

Out on a Limb: The
Role of Context and
Impression
Management in Selling
Gender-equity Issues

Susan J. Ashford
Nancy P. Rothbard
Sandy Kristin Piderit
Jane E. Dutton
University of Michigan

Under what conditions will women raise and promote gender-equity issues in their work organizations? We used structural equation modeling to analyze responses from a sample of over a thousand female managers to address this question. The results suggest that the perceived favorability of the organizational context fosters a willingness to sell gender-equity issues in organizations. The contextual factors that influenced willingness to sell were perceptions of a high degree of organizational support and of a warm and trusting relationship with critical decision makers, which enhanced the perceived probability of selling success and diminished the perceived image risk in selling. Organizational norms for issue selling also increased willingness to sell gender-equity issues by deflating perceived image risk. Individual differences did not predict willingness to sell gender-equity issues. We address the theoretical and practical implications of these findings.*

Managerial time and attention are scarce resources in organizations (Pfeffer, 1992). Both managers and non-managers compete to gain the attention of top policy makers for issues that they believe are important to the organization. To do so, they engage in what Dutton and Ashford (1993: 398) labeled issue selling, calling the organization's attention to key trends, developments, and events that have implications for organizational performance. Through issue selling, people's concerns become part of the organization's collective awareness (Narayanan and Fahey, 1982; Ocasio, 1997). While relevant to all organizational members, issue selling is an activity that is typically associated with those who have managerial responsibility.

The actions of issue sellers can create an adaptive advantage for an organization. From an evolutionary perspective, issue selling is one process by which people create variety in the pool of strategic ideas and initiatives within an organization. From this set of initiatives, some subset is selected and retained, contributing to patterns of strategic behaviors (Burgelman, 1990; Ghoshal and Bartlett, 1994). In this way, efforts that call attention to problematic conditions or emerging opportunities are the seed corn for organizational renewal and adaptation. Previous studies by Floyd and Wooldridge (1996) suggest that managers' choices to sell issues are consequential for an organization's strategic adaptation.

Despite the value of issue selling for organizations, potential issue sellers often feel tensions around whether to sell issues to managers above them. Selling the "right" issue at the "right" time can generate favorable career benefits. But selling an issue that is controversial or costly for the organization can potentially damage a seller's reputation. Furthermore, issue selling is effortful and takes time, creating another barrier to people's willingness to sell. Thus, the costs and benefits associated with issue selling often leave managers ambivalent about this type of discretionary action. This feeling of ambivalence is central to Meyerson and Scully's (1995) characterization of tempered radicals in organizations. They argued that there is an intrapsychic wrestling that governs whether managers will offer ideas, concerns, and input

© 1998 by Cornell University.
0001-8392/98/4301-0023/\$1.00.

•

We thank Larry Cummings, Herminia Ibarra, Anne Tsui, Bill Wooldridge, and three anonymous reviewers for their comments on previous drafts of this paper. We thank Jill Graham for her discus-
sant comments at the Academy of Management meetings, 1995. We thank the School of Business Administration, Interdisciplinary Committee for Organizational Studies and the vice president for research at the University of Michigan for their support of this research. Finally, we also thank Jeff Edwards for his advice about LISREL (although any misunderstandings remain our own).

to those above them or remain silent. If organizations value this input, then understanding the psychology underlying the choice to sell is critical. Our research question focuses on the heart of this dilemma: What personal and contextual factors make managers more or less willing to initiate issue selling in an organization?

Issue Selling Differentiated

Issue selling is a voluntary, discretionary set of behaviors by which organizational members attempt to influence the organizational agenda by getting those above them to pay attention to issues of particular importance to them (Dutton and Ashford, 1993). The types of issues that are sold range from changes in an organization's environment (e.g., technological or demographic changes) to more internally generated conditions, such as increasing employee dissatisfaction or changed goal levels. Trends and developments become issues when people construct them as real and make claims about their importance (Kitsuse and Spector, 1981). These discretionary upwardly directed behaviors differ from other similar individual-level behaviors, including whistle blowing, voice, principled organizational dissent, and product or innovation championing. They also differ from more general forms of employee participation and involvement.

Whistle blowing, voice, and principled organizational dissent all involve speaking out and often in an upward direction within the organization. Whistle blowing involves bringing illegal behavior or some clear wrong doing to the attention of those higher up in the organization or even to those outside of the organization (Near and Miceli, 1986). Voice is one means for expressing dissatisfaction (Withey and Cooper, 1989). Principled organizational dissent involves speaking out about violations of a sense of justice, honesty, or economy (Graham, 1986). The motivation implied by issue selling is broader than the motivation for these other behaviors. Potential issue sellers make choices to come forward about an issue based on the belief that it appropriately belongs on the organization's agenda or out of a personal desire to have an issue heard (Dutton and Ashford, 1993). With issue selling, the motivation to raise an issue doesn't imply an observation of illegality, a feeling of dissatisfaction, or a sense that justice or honesty has been violated. A person might raise an issue out of a sense that it represents an important organizational or personal opportunity. Thus, issue selling is similar (in that it involves speaking out and upward) to voice, whistle blowing, and dissent, but it includes a broader range of prompts to action than are typically considered by these other research domains.

Issue selling is both related to and yet distinct from product or innovation championing (Burgelman, 1990; Howell and Higgins, 1990). Researchers have defined champions as those who informally emerge in an organization and actively and enthusiastically promote an innovation (Archilladis, Jervis, and Robertson, 1971). Both issue selling and championing describe upward-influence behaviors and the challenge of getting upper management to invest precious time in a particular idea or solution. They differ in that innovation champions are typically pushing for concrete solutions to is-

Selling Issues

sues (e.g., an innovative processing technique such as frozen waffles) as opposed to a more abstract issue or idea (e.g., the growing number of families who would like foods that can be eaten on the go). While some issue sellers may sell specific solutions along with their issues (and at that point the dynamics governing their actions become quite similar to those for product champions), others do not and are faced with a much more ambiguous and abstract task, that of getting the powerful decision makers to see that their issue is one that the organization ought to focus on.

Issue selling and employee participation are also conceptually similar in that participation can sometimes entail the generation of ideas and issues. But, while participation activities are typically tied to formal programs initiated, framed, and bounded by upper management (Cotton et al., 1988; Wagner, 1994), in issue selling the locus of action is the seller. Issue selling focuses on employees' discretionary initiatives to raise ideas. Through issue selling, upper management may be confronted by ideas that are outside the agenda that it has established. In contrast to the participation literature's focus on employees' involvement in joint decision making (Locke and Schweiger, 1979), issue selling focuses on employees' attempts to shape the issue agenda and influence what may eventually be decided upon participatively.

Our study examined the conditions that encourage or discourage selling gender-equity issues, defined as the umbrella of concerns that relate to the differential treatment of women and men in work organizations. Very generally, these are concerns that managers might have about career opportunities for members of their own sex in the organization, about inclusion in or exclusion from organizational events, and about how members of their sex are treated in daily activities. Employees face choices about whether and when to raise these kinds of issues in their work organizations. As Meyerson and Scully (1995: 586) suggested in their description of tempered radicals, the choice to speak or be silent can be excruciating: "the struggle may be invisible, but it is by no means rare." The decision to speak up about issues of this sort is not a choice that many employees take lightly or resolve easily.

Two factors contributed to our choice to focus on the selling of gender-equity issues. First, given the changing composition of the U.S. workforce, the ability to make a diverse workforce feel welcomed and valued is increasingly important in today's organizations (Johnston, 1987; Cox and Blake, 1991; Jackson, 1992). Second, there is continuing evidence that women in particular perceive difficulties with breaking into top management ranks (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991) and in achieving and maintaining equal advantage to men in career progression (Stroh, Brett, and Reilly, 1992). There is also evidence of high rates of women leaving the workforce (Schwartz, 1992). If these negative outcomes persist in part because women, or men speaking on their behalf, have no avenues to create positive change within their organizations, then understanding the barriers to obtaining attention for gender-equity issues is both timely and practically important.

Although either men or women in organizations can raise gender-equity issues, we chose to study the social psychology underlying female managers' willingness to sell this issue for two reasons. First, while men may encounter sex discrimination in female-dominated occupations and elsewhere, the literature suggests that women are still far more likely to face gender-equity issues in the workforce as a whole. Women experience sexual harassment and power expressive displays, such as slights and sexual joking, at a much higher rate than men, and these displays can limit career advancement if these behaviors cause women to change jobs prematurely (Hemming, 1985). Empirical evidence also suggests that women have been excluded from male-dominated organizational networks that are significantly related to job promotions (Brass, 1985; Catalyst, 1996c). These glass-ceiling effects are still pervasive (Morrison and Von Glinow, 1990). Catalyst, an organization that tracks women's progress within U.S. firms, noted in 1996 that although women make up 46 percent of the labor force, they still represent less than 1 percent of the inside directors on boards of directors, 10.2 percent of total board seats, and only 2.4 percent of the 2,430 people with titles of chairman, vice chairman, chief executive officer, president, chief operating officer, or executive vice president (Catalyst, 1996a, 1996b). In light of this evidence, we assume that women will likely face gender-equity issues more often than will men.

The second reason for employing an all-female sample is the tension associated with selling an issue on behalf of one's own group, what Harquail (1996) labeled advocacy. While both men and women may notice and speak up for gender-equity issues, we believe that women's acts aimed at raising gender-equity concerns will have different connotations than would men's when they are selling on behalf of women. People may be more likely to ascribe self-serving motives to women selling gender-equity issues than they would to men selling these issues on behalf of women. Because we did not want to assume that risk and efficacy perceptions would be the same for those selling on behalf of their own group as for those selling on behalf of another group, we focused on women's perceptions of gender-equity issues to discover what encourages or discourages people from selling issues on behalf of their own group.

MODEL

We found no one theory that specified the relevant antecedent variables for our research question. Dutton and Ashford (1993) listed several variables that may lead to the choice to sell an issue but focus most of their theoretical attention on describing the form that such selling might take. Studies of upward-influence attempts have focused on predicting the type of influence strategies used (e.g., Farmer et al., 1997), but not whether influence attempts will be undertaken in the first place. As a result, we drew from three complementary literatures as the basis for our model. First, we followed Dutton and Ashford's (1993) suggestions on contextual variables that may influence issue-selling choices. Second, we drew from the innovation-championing literature to suggest rel-

evant individual-difference precursors (e.g., Howell and Higgins, 1990). Third, we employed general theories of behavior proposed by Ajzen (1991) and Vroom (1964), as well as more specific theories from research on another proactive discretionary behavior, feedback seeking (e.g., Ashford, 1986; Ashford and Northcraft, 1992), to specify the mediational paths by which these exogenous variables might influence willingness to sell gender-equity issues. Our primary criterion for inclusion of a predictor was its relevance for influencing the two mediators in our model.

Mediating Factors

For our model, we assume that two key assessments mediate the effects of individual and situational factors on the willingness to sell an issue. First, consistent with motivational theories that assume that effort exerted is related to expectancy beliefs (Vroom, 1964), Dutton and Ashford (1993) argued that the motivation to sell an issue is related to potential issue sellers' beliefs about whether their selling efforts are likely to be successful. We assume that people actively assess the probability of issue-selling success when deciding whether to initiate issue selling. A focus on expectancy beliefs parallels the upward-influence literature's emphasis on motivation to influence higher-ups (Mowday, 1978) and has been shown to be correlated with a willingness to dissent in organizations (e.g., Parker, 1993). These beliefs capture, in part, the expected efficacy of action (Withey and Cooper, 1989). Efficacy has been shown to be an important motivator of this kind of behavior in whistle-blowing studies (see Miceli and Near, 1992: 66, for a review). Ajzen (1991) argued that such beliefs are a critical antecedent to any planned behavior. Our logic is similar to these previous researchers': we assume that if issue sellers see major obstacles to having top management pay attention to an issue, they will estimate a low probability of issue-selling success and should, correspondingly, be less willing to initiate issue selling. Stated formally:

Hypothesis 1: People's perceptions of the probability of selling success are positively associated with their willingness to sell the gender-equity issue.

