I have not completed my thesis, thus I am unable to upload my presentation. If you are looking for specific information you can email me at luccakv@dukes.jmu.edu

Chapter 1: Introduction

As the business world has become more globalized and competitive, organizations have responded by increasing operating efficiencies and cutting costs wherever possible (Beynon, Jones, Pickernell, & Packham, 2015). High voluntary employee turnover, if it remains unchecked, can increase an organizations direct and indirect costs drastically, ranging from 100 to 300 percent of the replaced employee's salary (Slavianska, 2012; Ferrazzi & Davis, 2015). These costs can be from additional recruiting expenses to decreased employee productivity, and can severely effect an organizations bottom line. According to Aberdeen Group's report, *Onboarding 2013: A New Look at New Hires* (2013), 90% of businesses believe that employees decide to leave or stay with the organization within the first year of employment. Approximately 33 percent of new hires look for a new job within six months of starting at their place of employment (Ferrazzi & Davis, 2015). An effective way to increase employee retention, engagement, and productivity, is for organizations to create well-designed onboarding programs for new hires (Lahey, 2014; Ferrazzi & Davis, 2015).

Onboarding begins with pre-employment and can last over a year or more in order to successfully integrate new hires into organization systems, facilities, and culture (Hillman & Noel-Levitz, 2010). During a well-designed onboarding process, new employees create short- and long-term performance goals, receive training and development opportunities, learn standard operating policies and procedures, and gain specific knowledge on how to most effectively

complete job tasks. An integral part of the onboarding process is employee orientation, which introduces new hires to the structure, culture, and values of an organization, and has a set timeframe ranging from hours to days (Wanberg, 2012). 93 percent of organizations incorporate various forms of orientation programs into their onboarding processes (SHRM, 2007). When organizations take the time to invest in orientation programs, new employees learn who they are working for and why they should care about their performance, which increases organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Wallace, 2009). Because onboarding encompasses a wide variety of content types, it is not necessary for certain parts to remain in a face-to-face delivery format (Gagné, Wagner, Golas, & Keller, 2005). In the 2007 SHRM report, *Onboarding New Employees: Maximizing Success*, the content of onboarding is broken into distinct levels they call "the four C's" which are compliance, clarification, culture, and connection (p.2). The first two levels, compliance and clarification, ensures that new employees are taught basic policy rules and regulations as well as related job expectations. Levels three and four, culture and connection, teach the formal and informal norms of the organization and aid in establishing and developing relationships and networks for new employees. Orientation focuses on levels three and four of onboarding, which is also known as organizational socialization, a process that is delivered more effectively face-to-face (Hatmaker, 2015). The content covered during orientation aids in the organizational socialization process of new employees (Klein, Polin, & Leigh Sutton, 2015).

Organizational socialization is a process that helps new employees become acclimated to their work environment by showing them formal and informal norms of the workplace, effectively reducing the anxiety that is associated with starting a new job (Klein, Polin, & Leigh Sutton, 2015). According to Gagné, Wagner, Golas, and Keller (2005), "design of the lessons and learning activities centers on the development of external events that will be most effective

in bringing about the desired condition of learning" (p.29). The external conditions of Gagné's Varieties of Learning suggest in-person instructional techniques when developing new employee attitudes during orientation, which solidifies the alignment of individual and organizational mission, vision, and values (Gagné, Wagner, Golas, & Keller, 2005). Through observational modeling, new employees become motivated to perform well and complete job tasks efficiently (Bandura, 2001).

Developing awareness regarding appropriate content delivery methods for various types of instruction is critical in order for learning objectives to be met. Evaluating the efficacy of face-to-face content delivery methods for orientation programs aims to support the theoretical foundations that govern instructional design concepts (Gagné, Wagner, Golas, & Keller, 2005; Schunk, 2012). By showing the efficacy of face-to-face orientation programs, organizations will be made aware of advantages of having an in-person program. Overall, the study aims to show that online delivery is not the appropriate format for orientation programs. As employee retention increases, organizations can remain more competitive in their respective industries while lowering the costs associated with high employee turnover (Finnegan, 2010; Crush, 2014: McNeill, 2012; Schlabig Williams, 2010).

