GÖTEBORG UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Project psychology: differences in point of view between steering committee and operative project organization

Micael Litzell

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Tutor: Anders Biel

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Summary. The study aims to investigate if steering committees and an operative project groups have a difference in point view regarding the best way to see a project through. The research has the cross-sectional design using 44 questionnaires and 2 interviews. The proposed answer is that steering committee and operative project are two specialized functions to be coordinated thus their point of view differs. A hypothesis that steering committee members would be prone to a need for security and operative project members would be prone to a need for personal growth failed, one main reason for this is probably the fact that steering committee and project members are carefully selected.

An administrative department within a global business corporation[1] has for more than a year now been implementing and executing a major change effort which is to transform the organization of the administrative department from a flexible and adaptable organization to a more of structured and predictable organization. The operative project organization for the transformation meets a number of challenges. The steering committee has set clear targets on rationalization and focuses on control, while directions for solutions are vague and commitments to those solutions are sometimes weak. The risk is that top-management and the steering committee is too far from the operative reality and that they do not communicate with those managers who are key players in the change efforts. Another challenge is that much time and energy is needed for attending to internal relations between project members since conditions and relations within the project are constantly changing. Demands are put on the project to keep the budget and deliver solutions to problems which are not always budgeted for, and to achieve and perform according to objectives set. The global approach to the project requiring centralized standard routines and planning is often perceived as not leaving enough space for local adjustments of applications and that the project process due to this is slowed down (personal communication with corporation contact person, Mars, 2006).

Presently the steering committee and the operative project organization seem to not share a common view of the best way to see the transformation through; the steering committee wants to structure and have control over the process through standardized routines while the operative project organization wants more freedom to adjust the applications of the transformation process to local circumstances.

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[1] The global business corporation employs about 80,000 people and has production facilities in 25 countries.

Previous research

In the interaction between the mother organization and the project organization the project organization is dependant upon the mother organization for means of its survival and the mother organization is dependant upon the project organization for generating resources of more value than it has consumed. In this interaction the mother organization is more suited for administering knowledge while the project organization is more suited for generating knowledge. An important part of this interaction is to have the experiences of the project constantly interpreted and refined into knowledge by the mother organization. If this interaction is in sync then the culture and structure of the mother organization and that of the project organization will operate in harmony with each other. The project organization is at risk of lacking self efficacy if it is too dependant upon the mother organization; if the project organization on the other hand is too independent this might lead to sub-optimizing of resources by the project organization (Rapp Ricciardi & Schaller, 2005).

Theory

When people share values and beliefs strong enough to persist over time they can be predicted to spontaneously seek out each other's company and thus form subgroups that differ from other subgroups when they meet in a larger group (Newcomb, 1965). Some people prefer to have a stable and structured environment since it fills them with a feeling of calm – these people are characterized by a need for security; others react with anxiety in the same environment as they need more freedom to put their own resources in use – these people are characterized by a need for personal growth (Moxnes, 1991). Groups shape an important part of the identity of individuals. Hence people receive a social identity from their group membership. The social identity is eventually internalized by the individual and becomes a part of the self. At this stage individuals will see the world, think, act and define themselves as other members of the same group do (Haslam, 2001).

Research conducted by Neuberg and Newsom (1993) suggests that the need for structure differ between people. People with a high need for structure were more likely to organize information in less complex ways, complete their research on time and use ready acquired social categories and stereotypes in unfamiliar and ambiguous situations. Differences in need for structure may influence how people perceive, understand and interact with their surrounding world. Another research by Moskowitz (1993) showed that people with a high need for structure were more likely to form spontaneous trait inferences about other people; they were also more likely to recall names of target actors. The need for structure may be a basic chronic need. Research by Rapp Ricciardi and Schaller (2005) fits into to the theory of Moxnes (1991) in that it describes a mother organization that administers common resources and knowledge which is in line with a need for security; it also describes a project organization as the generator of new resources and knowledge which is in line with a need for growth. Their research also points out the fact that the organization may have two different "structures and cultures" which need to operate in harmony. This is in line with the theoretical reasoning of Watzlawick, Weakland and Fisch (1974) where they state that a system can not generate

a change of itself but the change of a system must come from actions that violate the rules of the system. The meaning of this is that if a system is supposed to adapt to changing circumstances in its environment it needs a part which operates in chaos without being bound by the rules of the system and of course a system which is willing to learn from these operations.