While Dutton and Ashford (1993) emphasized the rational, expectancy-driven assessment reflected in the discussion above, a second, more emotion-laden assessment may also play a role if people fear that others will form an undesirable impression of them because of their actions. Two factors may drive such negative impressions. First, an association with an issue that is seen as inappropriate or destructive to the organization or other organizational members can attach a social stigma to an individual (Dutton and Ashford, 1993). Second, because the act of selling reveals aspects of the individual's interpersonal and political savvy, if the seller fails in a selling attempt, other organizational members may view the issue seller as harmful to the organization (i.e., disloyal) or as incompetent. In either case, the risk is that the seller's image, how he or she is seen by others (particularly, powerful others), will be diminished or viewed by others as less positive. Dutton et al. (1997) found that managers were quite articulate about fears associated with issue selling. For example, one manager they interviewed as part of the data

collection for their study commented: "You know, as much as we like to say that the fear element is melting into the [horizon], going down into the west over here, there's still that fear element that, 'I will be perceived in such a way that it will have repercussions either on my salary treatment or how I'm perceived by my boss.' "

It has long been recognized that actions have impression-management consequences (Arkin, 1981; Ashford and Cummings, 1983; Tetlock and Manstead, 1985; Morrison and Bies, 1991). The issue is not simply whether various "audiences" for the act approve or disapprove (Ajzen, 1991), but how the act changes the content of how one is seen by others (e.g., as more or less virtuous or friendly). A positive public image helps people achieve desirable social outcomes such as approval, friendship, and power (e.g., Leary and Kowalski, 1990) and maintain access to resources controlled by others (Ashford and Tsui, 1991). A person's image, however, is also subject to change and must be protected. Accordingly, people are unlikely to initiate behaviors that could damage others' impressions of them (e.g., Ashford and Northcraft, 1992). Research suggests that a poor image remains an important factor leading to the career derailment of managerial women (Morrison, White, and Van Velsor, 1987), and women managers may be particularly attuned to the risks involved with image and to protecting their image rather than enhancing it (Ibarra and Harrington, 1997).

For some, there may be danger and fear associated with raising gender-equity issues in their organization. For example, more than half of the 210 female MBA graduates who responded to an open-ended survey as part of this research alluded to dangers associated with selling this issue.¹ When asked how selling gender-equity issues would affect them, representative comments were: "I think selling such an issue does give you a certain reputation within the organization. Given the current mix of management, I don't think this is the best reputation one could have. I think you would be looked down on in the future"; "I would probably win the whiner label, a particularly scarlet letter for a female"; and "I think it would have a mixed effect on my image. Those managers who agree would be supportive, while those who disagree or who don't like to rock the boat would probably brand me as aggressive, outspoken and a rebel." As these quotes illustrate, potential issue sellers can easily imagine a range of image costs associated with raising this issue. These perceived costs may dampen willingness to sell this issue:

Hypothesis 2: People's perceptions of image risk are negatively associated with their willingness to sell gender-equity issues.

Not only does image risk directly influence decisions about selling an issue, but people also take image risk into account in their cognitive assessments of the probability of selling success. This effect occurs when they justify their fears about selling the issue by rationalizing that the probability of success was already low. The stress and coping and cognitive dissonance literatures, both of which suggest that rationalization and reduction of cognitive expectations are typical distress responses, support this argument. For example, Ilfeld's (1980) coping dimension of rationalization-resignation

1

These quotes were taken from qualitative data collected from a subsample of our population at the same time that we collected our quantitative survey data. We asked this subsample what might happen to them if they were to sell gender-equity issues in their organizations. We followed that question with a specific probe about what might happen to their images within their organizations. These data were not used in our theorizing. We present the quotes here to show the richness and complexity of the phenomenon that we are trying to capture.

illustrates that people often cope by rationalizing or intellectualizing their stress. Cognitive dissonance theory also examines people's use of defense mechanisms such as intellectualization to make an event less emotional and more abstract and thereby reduce dissonance (e.g., Glass, Canavan, and Schiavo, 1968). Based on this research, we contend that when people are fearful (perceive image risk), they cognitively reassess their expectations for success. Rather than admit their fear to themselves, they begin to believe that they will be unsuccessful, which justifies their unwillingness to sell the issue. By moving to a rational rather than an emotional explanation, sellers reduce the distress associated with figuring out how much to allow perceived image risk to guide their behavior. These arguments suggest the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: People's perceptions of image risk are negatively associated with the perceived probability of success in selling.

Individual selling propensity. Research on innovation champions and entrepreneurs suggests that certain types of people may be predisposed to see a proactive activity like issue selling as viable (Howell and Higgins, 1990). We describe such people as having a high selling propensity, or dispositional qualities that make them more likely to sell an issue. One dispositional quality that indexes selling propensity is optimism, "the belief that good, as opposed to bad things will generally occur in one's life" (Scheier and Carver, 1993: 26). Optimists tend to believe that successful outcomes are more likely and that impediments to success can be overcome (Scheier and Carver, 1985) and have a greater sense of being able to perform the desired behavior (Schwarzer, 1994). They take on more activities and are more action-focused in coping with setbacks or adversity (e.g., Scheier, Weintraub, and Carver, 1986). The persistence associated with optimism has been shown to differentiate innovation champions from non-champions (Howell and Higgins, 1990). We believe that optimistic people will estimate a higher probability of success in selling than will those who lack this optimistic outlook.

Theory also suggests that optimists tend to underestimate the risks inherent in various activities. This belief has promoted studies of whether optimists are more likely to engage in risky health behavior, for example, because they underestimate the actual risks involved in getting AIDS (Fontaine, 1994) or having a drinking problem (Weinstein, 1980). While the empirical results showing the effect of dispositional optimism on risk perceptions are not conclusive, this logic would suggest that optimists would be likely to underestimate the amount of image risk involved in selling an issue, given their generalized tendency to assume that everything will work out all right.

A second dispositional component of selling propensity is the tendency to take risks. People with a higher risk-taking tendency enjoy risk taking and tend to take more specific risks than others (Kogan and Wallach, 1964). In contrast to risk-averse people, who attend to and weigh negative outcomes more heavily than positive outcomes (e.g., Schneider and Lopes, 1986), people with a tendency toward risk taking are thought to perceive risks to be lower (Brockhaus, 1980;

Sitkin and Pablo, 1992). In their study of innovation champions in 25 companies, Howell and Higgins (1990) found that innovation champions and non-champions differed significantly in their risk-taking propensity. Given this, we expect that risk propensity would have a similar positive effect on issue selling by elevating expectations of success and decreasing image risk assessments. These arguments suggest the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: People's selling propensity (indexed by higher levels of optimism and risk-taking propensity) is positively associated with their perceived probability of success in selling an issue and negatively associated with their perceived image risk.

Individual credibility. Attributes of sellers' past histories and current situations can also give them the credibility necessary to be successful in their selling attempts. In contrast to selling propensity, which describes a cluster of more stable dispositional differences, sellers' credibility is more fluid and context-dependent. Credibility is a form of social achievement that a person earns in a particular organizational setting and may be an important antecedent to issue-selling success. Dutton and Ashford (1993) captured the importance of credibility in their argument that sellers must always maintain the credibility necessary for the *next* selling attempt. Graham (1986: 44) emphasized the importance of credibility in her discussion of dissenters, arguing that it "is likely to enhance both attention and yielding from organizational listeners." Studies of persuasion have shown that source credibility affects the believability of the seller's message (Hovland and Weiss, 1951; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). If sellers understand these effects, then those who believe they are credible will be more likely to initiate selling activities because they perceive the probability of success as high and the risk to their image as low.

We propose that sellers consider three credibility-related factors relevant for issue selling: their past record of issue-selling success, their general performance record, and the fit of the issue sold with the seller's expertise or area of responsibility. First, if sellers have been successful in the past, they may be more likely to see their chances of success in the future more positively and, therefore, will be more willing to sell an issue. This positive assessment occurs as they generalize from past experience of success in issue selling or from their general performance track record to this specific act and assume that their credibility as an issue seller and, therefore, their perceived probability of selling success is good.

Second, sellers may also assume that others will take their general job success and past issue-selling success into account in interpreting a selling act. In developing an image of another, observers often attend to a few salient cues and then interpret subsequent information in a manner consistent with those cues (Staw, 1975). Theory and evidence suggest that other people actively use a person's success or reputation in drawing inferences about that person's power (e.g., Gioia and Sims, 1983) and in interpreting his or her behavior. Ashford and Northcraft (1992) found that the act of seeking feedback was interpreted more positively for high performers than for low performers. It has been suggested

Selling Issues

that this inferential process occurs either through priming (e.g., one is primed to use categories similar to those used in the past to organize perceptions of present behavior) (Wyer and Srull, 1980) or through confirmatory hypothesis testing (e.g., people seek out hypothesis-consistent and ignore hypothesis-inconsistent information) (Swann and Read, 1981). Thus, past success and a general performance record may give the seller credibility that will reduce his or her sense of image risk. Meyerson and Scully (1995) attributed this effect to an idiosyncrasy credits argument (Hollander, 1958). To the extent that sellers take these credits into account, they may be more motivated to sell an issue. Any mistakes or failures will be shaded more positively than they would be for a low-performing seller.

A third aspect of credibility is the fit between the seller's functional area and the issue sold. If sellers are raising issues that fall naturally within their area of responsibility, then they can expect that others will grant them some credibility and also should view their raising of the issue as legitimate. As Dutton and Ashford (1993: 408) put it, managers may be more willing to sell issues that fall within their functional domains because "in these efforts issue sellers may see themselves as more expert and trustworthy (i.e., more credible). With greater credibility, middle managers may see issue selling as less risky to their images and more likely to secure top management's attention." Given that gender-equity issues often fall under the purview of human resources departments in many organizations, we expect that managers in this function would feel relatively more credible selling this issue than would managers in other functions. These arguments suggest the following, more general hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: People's perceptions of themselves as more credible (indexed by their perceptions of past selling success, performance, and the fit between the issue raised and their functional expertise) are positively associated with their perceived probability of successfully selling an issue and negatively associated with their perceived image risk.

Context favorability. Potential issue sellers' perceptions of the organizational context in which they operate are also central to selling choices. We believe that people read the context for clues about how the act of issue selling may be received (e.g., Dutton et al., 1997). When an organizational context is favorable for issue selling, few negative outcomes (and perhaps some positive outcomes) are associated with trying to call upper management's attention to an issue. Issue sellers believe that issues will be treated seriously and fairly. In unfavorable organizational contexts, this sense of encouragement and safety is absent.

Previous research supports our inclusion of four different variables to characterize the context favorability of an organization. First, favorable organizational contexts are ones in which there is a high degree of perceived organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 1986: 501), which is defined as "individuals' beliefs about the extent to which the organization values employees' contributions and cares about their well being." Empirical studies have shown that the presence of perceived organizational support is associated with more prosocial behavior, stronger affective attachment to the orga-

nization, greater performance-reward expectancies (Eisenberger, Fasolo, and Davis-LaMastro, 1990), and lower intentions to quit (Wayne, Shore, and Liden, 1997). Supportive and empowering environments are also thought to encourage corporate entrepreneurs, or "change masters" (Kanter, 1983), and to promote a stronger sense of empowerment among middle managers (Spreitzer, 1996). We expect that people will use their perceptions that the organization cares, values contributions, and is generally supportive as cues leading them to infer that the context will support their initiatives about issues that concern them. This inference should elevate estimates about the potential for issue-selling success. Near and Miceli's (1986) whistle-blowing research suggested that an absence of organizational support was correlated with greater expectations of organizational retaliation. When perceived organizational support is greater, therefore, managers may believe their issue-selling attempts will be construed positively and that there is less possible risk to their image arising from retaliatory behavior. These arguments suggest that perceived organizational support should influence both of our mediator variables.

