Major Field:** Business Administration(Management)

**Title of Dissertation:** Breaking the Silence: Toward an Understanding  
of Speaking Up in the Workplace

**Approved:**

  
Major Professor and Chairman  
  
Dean of the Graduate School

**EXAMINING COMMITTEE:**

**Date of Examination:**

21 June 2001