Research question and hypothesis

A global business corporation represents a subgroup in society and certain people from society strive to achieve membership in this subgroup because the image and the culture that the global business group represents are appealing to these people; image and culture is what binds the employees together as a group along with the explicit values and norms that the global business corporation enforces on its employees. Within the global business corporation there are yet other subgroups such as steering committees and operative project-memberships. Steering committees provide an environment characterized by structure and control which appeals to employees prone to a need for security; operative project memberships provide an environment characterized by ambiguity and adaptation which appeals to employees prone to a need for personal growth. Once these subgroups are formed, members of the subgroups will start identifying themselves with the other members of the subgroup and reinforce those parts of the personality which they have in common. Hence members of the subgroup will start define themselves, think, act and see the world as the other members of the subgroup do. The theory of social identity explains why two groups hold different points of view between them and homogeneous point of views within them. The theory of Moxnes (1991) would explain why they hold different points of view assuming they share a common interest. The theory of Newcomb (1965) explains why people of a certain kind eventually end up joining a group of peers.

Do steering-committee and operative project organization have a different point of view of the best way to see a project through? To reach an answer to this question the research will use a questionnaire study and a complementary minor structured interview study. The hypothesis put forward in the questionnaire study is that steering-committee members are prone to a need for security and operative project members are prone to a need for personal growth. The interviews will investigate whether there is a difference in point of view on issues related to the process of seeing a project through.

The purpose of this research is to through previous research, theory, literature search, questionnaire, interviews and discussion reach an answer to the research question.

Literature search

Minimal group studies

The aim of minimal group studies is to establish the very least conditions under which individuals will discriminate between their own group (in-group) and another group (out-group). In order to create these conditions researchers eliminate variables that normally lead to group identification. Such eliminated variables among respondents are:

interaction face to face, conflict due to opposing interests, historical hostility, any links between respondents self interests and possible responses in the study. Respondents are given multiple choices for response which some of them would seem rationally more rewarding compared to creating a difference between in-group and out-group. Respondents are divided in to two groups and the criteria for group belonging is supposed to be insignificant to the respondents, for example the common preference of a painter or the toss of a coin. There is no interaction between respondents during the experiment. The respondents are asked to allot various amount of money under various conditions to subjects who are identified only by in- or out-group belonging. The respondents are told that they will receive the amount of money allotted to them by the other respondents during the research (Tajfel, 1981).

The results of this research activity were that respondents allotted money in favor to subjects belonging to the random in-group to a significantly higher extent than to subjects who they perceive as similar but belonging to the random out-group. Discrimination against an out-group is strongest when similarity and in-group belonging is combined (Tajfel, 1981). The respondents were given the choice between three strategies for allotting money: maximum joint profit, maximum in-group profit and maximum differentiation between in-group and out-group. Under these conditions the respondents choose maximum differentiation as their firsthand strategy, followed by the strategy of maximum in-group profit, while maximum out-group profit was hardly chosen at all (Tajfel, 1978b). When respondents were given the choice between allotting money to themselves or to others they favored themselves on expense of in-group favoritism. However preceding actions of inter-group discrimination modified respondents self favoritism towards in-group favoritism (Turner, 1978).