Second, research on issue selling and upward influence suggests that favorable organizational contexts also have top managers who are open to ideas from below (Schilit and Locke, 1982; Dutton and Ashford, 1993). Employees below the top-management ranks routinely monitor and read the attitudes and behaviors of top managers to predict how they are likely to respond to internal or external initiatives (Turner, 1980). When sellers perceive that top management is open to new ideas, they may see fewer barriers to getting top management to attend to their issue, contributing to a general sense of context favorability. This variable has been important in studies of principled organizational dissent (Graham, 1986), change and innovation championing (O'Reilly, 1989), and issue selling (Dutton et al., 1997). These findings prompted the inclusion of this perception as an important contributor to context favorability. Top-management openness leads potential issue sellers to see a higher probability of issue-selling success. Openness may also lead sellers to believe that their behavior will be interpreted more fairly. Thus, in contexts in which management is perceived to be open to new ideas, we expect perceptions of image risk to be lower.

A third aspect of context favorability for issue selling is one in which such behaviors are seen as legitimate and normal. Norms for any behavior "specify the amount or quality of behavior expected of the actor by relevant others" (Jackson, 1965: 302). Both organizational culture researchers and innovation researchers argue that norms supporting risk taking or speaking out can encourage innovation and creative behaviors (e.g., Kanter, 1983; O'Reilly, 1989). When such norms exist and expectations are clear, they provide guidelines for people about the appropriateness of an activity. The presence of norms promoting issue selling should reduce perceived image risk. If selling is known to be "okay," then sellers should be less concerned about image risk (Ashford and Northcraft, 1992). Also, where norms for issue selling exist, people have clearer guidelines about when and how to sell.

Selling Issues

Thus, norms should also increase probability estimates for successfully selling the issue.

A final aspect of a favorable issue-selling context is the quality of the relationship between a potential issue seller and critical decision makers in the organization (Schilit and Locke, 1982). When the relationship is warm, trusting, friendly, and open, people know upper managers as "particular others" and not just generalized actors playing broadly defined roles" (Heimer, 1992: 143). This type of connection contributes to a sense of safety in communication and a desire to communicate genuinely and authentically. Schilit and Locke (1982) found that in smaller organizations, successful upward-influence attempts correlated with a favorable relationship with a supervisor. The existence of trusting relationships promotes issue selling in two ways. First, trusting relationships create a sense of psychological safety that, in turn, reduces perceived image risk. Dutton et al. (1997) found that potential sellers viewed a poor relationship with a target as elevating image risk. Second, when trusting and warm relationships exist, potential sellers may believe that attempts to sell an issue will receive serious consideration from a target. The reciprocity expectations that typically accompany a good relationship may strengthen potential sellers' hopes that selling attempts will be treated seriously and fairly. Thus, we believe that a higher quality relationship with critical decision makers increases sellers' expectations of selling success and lowers estimates of image risk. Given all of the above arguments, in a favorable context, there are fewer perceived barriers to issue selling. Rather, people feel a sense of possibility and support. The factors creating these feelings are captured in the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6: The favorability of the organizational context (indexed by greater perceived organizational support, more openness of top management, a higher quality seller-target relationship, and the existence of norms favoring issue selling) is positively associated with people's perceived probability of successfully selling an issue and negatively associated with their perceived image risk.

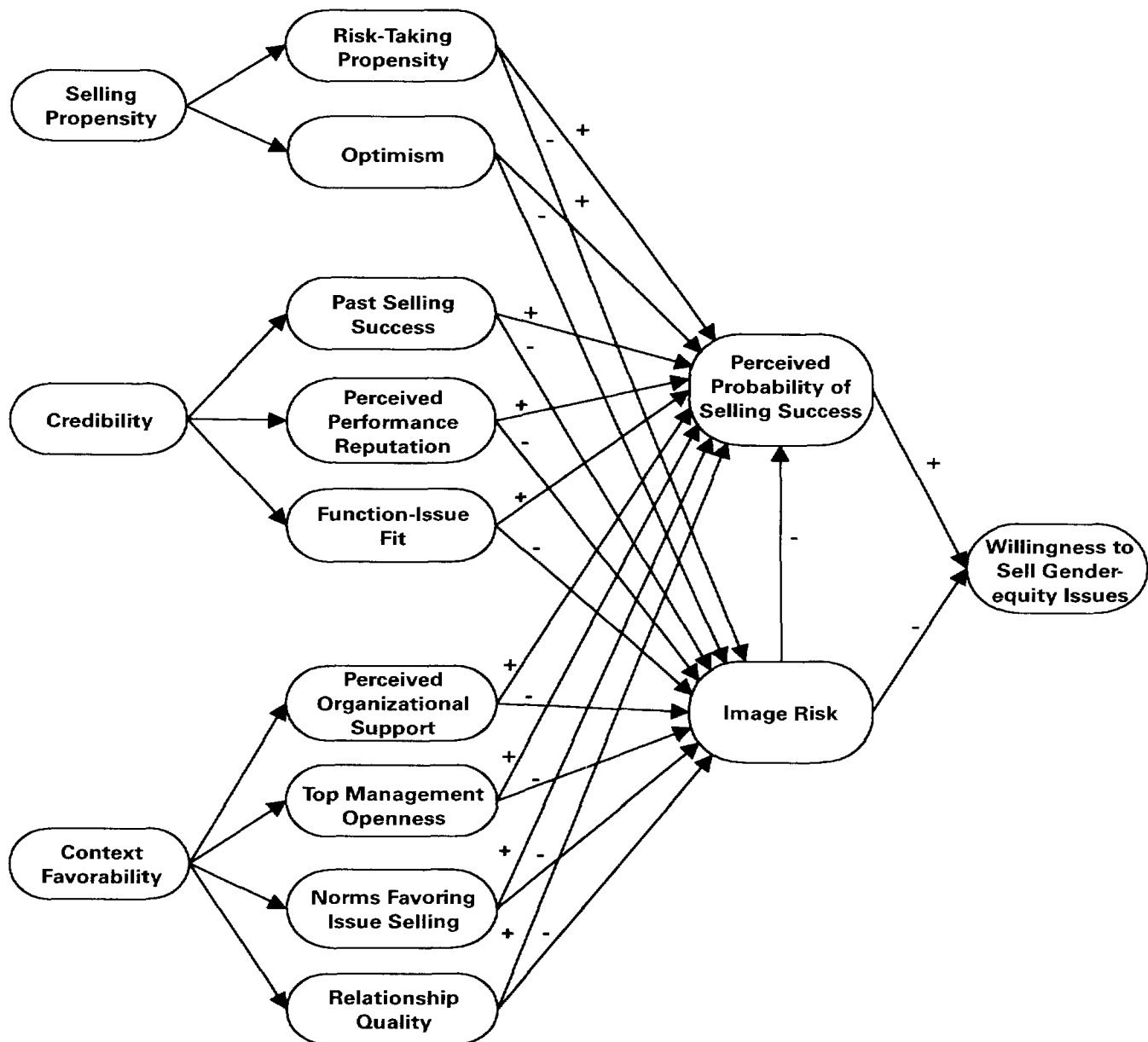
Figure 1 summarizes our model of willingness to sell gender-equity issues. On the far left are the individual and situational precursors; the perceived probability of successfully selling the issue and the image risk are the mediators. On the far right is the dependent variable, willingness to sell the gender-equity issue. This is the model we tested on a sample of female middle managers from a diverse set of organizations.

METHODS

Sample and Procedures

Our target population consisted of all female graduates throughout the history of a Midwestern business school. We divided this population randomly into two groups; 80 percent of the population received the quantitative survey described below, while 20 percent received an open-ended survey. We only reference these qualitative data briefly in this paper. We mailed 4,098 quantitative surveys to this population. Respondents received the survey directly from the business school, along with two cover letters, one from the authors and one from the school's dean explaining the nature and importance

Figure 1. Theoretical model of willingness to sell gender-equity issues.*



*Not shown are the effects of three control variables, identification with women, importance of the issue, and extent of issue, which are predicted to affect the mediator variables and willingness to sell the issue.

of the study. Surveys were returned anonymously and confidentiality was assured. We gave respondents the opportunity to send in their business card (whether they chose to participate or not), to be included in a drawing for a small prize (a university sweatshirt). We asked respondents who were not working to notify us so that we could differentiate them from those who were uninterested in replying. We used these returned notices to exclude 786 women from the eligible population, because they were either not currently employed outside the home (retired or raising children full-time) or not employed in hierarchical settings (if they ran their own business or worked in a small group without hierarchical layers). Thus, the eligible population for the study was 3,312 (4,098 – 786). Of these, 1,019 graduates returned

Selling Issues

surveys, for a response rate of 31 percent. The sample comprised a mixture of masters of business administration (MBA) and bachelors of business administration graduates of the business school.

The sample comprised female managers working in the following industries: 19 percent in financial services; 12 percent in education, government, and nonprofits; 11 percent in high technology; 10 percent in consumer products; 10 percent in transportation; 9 percent in health care; 8 percent in manufacturing; 6 percent in consulting; 2 percent in communications; 2 percent in travel and entertainment; and 11 percent in other industries. Of the respondents, 90 percent were white. Their average full-time work experience was 11.32 years (S.D. = 6.66), and their average supervisory experience was 5.39 years (S.D. = 5.50). They had worked an average of 4.21 years in their current organization (S.D. = 4.69) and an average of 3.28 years in their current position (S.D. = 3.28). The majority (64 percent) was staff. They worked in various functions, such as marketing (21 percent), finance (18 percent), accounting (12 percent), and human resources (8.6 percent).

We structured the survey to measure the dispositional and context variables first. Then we described the gender-equity issue and asked respondents to use this definition in their subsequent responses. The gender-equity issue described was based on a case presented in the *Harvard Business Review* (Reardon, 1993). Specifically, we described the issue as follows. First, sometimes women experience an eroding sense of worth and place due to the atmosphere of the organization. Examples of this might include: at meetings, women are interrupted, talked over, their ideas aren't heard, side conversations occur during their presentations, their explanations and other persuasion attempts fall on deaf ears. Second, sometimes women tend to feel unwelcome or unimportant due to events or incidents that on their own would be small things, but together and in repetition are quite powerful. Examples might include: retreats with "men only" bars, informal meetings-before-the-meeting, and postmortems after the meeting from which women are excluded, men making a big deal of the few occasions where they play "Mr. Mom." Third, sometimes women feel that their ability to get ahead within the organization is limited. Examples might include: women seeing that there are no women in the senior ranks of the organization and that women approaching the senior ranks seem to opt to leave the organization. While our portrayal may not be the way that every respondent would have described the issue on her own, it was important that the respondents react to the same issue description. We included several components to tap the domain of the issue broadly so that the issue would seem relevant to a broader spectrum of our sample. By asking respondents to respond to "the gender-equity issue," we were implicitly asking them to form an aggregate interpretation across these components.

We pretested several measures using three samples. First, a group of 56 MBA students responded to the issue described above and answered questions about how they would sell this issue, thinking back to their previous work organizations.

Second, a sample of 100 female alumnae from the same Midwestern business school completed an earlier version of the survey and were therefore excluded from the survey mailing for the current study. Third, an additional group of 39 MBA students responded to the same issue description and answered questions (different from those answered by the first group) about how they would sell this issue. We used the data from these pretests to revise scales by altering item wording or adding items.

Measures

Issue-selling propensity. Two variables, optimism and risk-taking propensity, indexed a respondent's selling propensity. *Optimism* was measured on a 7-point Likert scale with the 12-item Life Orientation Test (LOT) developed and evaluated by Scheier and Carver (1985). Previous research has used this scale extensively. Sample items include: "In uncertain times I usually expect the best" and "I'm a believer that 'every cloud has a silver lining'." We measured *risk-taking propensity* with a scale based on the work of Slovic (1972) and adapted by Gupta and Govindarajan (1984) that consists of four items using a 7-point Likert response format. Sample items include: "I am not willing to take risks when choosing a job or a company to work for" and "I prefer a low risk/high security job with a steady salary over a job that offers high risks and high rewards." The coefficient alpha for this scale in past research has been high (e.g., .91, Gomez-Mejia and Balkin, 1989).