Problem Statement

When organizations offer onboarding programs for new hires, employee retention rates increase (Finnegan, 2010; Crush, 2014: McNeill, 2012; Schlabig Williams, 2010). One major component critical to the success of onboarding is new employee orientation (Wanberg, 2012). Organizational socialization plays an important role in the efficacy of orientation programs by positively impacting job satisfaction, turnover, and commitment, and is most effective in a face-to-face environment (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007; Bandura, 2001; Gagné,

Wagner, Golas, & Keller, 2005). As technology has advanced, online instruction has become a more effective delivery method for certain types of content (Sangra, Vlachopoulos, & Cabrera, 2012; Ward, Peters, & Shelley, 2010). To save time and money, organizations are transitioning to online delivery methods for instruction (Mass, 2014; c; Yusuf and Al-Banawi, 2013; Kooser, 2007). Bartley and Golek (2004), state that the most effective forms of content delivery for organizations may be determined primarily by cost comparisons. While online orientations may initially seem cheaper, if employee turnover increases, financial costs will be higher (Bartley & Golek, 2004; Ferrazzi & Davis, 2015). Companies are using online delivery methods for orientation programs when it may not be the appropriate choice because of the content covered. By showing that the content delivered is effective in a face-to-face format because of the organizational socialization process, companies will avoid using online formats for orientation programs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is evaluate the efficacy of face-to-face content delivery methods when orienting new employees into an organization. The objectives of orientation are to transition new employees into the culture and climate, focusing on why the organization exists and why the employees should be invested in its future (Davis & Davis, 2011). To meet these objectives, new hires should be oriented using in-person socialization tactics because the interactive experience is essential to learning (Kibbee, & Gerzon, 2008). Socialization within an organization amongst new employees is necessary to make valuable interpersonal connections as well as develop a sense of individual commitment to the organization (Enneking & Kleiner, 2015).When organizations invest in developing interpersonal relationships and organizational

learning, employee performance increases substantially (Sung & Choi, 2014). Using face-to-face content delivery methods for orientation programs creates an authentic social environment that allows for the objectives of orientation to be met. Because organizational socialization can positively influence job satisfaction, person-to-organization fit, the adoption of organizational culture, and employee retention, it is seen as an integral part of orientation programs (Kim, Cable, & Kim, 2005; Hillman & Noel-Levitz, 2010).

Research Questions

I would like to examine the following questions:

- How are the objectives of the orientation program being met when using face-to-face content delivery methods?
- What are participants' attitudes regarding their orientation experiences?

The first research question seeks to determine how the objectives of the orientation program were met and proceeds to evaluate what made the face-to-face content delivery method effective or ineffective. Research question two will examine new employee thoughts and opinions toward their face-to-face orientation experience. Because socialization is a major component of orientation programs, gauging the participant's experiences with a face-to-face delivery method will determine if the orientation is effective.

Assumptions and Limitations

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Bandura's Social Learning Theory define learning as a social process, with environmental influences aiding in the construction of knowledge for the individual (Bandura, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978). Because social interaction occurs between individuals as well as between individuals and their external environment, I am assuming that

this interaction should occur face-to-face to be effective. The process of organizational socialization is grounded in the theoretical framework of Vygotsky and Bandura, so I am concluding that this process should be face-to-face to be effective as well.

When conducting research I am concluding that all participants will give their honest answers when completing the survey as well as during the interview and focus group discussions. To combat potential dishonesty, the consent forms signed by participants stated that I would maintain confidentiality. Participant non-response is a potential limitation of the findings, since it is likely that those who do not respond will have different answers than those that do (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). Responses may also vary due to uncontrollable variables such as the participant's mood and workload during the data collection period.

Researcher bias could affect the validity and reliability of the findings in the study. The instruments used to collect data have not been previously tested and are self-constructed, but were created based on the objectives and framework surrounding the study. During the summer of 2015, I redesigned the onboarding process at the higher-education institution being used in the study. Redesigning the onboarding process was the inspiration behind my thesis topic, but as a researcher could create a potential unconscious bias. To reduce my potential bias, the interview, focus group, and survey questions were developed with concise, neutral wording and research was conducted with objectivity to avoid influencing participant answers.