Credibility. A seller's credibility was indexed by three variables intended to capture sellers' perceptions of their credibility in the eyes of others: past selling success, perceived performance reputation, and the fit between the seller's functional area and the gender-equity issue (function-issue fit). Three items developed for this study asked respondents to report on the extent of their *past success in selling issues*, defined as success in getting the critical decision makers for an issue to give it their time and attention. We asked respondents to consider this definition and then respond to three questions using a 7-point Likert scale. The three statements were: "I have been successful in the past at selling issues in this organization"; "I have a positive track record for selling issues"; and "I am known as a successful issue seller." We measured *perceived performance reputation* with a new 5-item scale using a 7-point Likert scale. The construct of interest was not respondents' actual performance level but, rather, how they thought their performance was perceived by others. Sample items include: "I am viewed as an exceptional performer in this organization" and "I have a reputation in this organization for doing my work very well." We assessed the *fit between the seller's function and the issue* by comparing managers positioned in human resource functions with managers in all other functional areas. We used a single-item dummy variable coded 1 for all managers who indicated that they worked in human resources, personnel, training, or administration and 0 for all other managers.

Context favorability. We measured perceived organizational support, top-management openness, quality of seller-target relationship, and norms favoring issue selling as indicators of

context favorability. *Perceived organizational support* was measured with the 17-item form of the Index of Perceived Organizational Support (IPOS) developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986), using a 7-point Likert response format. This scale has been shown to have adequate reliability and validity in previous research (cf. Shore and Tetrick, 1991). We measured *top management openness* with a scale drawn from House and Rizzo's (1972) Organizational Practices Questionnaire that was originally called top-management receptiveness and which they found reliable. These six items used a 7-point "very true" to "very untrue" response format. Sample items include: "good ideas get serious consideration from management above them" and "when suggestions are made to management above them, they receive fair evaluation." Six items developed for this study measured the *relationship quality* between the respondent and the group to whom she would have to sell this issue. Respondents used a 7-point Likert-type scale to rate the relationship along several dimensions: "distant" (reverse coded), "cordial," "friendly," "open," "trusting," and "close." Response alternatives were anchored by 1 ("not at all descriptive of our relationship on average") and 7 ("very descriptive of our relationship on average"). We assessed *norms favoring issue selling* on a three-item scale developed in our pretests with the student sample ($N = 39$). These items asked respondents to assess the norms in their organization on a 7-point Likert scale. Sample items include "in my work organization, controversial issues are kept under the table" and "people in my work organization are typically willing to raise issues important to them." The pretest coefficient alpha for this scale was .77.

Probability of selling success. We measured this variable with three items pretested on samples of alumnae and current MBA students ($N = 195$) using a 7-point Likert scale. The items were: "I am confident that I could sell this issue successfully in my work organization"; "I believe that I could get the critical decision makers in my work organization to buy this issue"; and "I am confident that I could get the critical decision makers in my work organization to pay attention to this issue." This scale showed adequate reliability in pretesting and in this sample ($\alpha = .91$). We had considered using a measure that would follow Lee and Bobko's (1994) prescriptions for measuring self-efficacy by assessing respondents' agreement that they could get various levels of attention for this issue within their current work organization and then summing these items. This method was not feasible for measuring efficacy about issue selling, however, because this behavior and its attendant outcomes do not neatly fall into levels, unlike many of the studies cited by Lee and Bobko (1994).

Image risk. We measured this variable on a 7-point Likert scale with six questions asking for respondents' perceptions about how their images would be affected if they were to sell this issue. These items were based on Ashford's (1986) scale measuring the risk in seeking feedback in organizations, but, in addition, items in this scale asked respondents about potential gains as well as harm to their image. Sample items include: "If I were to sell this issue, others in the organization would think worse of me" and "If I were to sell this

issue, my image in the organization would be enhanced" (reverse scored).

Willingness to sell. Three items measured our dependent variable, respondents' willingness to sell gender-equity issues. These items, developed from our pretest samples, asked respondents about the amount of time, energy, and effort that they would be willing to devote to selling this issue in their current organizations. The response format ranges from 1 ("none at all") to 7 ("a great deal of [effort, time, or energy]"). This scale showed adequate reliability in the pretest ($\alpha = .77$) and was factorially independent of the items measuring probability of selling success described above.

Control variables. We measured three control variables. Given our interest in the dispositional and contextual influences on issue selling, our goal was to control for the motivation to sell that might stem from the issue itself. *Social identification with women* was measured using six items developed by Harquail (1996), drawing from Gurin and Markus (1989). This scale employs a 5-point response format, with responses ranging from "not at all" to "a great deal." Sample items include: "How much do the successes of women as a group feel like your successes?" and "How connected do you feel to women as a group?" A second control variable, *extent of the issue*, indexed the extent to which gender-equity issues, as we described them, existed within the respondent's organization. Though we used an all-female sample, we didn't assume that all women would experience gender-equity concerns in their settings. Rather, we assumed that while women would experience this issue more frequently than would men, they would also vary in the degree to which they experienced the issue in their organizational settings. We included this variable because our findings may differ in settings in which the issue is extensive versus nearly nonexistent. Extent of the issue was measured with the question, "To what extent is the issue described [the gender-equity issue as presented above] an issue in your work organization?" Responses were assessed on a scale from 1 ("to no extent") through 4 ("to some extent") to 7 ("to a great extent"). The final control variable was the perceived *issue importance*, measured with three items employing a 7-point Likert-type response format. Sample items include: "How concerned are you personally about this issue?" and "How much does this issue matter to you personally?"

We expected that our control variables would relate to willingness to sell gender-equity issues and, in some cases, to our mediators. Because Harquail (1996) found that social identification with women had a significant effect on women's advocacy on behalf of women, we expected this variable to influence respondents' willingness to sell gender-equity issues directly. We expected that the perceived extent of the issue would influence respondents' perceptions of both their probability of selling success and image risk. If the issue exists to a great extent in an organization, people might feel that they cannot effect change no matter what they try, which would lower their perceived probability of selling success. They also might feel greater image risk

because there is more at stake—more people are potentially invested in the status quo and might think poorly of someone who challenged it. The extent of the issue in the organization also provides a motivation for an individual to sell an issue: if people do not think that this issue exists in their organization, they have little incentive to raise it. We controlled for the extent of the issue to determine what other factors encouraged and inhibited people from raising this issue beyond the extent to which it was an issue in their particular organization. We expected that the perceived importance of this issue would also affect women's willingness to sell because issues that aren't seen as important shouldn't generate much selling energy. Importance is different from the extent of the issue: the latter refers to how much of an issue the gender-equity issue was in the respondent's organization and the former to how much the respondent cared about it.

Both the perceived importance of the gender-equity issue and identification with women should increase the perceived value of raising gender-equity issues and, therefore, the sellers' willingness to go to bat for them. We also related these controls to the mediators by specifying paths from them to each mediator, to address a methodological concern, rather than to depict a theoretically hypothesized relationship. Because of the way the controls were modeled (as endogenous variables that are predictors of willingness), unless we specified paths between the controls and the mediators, we would not take into account the correlations between those mediators and the controls. By relating the controls to the mediators, we accounted for the shared variance between the mediators and the controls in predicting willingness to sell. In the case of issue extent, we also expected relationships with the mediators for theoretical reasons.

Analysis

We used LISREL 8 to analyze the saturated measurement model, the structural model corresponding to the full set of hypotheses, and a series of nested structural models testing individual hypotheses. For scales with more than five items, we created multiple observed indicators for the latent constructs by using composite variables created from pairs or triplets of items, as suggested by Bagozzi and Heatherton (1994). Thus, we created three composites as indicators of optimism, perceived organizational support, top management openness, relationship quality, and image risk. For scales with five or fewer items, we used the individual items as indicators of the latent construct. This was done for risk-taking propensity, past selling success, perceived performance reputation, norms favoring issue selling, perceived probability of selling success, and willingness to sell gender-equity issues.

We assessed model fit using several statistics. First, we used the chi-square test that assesses the goodness of fit between the reproduced and observed correlation matrices. Because the chi-square test statistic is widely known to be highly sensitive to sample size, such that models that fit the data reasonably well are often rejected due to the moderate to large size of the sample in which the test is conducted

(Bentler and Bonett, 1980), we also used three other goodness of fit criteria that are not sensitive to sample size (Bentler, 1980). These were the non-normed fit index (NNFI; Bentler and Bonett, 1980), the incremental fit index (IFI; Bollen, 1989), and the comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990). These indices represent the relative improvement in fit of the hypothesized model over the null model, in which all observed variables are specified as uncorrelated. These indices have expected values of 1.00 when the hypothesized model is true in the population. Although standards for such indices are difficult to establish (Marsh, Balla, and McDonald, 1988), a value of .90 or higher has been suggested as indicating adequate fit (Bentler and Bonett, 1980). Finally, we also used the root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA; Steiger, 1990), which is an estimate of the discrepancy between the original and reproduced covariance matrices in the population. Cudeck and Browne (1983) suggested that an RMSEA of .05 represents a close fit and that RMSEAs of less than .08 represent a reasonable fit.

While the structural model test assessed all our hypotheses simultaneously, we also performed several chi-square difference tests of our hypotheses. For instance, to test hypothesis 4, relating selling propensity to the perceived probability of selling success and to image risk, we estimated a constrained model with those paths set to zero, rather than estimating them, and compared its chi-square to the chi-square from the structural model to see if the model fit of the constrained model was significantly worse. This constrained-model test indicated whether we included paths that were not significant.

We then examined several relaxed models to verify that we had not excluded any paths from our model that could improve its fit. For example, we estimated three relaxed models that added paths from the independent variables (selling propensity, credibility, and context favorability) directly to the dependent variable (willingness to sell the issue). If the chi-square difference indicated a significantly better fit and if these paths were significant, we would not be able to claim that the effects of the independent variables were all channeled through the mediators. If the chi-square difference showed that there was no improvement and if these paths were not significant, we would gain added support for our mediation hypotheses. For all structural models, we estimated paths between the control variables and both the mediators and dependent variables to capture respondents' motivation and assessments that might stem from the issue itself.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents scale characteristics, intercorrelations, and reliabilities. As described above, we used single items or item subscales as indicators of our latent variables in the LISREL analyses.

Assessment of the Measurement Model

The saturated measurement model represents a confirmatory factor analysis of all scales used in the study, including the relationships between items and their factors, the first-

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Scales Used in Analyses*

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Optimism	5.28	0.68	(.81)						
2. Risk-taking propensity	5.11	1.04	.30	(.73)					
3. Past selling success	4.86	1.17	.25	.29	(.92)				
4. Perceived performance reputation	5.45	0.96	.26	.17	.46	(.92)			
5. Function-issue fit (1 = HR, 0 = other)	0.09	0.28	.00	.00	.03	.00	(—)		
6. Perceived organizational support	4.86	1.01	.23	.07	.40	.28	.03	(.94)	
7. Top management openness	5.22	1.19	.19	.09	.45	.26	.01	.71	(.92)
8. Norms favoring issue selling	4.46	1.32	.13	.07	.34	.15	.01	.51	.53
9. Relationship quality	4.37	1.34	.19	.11	.36	.28	-.01	.58	.53
10. Social identification with women	3.07	0.74	.09	.02	-.02	-.02	.04	-.03	-.06
11. Issue importance	5.18	1.35	-.01	.08	-.12	-.06	.03	-.19	-.17
12. Extent of the issue	4.14	1.71	-.08	.04	-.15	-.11	.05	-.34	-.31
13. Probability of selling success	3.57	1.45	.16	.10	.29	.17	.08	.49	.44
14. Image risk	4.19	1.13	-.12	-.02	-.15	-.11	-.05	-.36	-.29
15. Willingness to sell the issue	3.33	1.47	.10	.12	.08	.05	.11	.08	.06
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
8. Norms favoring issue selling	(.87)								
9. Relationship quality	.36	(.87)							
10. Social identification with women	-.03	-.04	(.84)						
11. Issue importance	-.14	-.18	.49	(.89)					
12. Extent of the issue	-.27	-.32	.18	.46	(—)				
13. Probability of selling success	.34	.49	.05	-.09	-.30	(.92)			
14. Image risk	-.28	-.34	-.06	.06	.27	-.61	(.91)		
15. Willingness to sell the issue	.07	.11	.35	.44	.20	.37	-.36	(.97)	

* Correlations >.06 are significant at $p < .05$. Entries in parentheses are coefficient alphas. $N = 952$.

and second-order factors, and the correlations among the factors. Despite a significant chi-square [$\chi^2(823) = 1570.82$, $p = .000$], which is to be expected with a sample as large as ours (Bentler and Bonett, 1980), the measurement model fit well according to other fit statistics (CFI = .97, IFI = .97, NNFI = .97) and according to the small size of the residuals (RMSEA = .032, SRMR = .036).

Our measurement model also generally confirmed our sense that there were clusters of dispositional variables, contextual variables, and credibility variables. The first-order factors representing optimism and risk-taking propensity were both significantly related to a second-order factor we called selling propensity ($\gamma = .62$ and $\gamma = .60$, respectively). Four first-order factors were significantly associated with a second-order factor we called context favorability ($\gamma = .89$ for perceived organizational support, $\gamma = .58$ for norms favoring issue selling, $\gamma = .85$ for openness of top management, and $\gamma = .68$ for relationship quality). Finally, the first-order factors representing past selling success and perceived performance reputation were significantly associated with a second-order factor representing credibility ($\gamma = .82$ and $\gamma = .58$, respectively), but the first-order factor representing function-issue fit was not significantly associated with this credibility factor ($\gamma = .03$).

We also assessed discriminant validity in the measurement model by testing a model in which all the endogenous variables loaded together on one factor. If the chi-square increased significantly when compared with the measurement model, this would indicate that the model fit better when

these factors were modeled distinctly. The model with all endogenous items loading on one factor fit poorly [$\chi^2(850) = 6218.41$, $p = .000$, CFI = .81, IFI = .81, NNFI = .79]. The chi-square increased by a significant amount [$\Delta\chi^2(20) = 4642.50$, $p = .000$], providing more evidence for the discriminant validity of the endogenous factors.

Assessment of the Structural Model

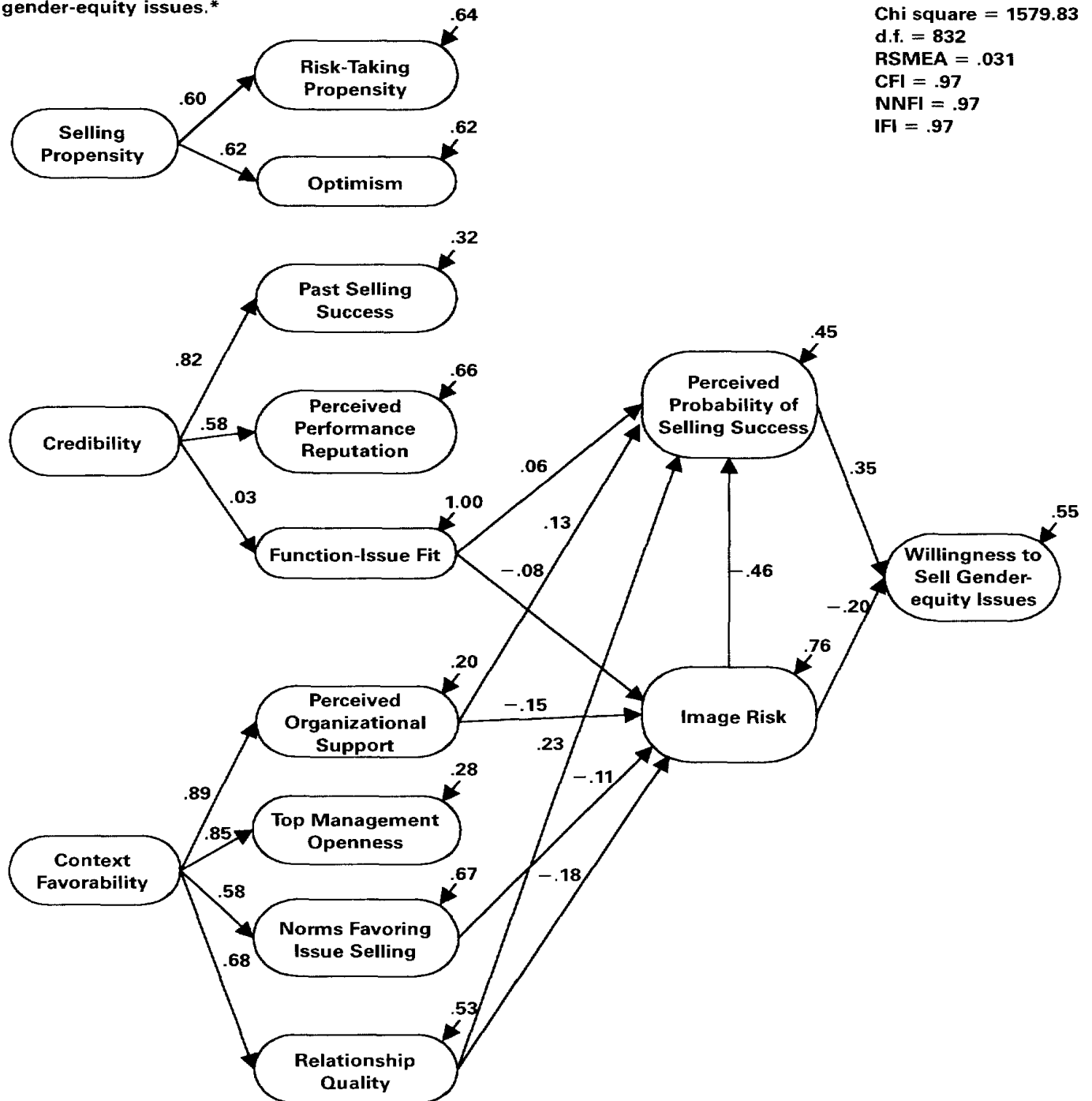
As with the measurement model, while the chi-square for the structural model was significant [$\chi^2(832) = 1579.83$, $p = .000$], the other statistics indicated that the model fit the data well (CFI = .97, IFI = .97, NNFI = .97), as did the small residuals (RMSEA = .031, SRMR = .037). To assess the structural model, we first compared the saturated measurement model with the theoretical structural model to determine whether reducing the number of parameters estimated to only our hypothesized paths resulted in poorer fit. These chi-square difference test results indicated that the theoretical model was not significantly different from the measurement model [$\Delta\chi^2(9) = 9.01$, $p = .436$], signifying that our more parsimonious structural model had just as good a fit as the saturated measurement model.

The standardized path coefficients for our theoretical structural model, presented in figure 2, provided mixed support for our hypotheses. Our first three hypotheses were supported. The perceived probability of selling success was significantly and positively related to willingness to sell the issue ($b = .35$, $p < .001$), image risk was negatively associated with willingness to sell the issue ($b = -.20$, $p < .001$). Perceived image risk also significantly decreased the probability of selling success in the seller's mind ($b = -.46$, $p < .001$). Thus, people's perceptions of image risk influenced their willingness to sell both directly and indirectly (through the influence of image risk on the probability of selling success).

In contrast, hypothesis 4 was not supported. While optimism and risk-taking propensity were associated with a second-order factor of selling propensity, the path coefficients for optimism and risk-taking propensity on probability of selling success ($b = .01$, $b = .04$) and on image risk ($b = -.04$, $b = .01$) were not significantly different from zero. Hypothesis 5 was only partially supported. For two aspects of credibility, past selling success and perceived performance reputation, the path coefficients to perceived probability of selling success ($b = .04$, $b = -.03$) and to image risk ($b = .05$, $b = .01$) were not significantly different from zero. But function-issue fit, operationalized as the comparison of human resources managers versus all other managers, was positively associated with perceived probability of selling success ($b = .06$, $p < .05$) and negatively associated with image risk ($b = -.08$, $p < .05$). As shown above, however, function-issue fit was not significantly related to the two other aspects of credibility.

Finally, hypothesis 6 was largely supported. In figure 2, significant paths linked perceived organizational support to both the perceived probability of selling success ($b = .13$, $p < .01$) and image risk ($b = -.15$, $p < .05$). Relationship quality was also significantly related to both perceived probability of selling success ($b = .23$, $p < .001$) and image risk ($b = -.18$,

Figure 2. LISREL results of structural model of willingness to sell gender-equity issues.*



*Only statistically significant paths are shown. Not shown are the effects of three control variables: identification with women, importance of the issue, and extent of issue. Positively related to willingness are: identification ($b = .12, p < .01$), issue importance ($b = .21, p < .001$), and extent ($b = .23, p < .001$). Extent is also negatively related to probability of success ($b = -.07, p < .05$) and positively related to image risk ($b = .23, p < .001$).

$p < .001$). Finally, norms favorable to issue selling were significantly negatively related to image risk ($b = -.11, p < .01$) but not to perceived probability of selling success ($b = .00$). The paths from top-management openness to the mediators, probability of selling success and image risk, were not significantly different from zero ($b = .07, b = -.01$, respectively).

The results for the control variables were as follows. First, social identification with women was positively and significantly related to willingness to sell the issue ($b = .12$, $p < .01$) but was not significantly related to either of the two mediators. Second, the extent to which respondents saw the gender-equity issue as an issue in their organizations was positively related to willingness to sell the issue ($b = .21$, $p < .001$). Extent of the issue was also negatively related to perceived probability of selling success ($b = -.07$, $p < .05$) and positively related to image risk ($b = .23$, $p < .001$). Third, the importance of the issue to people was positively related to their willingness to sell it ($b = .35$, $p < .001$) but was not related to either mediator.

Finally, figure 2 also presents the error terms (ζ s) for the structural equations. In standardized form, these error coefficients for the equations represent the proportion of variance not accounted for by the structural model. We explain more of the variance in probability of selling success (55 percent) and in willingness to sell the issue (45 percent) than we do in image risk (24 percent).

We also compared the structural model with a number of other models to determine if it was sufficiently parsimonious and comprehensive. Table 2 reports the results from these nested-models analyses.

For each constrained model, a set of paths was fixed to zero to allow us to see if we had included paths that weren't necessary. If fit worsened significantly, this would indicate that the paths dropped from the model as a set were important predictors (as we had hypothesized). In three of the constrained models, fit was significantly worse, indicating that the excluded paths should have been included in the model and providing additional support for hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. These three models excluded the paths from perceived probability of selling success to willingness to sell (M6), the paths from image risk to both perceived probability of selling success and willingness to sell (M7), and the paths from the control variables to the mediators and to willingness to sell (M2). Hypotheses 5 and 6 received additional support, since when the credibility paths (M4) and the context favorability

Table 2

Results from Nested Model Tests of Hypotheses

Model		χ^2	d.f.	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δ d.f.	P
M0	Measurement model	1570.82	823	—	—	—
M1	Structural model	1579.83	832	9.01	9	.436
M2	Drop control paths	1963.08	841	383.25	9	.000
M3	Drop selling propensity paths	1582.86	836	3.03	4	.553
M4	Drop credibility paths	1595.38	838	15.55	6	.016
M5	Drop context favorability paths	1791.22	840	211.39	8	.000
M6	Drop probability of success to willingness to sell path	1659.49	833	79.66	1	.000
M7	Drop image risk paths to probability of success and willingness to sell	1820.68	834	240.85	2	.000
M8	Add selling propensity paths to willingness to sell	1575.91	830	3.92	2	.141
M9	Add credibility paths to willingness to sell	1577.60	829	2.23	3	.526
M10	Add context favorability paths to willingness to sell	1577.88	828	1.95	4	.745

paths were dropped (M5), the chi-square statistic increased significantly. In contrast, these tests confirmed that hypothesis 4 was not consistent with our data. In the constrained model (M3), fit was not significantly decreased when the sets of paths were dropped, indicating that the paths from selling propensity to the mediators did not contribute significantly to the fit of the model.

We also relaxed some of the assumptions of our theoretical model to test for partial mediation. In three relaxed models (M8, M9, and M10), we added direct paths from the selling propensity factors, the credibility factors, and the context favorability factors, respectively, to willingness to sell. Testing these models allowed us to see if we had excluded paths that should have been included. None of these relaxed models significantly improved the fit of the model. These tests bolster our mediation findings. They show that none of the direct paths from the independent variables to willingness to sell were significant. In particular, the effects of perceived organizational support, relationship quality, norms, and the seller's function-issue fit on perceived willingness to sell the issue are fully mediated by image risk and the perceived probability of selling success.