Because I am conducting research at one higher-education institution, using a random sample of participants that attended orientation between August and December of 2015, the scope of this study is relatively small. A smaller scope and number of participants could limit the generalizability of this research to the larger new employee orientation population in organizations. Due to time and resource constraints, conducting research at multiple

organizations was not feasible, therefore justifying the scope and sample size. To combat the small sample size, multiple data collection methods were employed and a purposeful sampling strategy was used.

Significance of the Study

A well-designed onboarding program helps reduce the time required for new hires to reach full productivity, and increases the probability that they will stay at the organization (Ferrazzi & Davis, 2015). Some of the best practices for onboarding include developing a written onboarding plan, making the first day on the job special, establishing clear expectations, budgeting for the process, providing mentoring or coaching, including experiential learning opportunities, and using a formal orientation program (SHRM, 2007; Mota, 2016; Ferrazzi & Davis, 2015). Orientation programs, a critical part of onboarding, serve a social role by welcoming new employees into the organization and teaching cultural norms to relieve the anxiety associated with starting a new job (SHRM, 2007).

Because of advancements in technology throughout the past decade, many forms of instruction are transitioning to an online format (Brown, Murphy, & Wade, 2006; Sexton, Schilling, & Taylor, 2009; Yusuf and Al-Banawi, 2013). Online instruction is not an appropriate format to deliver orientation program content because of the crucial social role it plays for employees. Socialization tactics are essential because they develop newcomer attitudes such as satisfaction and fit with the organization, and have a positive correlation with increased task mastery and role clarity (Sluss & Thompson, 2012; Akremi, Nasr, & Richebé, 2014). Because socialization increases job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and the rate of task mastery, these tactics are invaluable in increasing new employee productivity (Enneking & Kleiner, 2015). As the world becomes increasingly globalized, it is critical for organizations to retain new

employees, which can be done through a well-designed onboarding program (Batalla-Busquets & Pacheco-Bernal, 2013; Lahey, 2014).

There is a plethora of literature written on the benefits of organizational socialization when onboarding new hires. While the advantages of onboarding are vast, the theoretical framework supporting socialization, which is an integral part of orientation, has been overlooked as companies have moved to online formats. Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory emphasize the construction of meaning through social interactions with the environment (Bandura, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978).This authentic, face-to-face interaction cannot be replicated online. Organizations may be unaware of the indispensable social component they are eliminating when transitioning online. As companies begin to move their orientation programs online, it is vital that they be made aware that this method may not be the appropriate choice for content delivery.

Definition of Terms

Term	Definition
Onboarding	"Onboarding includes a longer-term continuum of planned actions aimed at positive new employee experiences. These begin during the pre-employment phase of a prospect's contacts with the employer and can extend to a period that lasts up to a year or more. The focus of onboarding programs is to quickly and fully integrate the new hire into the organization—its operating structure and systems, its physical facilities, its culture—and everything in-between" (Hillman & Noel-Levitz, 2010, p.1).
Orientation Programs	Where employees learn valuable information about the organization: who they are working for, what the organization is trying to do, why the organization is doing what it is doing, and

	how the employees help the organization reach its goals (Wallace, 2009).
Organizational Culture	Schein (2010) defines organizational culture as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (p.18).
Content Delivery Methods	There are three main forms of content delivery methods: face-to-face, online, and blended. Face-to-face delivery methods include classroom training, one-on-one tutorials, lectures/demonstrations, and self-paced. Online delivery methods include facilitated and self-paced. The two delivery methods can also be combined to form blended learning (Kibbee & Gerzon, 2008).
Face-to-face (traditional) Instruction	Instruction designed in a classroom setting, using in-person methods as the primary mode of delivering content to learners. This form of instruction encourages interaction and collaboration between learners because of the face-to-face environment (Larson & Sung, 2009; Keramidas, 2012).
Online Instruction (e-learning)	Learner-centered instruction accessed through electronic media, primarily the internet, with simplified interaction tailored to the user-experience to provide a flexible learning environment. The delivery can be facilitated or self-paced, and occurs at a distance (Watson & Kalmon, 2005; Sangra, Vlachopoulos, & Cabrera, 2012; Karaaslan, 2013).
Organizational socialization	The process through which new employees learn the knowledge, skills, and expected behaviors in order to become successful organizational members, ensuring their integration into present organizational patterns. (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Barge & Schlueter, 2004).