DISCUSSION

We began with a simple plot line: that female managers will feel tensions surrounding the choice to bring gender-equity issues to the attention of managers above them. These tensions arise because of their perceptions that gender-equity issues are important, coupled with concerns about the reactions elicited by raising these issues. We then articulated the type of person (with a particular disposition and track record and located in a particular function) and context that might tip the balance in favor of selling gender-equity issues.

Our measurement model confirms the existence of two individual (selling propensity and credibility) and one contextual second-order factor that together organize our independent variables. The most striking finding about these second-order factors is that context favorability was critical in influencing decisions about selling gender-equity issues. Women who perceive their organizations to be supportive and who have a close relationship with critical decision makers perceive less image risk and are more likely to believe that they can sell the issue. Perceptions that favorable norms for issue selling exist also reduce image-risk perceptions. Sellers who perceive these conditions may feel a sense of safety, few threats, and greater comfort in raising this potentially divisive issue. The findings for perceived organizational support suggest that in addition to a supportive climate's role in prompting commitment, prosocial behavior (Eisenberger et al., 1990), innovation, and participation (O'Reilly, 1989), this same supportive climate also may prompt the airing of controversial and potentially divisive issues.

Female managers who have high-quality relationships with the critical decision makers may also have more opportunities to gain access and sell their issues in informal ways. Our findings that relationship quality is more strongly related to probability of selling success than to image risk supports

this interpretation. In contrast to much network research that examines the effects of the existence or strength of relationships (Granovetter, 1973; Burt, 1992), our findings suggest that the perceived quality of the relationship is pivotal in prompting or discouraging the selling of gender-equity issues. Future research could consider both the existence of relational ties as well as their nature or quality to understand how such ties will affect issue selling and other behaviors.

The findings on perceived organizational support and relationship quality suggest that people do consider these salient contextual factors in their efforts to read the situation. They reinforce Ghoshal and Bartlett's (1994) argument that trust and supportiveness are crucial for provoking what they labeled distributed initiative among people and for increasing overall organizational learning. They also reinforce Weick and Ashford's (1998) notion that the way to increase organizational learning is to focus on the barriers to its component activities, in this case, issue selling. The value of creating a supportive context lies in part in the issue-selling behavior that it promotes.

The other two indicators of context favorability included in our model (openness of top management and norms favoring issue selling) do not have consistent effects. Despite Dutton and Ashford's (1993) argument that signals sent by top management expressing openness to ideas from below would be important to issue selling and O'Reilly's (1989) finding relating openness to innovation, this variable is not a significant predictor of either of our mediators or of willingness directly. This pattern may derive from the relative salience of the variables. Pierce, Dunham, and Cummings (1984) argued that people are influenced to a greater degree by more salient and proximate stimuli (e.g., one's immediate work space, those with whom one interacts on a project) than they are by more distal stimuli (e.g., organizational structure, top managers at other locations). The quality of the relationship that one has with the critical decision makers for an issue may be more salient than whether or not the top management team is open. Thus, while the openness of the top management team is clearly related to perceived organizational support and quality of relationship (average correlation among the four factors = .55), it may not be salient to people.

Similarly, the existence of norms favoring issue selling is unrelated to the perceived probability of selling success. Norms signal that selling has occurred in a given environment, but they may not signal how people might sell effectively. Norms supporting issue selling are associated negatively with perceived image risk, however, suggesting that knowing that something is normatively sanctioned frees one from fears about how it might look (image risk). This finding suggests that the link between certain norms and innovation found by O'Reilly (1989) may operate through reducing the perceived image risk involved in pursuing innovations within the organization. This finding is potentially important for organizations. It suggests that top leaders can work to create environments in which they get more spontaneous initiatives from below (e.g., Ghoshal and Bartlett, 1994) by taking action to reduce fears about how such efforts will be per-

ceived. Such actions include steps to create norms through managerial reinforcement of certain behavioral patterns and through communicating widely and vividly about the behaviors that top management hopes to sanction.

A second major finding from our study is that our hypothesized individual differences do not affect the decision to sell gender-equity issues. The two selling-propensity factors (i.e., risk propensity and optimism) and two of the three credibility variables (i.e., performance reputation and past issue-selling success) are not significant predictors in our model of the initiation of issue selling. Three explanations could account for this pattern of non-findings. The first is that we may not have selected the right dispositional factors. For example, a pair of very recent papers reporting a single-organizational study of upward-influence attempts in a nonprofit organization found that Machiavellianism, locus of control, and self-monitoring affected the type of upward influence strategy managers used (hard, soft, or rational) (Farmer et al., 1997) and how they responded to the failure of their first attempt (Maslyn, Farmer, and Fedor, 1996). Perhaps if we had measured different dispositional factors, the connection to our mediators and willingness to sell would be stronger. It may also be that our focus on motivational factors as indicators of selling propensity may have underemphasized the importance of skill elements (e.g., communication skills) that may lead to an enhanced selling propensity.

A second explanation for the non-findings concerns the nature of the issue we studied. While personal characteristics and assessments of one's credibility within the organization may be more relevant in considering the sale of some issues, they may be less relevant for a potentially controversial issue like gender equity. In this case, strong issue variance across contexts that affects how issue-selling efforts will be received by top management may significantly drive a willingness to sell. In addition, the fact that we studied only women's issue-selling efforts may have contributed to the importance of the relational context in our results. Some scholars argue that women may be more tuned into the relational context by necessity (e.g., they cannot take support from others for granted) or by dispositional preference (e.g., Gilligan, 1982).

Finally, several alternative explanations for specific credibility findings also warrant mention. For example, one reason why credibility may not affect perceived image risk or judgments about the probability of selling success is that we may have misunderstood the psychology of credibility as it relates to issue selling. We assumed that if women felt credible, they would feel they had more "credits" to spend in the act of issue selling. While this logic may hold for some women, others may want to protect their good reputations and therefore are less willing to take risks. The lack of findings may reflect the varying effects of credibility on women in different types of situations. For example, women with high credibility in secure jobs may be willing to cash in their "credits" on this issue, whereas those in insecure jobs or in jobs for which the level of security is ambiguous are not. The arguments supporting our credibility hypotheses also may have expected too much of our respondents. We argued that

women know how they are seen by others and take those imagined images (as being credible or not) into account in making decisions about whether to undertake actions such as issue selling. This logic makes several assumptions about our respondents, i.e., that they know how they are seen by others, that they can estimate how the act of selling will affect others' impressions of them, and that they take these assessments into account in making selling-initiation decisions. These assumptions may not be true. In future research, the association between credibility and decisions to sell issues could be examined more microscopically to tease out the true relationships.

We did find that a manager's being in a human-resource function was correlated with a higher probability estimate for selling success and a lower sense of image risk, but this variable did not load cleanly onto the latent credibility factor. One interpretation is that membership in an issue-relevant function (in this case, human resources) may temper the risk associated with selling an issue by giving others a situational account for why a woman might be pushing for the issue's consideration. Buoyed by the possibility that others might impute situational rather than personal motives for raising this issue, female managers might experience less image risk in going to bat for it. In addition, by raising this issue as members of the human-resource function, sellers may feel less like solo sellers and more part of an issue coalition. This feeling might account for the increased perceived probability of selling success reported by this group. Thus, the way that the human resources function variable affects willingness to sell gender-equity issues may be more complicated than simply enhancing the sellers' perceived credibility.

In testing our model, we controlled for motivation to sell the issue that stems from the nature of the issue itself by including paths from three control variables to the mediators and to willingness to sell the issue. From the results it is clear that there is much issue-specific motivation for selling gender-equity issues. Perceived issue importance, social identification, and the extent of the issue's occurrence all were significantly associated with willingness to sell. Most notable, perhaps, is the strong linkage between perceived issue importance and willingness to sell the issue. This variable would be profitably included in subsequent models of issue selling. By controlling for issue importance, however, we have established that the other independent variables have effects above and beyond this control. The social identification results are also notable in that this variable is the one individual characteristic that showed any relationship (either direct or mediated) to expressed willingness to sell the issue. This finding suggests that social identification with women has a rather strong effect that shows up even when considered in conjunction with the context variables and replicates Harquail's (1996) finding of a positive relationship between strength of social identification with women and advocacy on their behalf. Social identification with women may have an effect on willingness to sell gender-equity issues because it is issue-specific. More general dispositional characteristics may have weaker effects. While this variable may be relatively unique to this issue, taken in tandem with the

Selling Issues

issue-importance control variable, it suggests that individual differences in the importance placed on an issue (for whatever reason) affect willingness to sell by making a seller more willing to act.

Finally, the finding that the extent of the issue was positively related to willingness to sell may reflect a greater pressure that respondents feel to address the situation. Also, it makes sense that the less respondents saw the issue as an issue in their organizations, the less willing they were to sell it. The positive relation between this variable and perceived image risk, however, suggests some perceived dangers in raising this issue in environments where the issue is pervasive. Women raising gender-equity issues in organizations where such issues are pervasive may have reason to be particularly concerned, for the act of raising these issues might be perceived as particularly consequential and dangerous.

Mediating Processes

The results presented in table 2 and figure 2 suggest that three context factors, perceived organizational support, norms favoring issue selling, and relationship quality, as well as the seller's functional fit with the issue, affect the initiation of issue selling through their effects on the perceived probability of selling success and perceived image risk. The tests of the relaxed models show that there are no direct effects.

The mediating role of the perceived probability of selling success is consistent with motivational theories that assume that effort is related to expectancy beliefs (Vroom, 1964). Issue selling is more likely when sellers believe that they can be successful. If issue sellers see roadblocks to gaining attention for an issue (e.g., an unsupportive context and a poor relationship with the critical decision makers), they will estimate a lower probability of selling success and will be less willing to exert effort. These findings resemble the positive influence of efficacy on reformist dissent (e.g., Parker, 1993) and on whistle blowing (e.g., Miceli and Near, 1992) and the hypothesized importance of feasibility perceptions in models of principled organizational dissent (Graham, 1986).

The amount of image risk perceived by the individual is a second mediating process. We found both direct and indirect effects of image risk on willingness to sell gender-equity issues. In general, image risk had a strong total effect on one's willingness to sell this issue, over and above the effect of the perceived probability of selling success on willingness to sell. This pattern suggests that more emotion-laden, interpersonal, impression-management concerns are also relevant to issue-selling initiation decisions, at least for this issue. It is uncertain whether image risk would have as powerful an influence on less controversial strategic issues.

Limitations of Our Study

The study's findings need to be considered in light of its limitations. Four notable limitations are the study of a single-issue, the particular characteristics of this sample, potential common-method variance, and unmeasured variables. To obtain detailed information about the process of selling an issue, we felt the need to ground our study in one issue.

This choice reflects our view that much is lost when we ask respondents to average their reports of issue-selling behavior over several issues at once. Much depends on the nature of the issue sold, and we chose to study an issue that is particularly important in today's workplace. But some caution is required in generalizing from the results of this single-issue study. Previous work on issue dimensions suggests that issues vary in their content (e.g., social, economic, political), analytical qualities (e.g., abstractness, complexity, magnitude), implied action (e.g., amount of payoff from action on the issue), and source (e.g., chosen vs. externally induced) (Dutton, Walton, and Abrahamson, 1989). One analytical quality that was mentioned in Dutton, Walton, and Abrahamson's (1989) review and is highlighted in our study is an issue's divisiveness. It may be that while our proposed model was a general one depicting issue-selling initiation, several of the findings may only generalize to a smaller subset of issues. For example, the effects of the relational context may be less dramatic when studying the selling of less divisive issues. Our control variables, too, particularly social identification, may be issue-specific. Future research might directly compare the selling of different types of issues to establish whether the social psychology underlying the selling of a range of issues systematically varies. We suggest that the potential divisiveness of an issue is one important underlying dimension.

In addition, our sample consists of all women alumnae from a large business school in the Midwest. As a result, we cannot explore whether men's decision-making processes differ. When they personally experience gender inequity, men's reactions might differ from women's due to dispositional differences. Further, when men raise this issue on behalf of women, there may be real differences in the social psychology associated with promoting one's own versus another's group. Future research might focus profitably on the differences between such sellers and those advocating for others. Researchers might also explore men's reactions when they are in situations in which they are the numerical minority. A strength of our sample is that it represents the responses of women in a range of managerial positions across a wide variety of organizations.

A third limitation is our study's use of a cross-sectional survey methodology to understand the process of issue selling and the associated problem of common-method variance. Since we were interested in people's perceptions of their context, credibility, and assessments of image risk and the perceived probability of selling success, we needed responses from the people themselves. For example, assessing a respondent's actual credibility in the organization (or at least how credible others saw her to be) would not have been as useful, because our theory suggests that it is respondents' self-assessments of credibility that affect their reactions. To assess the impact of common-source, common-method bias, we performed Harmon's one-factor test, following Podsakoff and Organ (1986). We also assessed models constraining all variables to load on a single factor. The results suggest that the constructs in our model were not related solely because of common-method variance. The

pattern of our findings also diminishes our concerns about common-method variance. For example, if this bias is operating, it should lead respondents who report that top management is open to initiatives to report also that they expect success in their issue-selling initiatives. We did not find this or other findings that might be predicted by this bias. These non-findings do not rule out this possible bias, but they make it less likely that common-method variance totally accounts for our results.

Finally, like most social science models, ours excludes a few potentially important factors. For example, in contrast to several other studies (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Dutton et al., 1997), in this study we did not consider how the institutional, competitive, and cultural environments structure the context that determines whether managers will initiate or withhold issue-related action. We recognize, however, that these "broader societal and interorganizational processes structure interactions at a micro level" (Phillips, 1997: 46). In our attempt to learn more about the social psychology of the issue-selling process, we may have sacrificed some of the richness and complexity of this process. Issue selling is rarely a stand-alone, one-time event; rather, it is embedded in a history of action and inaction. While we tapped some of the historical aspects by measuring past selling success, we did not fully capture the historical and contextual embeddedness of these initiatives.

Three other potentially important variables have not yet been tested in our model.² First, in our attempt to contrast an efficacy versus an impression-management process mediation, we failed to assess the perception that other potential negative outcomes might flow from attempts to sell this issue. Women considering initiating such selling may also be concerned about possible ostracization, negative performance reviews, or a reduction in managerial support. Second, sellers' willingness to sell any one issue may be related to the number of other issues in which they are currently involved. The number of issues may be a proxy for attentional capacity or for the trade-offs that people may confront as they "spend" their idiosyncrasy credits via issue selling. A manager might care about many issues but know that he or she will lose points with upper management if he or she sells too often or on too many issues. All things considered, sellers are more likely to sell an issue if they have few other issues with which they are simultaneously involved.

A third possible omitted variable is an employee's industry. We were able to assess the impact of this variable in a post-hoc ANOVA analysis (which should be considered only as suggestive) relating respondents' industries to the two mediators (probability of selling success and image risk) and the dependent variable (willingness to sell the gender-equity issue). Industry had a significant effect on respondents' perceived probability of success ($F = 2.78, p < 0.01$) and their perceived image risk ($F = 4.08, p < 0.001$). In looking at the array of industries, we saw that women reported lower levels of willingness and perceived probability of success and higher levels of image risk in industries such as transportation (primarily auto companies), where there may be fewer women, than in industries such as nonprofits, where there

²

We thank the anonymous reviewers for suggesting these additional variables.

may be more women. Thus, we speculated that the percentage of women present in organizations in various industries might be making a difference here. To assess this, we ran an ANOVA controlling for the effects of our previous context variables, industry, and the percentage of women in the organization by entering them as covariates. In this analysis, the effects of industry on perceived probability of selling success ($F = .987, p < .50$) and perceived image risk ($F = 1.67, p < .10$) disappeared, whereas the percentage of women in the firm was a significant predictor of both. All of our other context results stayed the same. We concluded from this analysis that industry makes a difference because it is a proxy for the percentage of women that a seller might find in her organization. This post-hoc analysis needs to be confirmed in subsequent studies with independent samples.

Contributions of Our Study

Our research makes several important theoretical contributions. First, in contrast to many models of individual behavior in organizational studies, which implicitly treat people as reactive, our model explicitly depicts people as active readers of and actors within their contexts. Our perspective contributes to this discussion by focusing on the choice to act. So much of the upward-influence and impression-management literatures focus on the ways that people act rather than on factors that determine whether they'll take action in the first place. While previous research has examined whether context affects the form of issue selling (e.g., Cheng, 1983) or the success or lack of success in upward influence (e.g., Schilit and Locke, 1982), this study addresses the centrality of context in determining whether such influence efforts are initiated in the first place. This shift in theoretical emphasis is important. It suggests that inaction (the issues that people care about but don't raise) can be as significant as action in organizations. While Withey and Cooper (1989) had difficulty predicting voice, we explained a good portion of the variance in our measure of willingness to sell an issue. One crucial reason might be that we considered not only what encourages people to speak up but also what inhibits or prevents people from exercising this option. Looking at factors such as image risk, we see the important role it plays in dampening intentions to raise gender-equity issues in one's work organization.

Second, our study adds to issue-selling research and to related work on change mastery and innovation championing (e.g., Schon, 1963; Chakrabarti, 1974; Kanter, 1983; Howell and Higgins, 1990) by considering systematically how dispositional and situational factors simultaneously contribute to a willingness to initiate action on an issue. While previous researchers have tended to highlight one set of factors over another, this research considers how both contribute to issue selling.

Third, while some of our context variables have been suggested previously in work on the antecedents of employee involvement, participation, and innovation championing (e.g., O'Reilly, 1989; Chakrabarti, 1974), our model moves this literature forward in its explicit emphasis on the mediating processes by which these variables may have their effects. By

Selling Issues

looking at the effects of perceived image risk and perceived probability of success we are able to see and test more clearly how contextual variables affect willingness to raise issues.

In our process focus, we built on treatments of behaviors that resemble issue selling that depict the motivation to sell as a type of calculative and rational decision (e.g., Graham, 1986; Miceli and Near, 1992). We proposed that people also consider the interpersonal context of issue selling and take impression-management concerns into account. In this depiction, we further add to the championing and voice literatures the important perspective that there are dangers to championing issues. Our focus on image risk and the aspects of context that might prevent people from raising issues complicates the process by which issues come to the attention of top management. While Withey and Cooper (1989) briefly discussed the costs associated with voicing issues, our focus on image risk highlighted the emotional, fear-based quality of risk and its impact on the decision to initiate these activities. Image risk may also be important in understanding principled organizational dissent (Graham, 1986), in which people try to advocate change based on perceived wrong doing. Our paper's depiction of the social psychology of issue selling may thus have broad applicability to other voice processes, such as principled organizational dissent, innovation championing, and whistle blowing.

Practical Implications

Our emphasis on the choice to act has several important practical implications. For organizations concerned about the rising exodus of women and the potential for lawsuits, understanding the factors that encourage or discourage the timely raising of gender-equity issues may allow organizations to create early "pressure release" mechanisms via issue selling that make dire outcomes less probable. More generally, strategy researchers are becoming increasingly concerned with how to design organizational contexts that promote individual initiative (Burgelman, 1994; Ghoshal and Bartlett, 1994; Noda and Bower, 1996). This study gives some guidance if the initiative desired includes raising strategic issues. The results here suggest that organizational leaders should try to create more pathways for the communication of issues (enhance the perceived probability of success) and take steps to reduce image risk. Such pathways can be created, for example, by taking steps to create a positive relational context. Additional steps that top management might take include creating and emphasizing norms sanctioning the behavior, locating people in units that bestow them with legitimate expertise, and prompting critical decision makers to create and maintain relationships with key people in various networks. Our results suggest that it is within networks of high-quality relationships that important issues are raised and sold.

We see managers as active participants in the strategy process who attend to contextual cues. The salient contextual cues for this issue are the ones signaling the existence of a positive relational context, but we need to understand how managers decide to initiate issue selling in response to

those cues, assuming they have the option to remain silent. Finally, our process explanation focused on efficacy expectations and concerns about image. By considering the role of image risk in the initiation of issue selling, we explored the costs that managers anticipate in going public and speaking out to top managers on gender-equity issues. Going out on a limb can be risky business. Organizational scholars need to consider these image risks and the role of context in reducing them in accounting for individual action or inaction in the strategy process.

REFERENCES

- Ajzen, Icek**
1991 "The theory of planned behavior." *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50: 179-211.
- Archilladis, B., P. Jervis, and A. Robertson**
1971 *A Study of Success and Failure in Industrial Innovation*. Sussex, England: University of Sussex Press.
- Arkin, R. M.**
1981 "Self-presentation styles." In James T. Tedeschi (ed.), *Impression Management Theory and Social Psychological Research*: 311-333. New York: Academic Press.
- Ashford, Susan J.**
1986 "The role of feedback seeking in individual adaptation: A resource perspective." *Academy of Management Journal*, 29: 465-487.
- Ashford, Susan J., and L. L. Cummings**
1983 "Feedback as an individual resource: Personal strategies of creating information." *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 32: 370-398.
- Ashford, Susan J., and Gregory Northcraft**
1992 "Conveying more (or less) than we realize: The role of impression-management in feedback seeking." *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 53: 310-334.
- Ashford, Susan J., and Anne S. Tsui**
1991 "Self-regulation for managerial effectiveness: The role of active feedback seeking." *Academy of Management Journal*, 34: 251-280.
- Bagozzi, Richard P., and Todd F. Heatherton**
1994 "A general approach to representing multifaceted personality constructs: Application to state self-esteem." *Structural Equation Modeling*, 1: 35-67.
- Bentler, Peter M.**
1980 "Multivariate analysis with latent variables: Causal modeling." *Annual Review of Psychology*, 31: 419-456.
1990 "Comparative fit indexes in structural models." *Psychological Bulletin*, 107: 238-246.
- Bentler, Peter M., and Douglas G. Bonett**
1980 "Significance tests and goodness of fit in analysis of covariance structures." *Psychological Bulletin*, 88: 588-606.
- Bollen, Kenneth A.**
1989 *Structural Equations with Latent Variables*. New York: Wiley.
- Brass, Daniel J.**
1985 "Men's and women's networks: A study of interaction patterns and influence in an organization." *Academy of Management Journal*, 28: 327-343.
- Brockhaus, Robert H.**
1980 "Risk-taking propensity of entrepreneurs." *Academy of Management Journal*, 23: 509-520.
- Burgelman, Robert A.**
1990 "Strategy-making and organizational ecology: A conceptual integration." In Jitendra V. Singh (ed.), *Organizational Evolution: New Directions*: 164-181. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
1994 "Fading memories: A process theory of strategic business exit in dynamic environments." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 39: 24-56.
- Burt, Ronald**
1992 *Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Catalyst**
1996a 1996 Catalyst Census of Women Directors of the Fortune 500. New York: Catalyst.
1996b 1996 Catalyst Census of Women Corporate Officers and Top Earners. New York: Catalyst.
1996c *Women in Corporate Leadership: Progress and Prospects*. New York: Catalyst.
- Chakrabarti, Alok K.**
1974 "The role of champion in product innovation." *California Management Review*, 17: 58-62.
- Cheng, Joseph L.**
1983 "Organizational context and upward influence: An experimental study of the use of power tactics." *Group and Organization Studies*, 8: 337-355.
- Cotton, John L., David A. Vollrath, Kirk L. Froggatt, Mark L. Lengnick-Hall**
1988 "Employee participation: Diverse forms and different outcomes." *Academy of Management Review*, 13: 8-22.
- Cox, Taylor H., and Stacy Blake**
1991 "Managing cultural diversity: Implications for organizational competitiveness." *Academy of Management Executive*, 5: 45-56.
- Cudeck, Robert, and Michael W. Browne**
1983 "Cross-validation of covariance structures." *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 18: 147-167.
- Dutton, Jane E., and Susan J. Ashford**
1993 "Selling issues to top management." *Academy of Management Review*, 18: 397-428.

Selling Issues

- Dutton, Jane E., Susan J. Ashford, Elizabeth E. Wierba, Regina O'Neill, and Erika Hayes**
1997 "Reading the wind: How middle managers assess the context for issue selling to top managers." *Strategic Management Journal*, 15: 407-425.
- Dutton, Jane E., and Janet M. Dukerich**
1991 "Keeping an eye on the mirror: Image and identity in organizational adaptation." *Academy of Management Journal*, 34: 517-554.
- Dutton, Jane E., Eric J. Walton, and Eric Abrahamson**
1989 "Important dimensions of strategic issues: Separating the wheat from the chaff." *Journal of Management Studies*, 26: 379-396.
- Eisenberger, Robert, Peter Fasolo, and Valerie Davis-LaMastro**
1990 "Perceived organizational support and employee diligence, commitment, and innovation." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 75: 51-59.
- Eisenberger, Robert, Robin Huntington, Steven Hutchinson, and Debora Sowa**
1986 "Perceived organizational support." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 71: 500-507.
- Farmer, Steven M., John M. Maslyn, Donald B. Fedor, and Jodi S. Goodman**
1997 "Putting upward influence strategies in context." *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 18: 17-42.
- Floyd, Steve W., and Bill J. Wooldridge**
1996 *The Strategic Middle Manager*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Fontaine, Kevin R.**
1994 "Effect of dispositional optimism on comparative risk perceptions for developing AIDS." *Psychological Reports*, 74: 843-846.
- Ghoshal, Sumatra, and Christopher A. Bartlett**
1994 "Linking organizational context and managerial action: The dimensions of quality of management." *Strategic Management Journal*, 15: 91-112.
- Gilligan, Carol**
1982 *In a Different Voice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gioia, Dennis A., and Henry P. Sims**
1983 "Perceptions of managerial power as a consequence of managerial behavior and reputation." *Journal of Management*, 9: 7-26.
- Glass, David C., Donnah Canavan, and Stephen Schiavo**
1968 "Achievement motivation, dissonance, and defensiveness." *Journal of Personality*, 36: 474-492.
- Gomez-Mejia, Luis R., and David B. Balkin**
1989 "Research note." *Industrial Relations*, 28: 431-445.
- Graham, Jill W.**
1986 "Principled organizational dissent: A theoretical essay." In L. L. Cummings and Barry M. Staw (eds.), *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 8: 1-52. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Granovetter, Mark**
1973 "The strength of weak ties." *American Journal of Sociology*, 78: 1360-1380.
- Gupta, Anil K., and Vijay Govindarajan**
1984 "Build, hold, harvest: Converting strategic intentions into reality." *Journal of Business Strategy*, 4: 34-47.
- Gurin, Patricia, and Hazel R. Markus**
1989 "Cognitive consequences of gender identity." In Suzanne Skevington and Deborah Baker (eds.), *The Social Identity of Women*: 152-172. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Harquail, Celia V.**
1996 "When one speaks for many: The influence of social identification on group advocacy in organizations." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan.
- Heimer, Carol**
1992 "Doing your job and helping your friends: Universalistic norms about obligations to particular others in networks." In Nitin Nohria and Robert G. Eccles (eds.), *Networks and Organizations*: 143-164. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hemming, Heather**
1985 "Women in a man's world: Sexual harassment." *Human Relations*, 38: 67-79.
- Hollander, E. P.**
1958 "Conformity, status, and idiosyncrasy credits." *Psychological Review*, 65: 117-127.
- House, Robert J., and John R. Rizzo**
1972 "Toward the measurement of organizational practices." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 56: 388-396.
- Hovland, C. I., and W. Weiss**
1951 "The influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 15: 635-650.
- Howell, Jane M., and Christopher A. Higgins**
1990 "Champions of technological innovation." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 35: 317-341.
- Ibarra, Herminia, and Brooke Harrington**
1997 "Deference and demeanor: Gender, demography and self-presentation in professional careers." Paper presented at Academy of Management Meetings, Boston.
- Ilfeld, Frederic W., Jr.**
1980 "Coping styles of Chicago adults: Description." *Journal of Human Stress*, 60: 2-10.
- Jackson, J.**
1965 "Structural characteristics of norms." In Ivan D. Steiner and Martin Fishbein (eds.), *Current Studies in Social Psychology*: 301-308. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Jackson, Susan E.**
1992 "Team composition in organizational settings: Issues in managing an increasingly diverse work force." In Stephen Worchel, Wendy Wood, and Jeffry A. Simpson (eds.), *Group Process and Productivity*: 138-173. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Johnston, William B.**
1987 *Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the 21st Century*. Indianapolis, IN: Hudson Institute.
- Kanter, Rosabeth Moss**
1983 *The Change Masters*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Kitsuse, J. I., and M. Spector**
1981 "The labeling of social problems." In Earl Rubington and Martin S. Weinberg (eds.), *The Study of Social Problems*: 198-206. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kogan, Nathan, and Michael A. Wallach**
1964 *Risk Taking: A Study in Cognition and Personality*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

- Leary, Mark R., and Robin M. Kowalski**
1990 "Impression management: A literature review and two-component model." *Psychological Bulletin*, 107: 34-47.
- Lee, Cynthia, and Philip Bobko**
1994 "Self-efficacy beliefs: Comparison of five measures." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 79: 364-369.
- Locke, Edwin A., and David M. Schweiger**
1979 "Participation in decision making: One more look." In Barry M. Staw (ed.), *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 1: 265-340. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Marsh, Herbert W., John R. Balla, and Roderick P. McDonald**
1988 "Goodness-of-fit indexes in confirmatory factor analysis: The effect of sample size." *Psychological Bulletin*, 103: 391-410.
- Maslyn, John M., Steven M. Farmer, and Donald B. Fedor**
1996 "Failed upward influence attempts: Predicting the nature of subordinate persistence in the pursuit of organizational goals." *Group and Organization Management*, 21: 461-480.
- Meyerson, Debra E., and Maureen A. Scully**
1995 "Tempered radicalism and the politics of ambivalence and change." *Organization Science*, 6: 585-600.
- Miceli, Marcia P., and Janet P. Near**
1992 *Blowing the Whistle*. New York: Lexington Books.
- Morrison, Ann M., and Mary A. Von Glinow**
1990 "Women and minorities in management." *American Psychologist*, 45: 200-208.
- Morrison, Ann M., Randall P. White, and Ellen Van Velsor**
1987 *Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Can Women Reach the Top of America's Largest Corporations?* Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.
- Morrison, Elizabeth Wolfe, and Robert J. Bies**
1991 "Impression management in the feedback-seeking process: A literature review and research agenda." *Academy of Management Review*, 16: 522-541.
- Mowday, Richard**
1978 "The exercise of upward influence in organizations." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 23: 137-156.
- Narayanan, V. K., and Liam Fahey**
1982 "The micro-politics of strategy formulation." *Academy of Management Review*, 7: 25-34.
- Near, Janet P., and Marcia P. Miceli**
1986 "Retaliation against whistle blowers: Predictors and effects." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 71: 137-145.
- Noda, Tomo, and Joseph L. Bower**
1996 "Strategy making as iterated processes of resource allocation." *Strategic Management Journal*, 17: 159-192.
- Ocasio, William**
1997 "Toward an attention-based view of the firm." *Strategic Management Journal*, 18: 187-206.
- O'Reilly, Charles A.**
1989 "Corporations, culture and commitment: Motivation and social control in organizations." *California Management Review*, 31: 9-25.
- Parker, Louise E.**
1993 "When to fix it and when to leave: Relationships among perceived control, self-efficacy, dissent, and exit." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 78: 949-959.
- Petty, Richard E., and John T. Cacioppo**
1986 *Communication and Persuasion: Central and Peripheral Routes to Attitude Change*. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Pfeffer, Jeffrey**
1992 *Managing with Power: Politics and Influence in Organizations*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Phillips, Nelson**
1997 "Bringing the organization back in: A comment on conceptualizations of power in upward influence research." *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 18: 43-47.
- Pierce, Jon L., Randall B. Dunham, and L. L. Cummings**
1984 "Sources of environmental structuring and participant responses." *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 33: 214-242.
- Podsakoff, Philip M., and Dennis W. Organ**
1986 "Self-reports in organizational research: Problems and prospects." *Journal of Management*, 12: 531-544.
- Reardon, Kathleen**
1993 "The memo every woman keeps in her desk." *Harvard Business Review*, March-April: 3-8.
- Scheier, Michael F., and Charles S. Carver**
1985 "Optimism, coping, and health: Assessment and implications of generalized outcome expectancies." *Health Psychology*, 4: 219-247.
- 1993 "On the power of positive thinking: The benefits of being optimistic." *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 2: 26-30.
- Scheier, Michael F., Jagdish K. Weintraub, and Charles S. Carver**
1986 "Coping with stress: Divergent strategies of optimists and pessimists." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51: 1257-1264.
- Schilit, Warren K., and Edwin A. Locke**
1982 "A study of upward influence in organizations." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 27: 304-316.
- Schneider, Sandra L., and Lola L. Lopes**
1986 "Reflection in preferences under risk: Who and when may suggest why." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, 12: 535-548.
- Schon, Donald**
1963 "Champions for radical new inventions." *Harvard Business Review*, 40: 77-86.
- Schwartz, Felice N.**
1992 *Breaking with Tradition: Women and Work, and the New Facts of Life*. New York: Warner Books.
- Schwarzer, Ralf**
1994 "Optimism, vulnerability and self-beliefs as health-related cognitions." *Psychology and Health*, 9: 161-180.
- Shore, Lynn M., and Lois E. Tetrick**
1991 "A construct validity study of the survey of perceived organizational support." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 76: 637-643.

Selling Issues

- Sitkin, Sim B., and Amy L. Pablo**
1992 "Reconceptualizing the determinants of risk behavior." *Academy of Management Review*, 17: 9-38.
- Slovic, Paul**
1972 "Information processing, situation specificity, and the generality of risk-taking behavior." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 22: 128-134.
- Spreitzer, Gretchen M.**
1996 "Social structural characteristics of psychological empowerment." *Academy of Management Journal*, 39: 483-504.
- Staw, Barry M.**
1975 "Attribution of the 'causes' of performance: A general alternative interpretation of cross-sectional research on organizations." *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 13: 414-432.
- Steiger, James H.**
1990 "Structural model evaluation and modification: An interval estimation approach." *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 25: 173-180.
- Stroh, Linda K., Jeanne M. Brett, and Anne H. Reilly**
1992 "All the right stuff: A comparison of female and male managers' career progression." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 77: 251-260.
- Swann, William B., and Stephen J. Read**
1981 "Acquiring self-knowledge: The search for feedback that fits." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 41: 1119-1128.
- Tetlock, Philip E., and Antony S. Manstead**
1985 "Impression management versus intrapsychic explanations in social psychology: A useful dichotomy?" *Psychological Review*, 92: 59-77.
- Turner, Barry A.**
1980 *Exploring the Industrial Subculture*. London: MacMillan.
- U.S. Department of Labor**
1991 *A Report on the Glass Ceiling Initiative*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.
- Vroom, Victor H.**
1964 *Work and Motivation*. New York: Wiley.
- Wagner, John A.**
1994 "Participation's effects on performance and satisfaction: A reconsideration of research evidence." *Academy of Management Review*, 19: 312-330.
- Wayne, Sandy J., Lynn M. Shore, and Robert C. Liden**
1997 "Perceived organizational support and leader-member exchange: A social exchange perspective." *Academy of Management Journal*, 40: 82-111.
- Weick, Karl, and Susan J. Ashford**
1998 "Learning in Organizations." In L. Putnam and F. Jablin (eds.), *Handbook of Organizational Communication*, 2d ed. Newbury Park, CA: Sage (forthcoming).
- Weinstein, Neil D.**
1980 "Unrealistic optimism about future events." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 39: 806-820.
- Withey, Michael J., and William H. Cooper**
1989 "Predicting exit, voice, loyalty and neglect." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 34: 521-539.
- Wyer, R., and T. Srull**
1980 "The processing of social stimulus information: A conceptual integration." In Reid Hastie et al. (eds.), *Person Memory: The Cognitive Basis for Social Perception*: 227-300. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.