Social categorization

Social categorization is the act of differentiating social events and objects and sort those events and objects perceived as similar into certain categories. Individual beliefs, intentions and actions steer the way events and objects are categorized (Tajfel, 1981). The individual is engaged in this process with the purpose to systematize and simplify the surrounding environment. Each category will be subjectively recognized as different from other categories and these differences will be accentuated; the same principle applies to the similarities within each category which also will be accentuated (Tajfel, 1978a). All categorizations whether they are of objects, events, people or other are the result of the interaction between the individual's current cognitive structure and the internal organization of new information gathered from the outside world (Tajfel, 1981). The individual can by means of social categorization sort people into different groups in accordance with the individual's cognitive structure and information at hand. The term "group" in this context means a category which is meaningful to the individual at a particular moment of time; these categories may change if the individual's beliefs, intentions and actions change. The purpose of categorizing people is to bring order to and make sense of the social environment. Categories bring structure and are a tool for interpretation and understanding of the social environment; the structure serves as a guide for action (Tajfel, 1978a). The above principles can be connected to individuals' self categorization. In a given context individuals can be predicted to categorize themselves as belonging to the group where they perceive that the differences between themselves

and the group are less than the differences between themselves and other groups present. If individuals are placed among peers they will accentuate individual characteristics and thus differentiate themselves within the group. Should the context change then individuals may re-categorize former in-group members as out-group members in the new context. The extent to which individuals identify themselves with a group is a particularly important measure of their readiness to define themselves in accordance with a group's values, culture and ideology (Haslam, 2004). Research supports the idea that an individual's identification with a group is the only reliable underlying variable to influence the individuals' group differentiation in inter-group processes (Jetten, Spears & Postmes, 2004). Based on the assumption that people has an inherent need to be positively evaluated by their group membership Tajfel and Turner (referred to in Haslam, 2004) identified two basic strategies for individuals to improve their social identity value, they can either resort to social mobility and change group membership if possible or engage in social change to try to improve the group's status. People will seek to improve their situation if they find that their group membership is of relatively low status (Haslam, 2004). Categorization of people is based on physical and social stimuli, the main difference being that social stimuli often are related to values and different groups will thereby be associated with positive or negative evaluations Accentuation of differences and similarities in social stimuli often is linked to certain physical stimuli and vice versa thus leading to stereotyping of categories (Tajfel, 1978a).

Intergroup behavior

The purpose of social categorization is to simplify and systematize the abundance of complex information which the individual is constantly exposed to in its environment. *Stereotypes* are further simplified mental images derived from the process of social categorization. Ideally stereotypes are consistent with facts, but they are persistent even when facts speak against them. Stereotypes facilitate cognitive and behavioral adaptation to the social environment. When stereotypes are circulated, elaborated and shared in society and groups they become a social or group stereotype. Social or group stereotypes derive from individuals' social categories and the group's interaction with other groups and their functions are shaped by this interaction. Social stereotypes facilitate the individual's adaptation to the group and serve to create and maintain group values and norms; thus they justify social actions and serve to create and preserve a group's positive value differentiation relative other groups (Tajfel, 1981). Stereotypes provide motives and a common understanding which in-group members use to discuss the discourse of prejudice toward out-group members (Ehrlich, 1973), and changes in the environmental context lead respondents to modification of stereotypes and a change of attitude. Hence stereotypes are sensitive to priming (Wittenbrink, Judd & Parker, 2001).

Prejudice is the individual's tendency to perceive, think and feel relative to other groups and individuals, including preset responses and practices which are considered appropriate according to the acquired prejudice (Newcomb, 1965). Klineberg (referred to in Tajfel, 1981) proposed prejudice to be a prejudgment based on inadequate amount of evidence involving a positive or negative attitude towards groups of people and individuals (Tajfel, 1981). The term prejudice has no consensus meaning within sociology and social psychology but can be defined as an attitude towards other people (Ehrlich, 1973). Prejudice is learnt by observing socially enforced differences in society and in

interaction with in-group members. The individual will not hold prejudice towards other individuals or groups prior to the conditions under which prejudice is taught; hence individuals are not prejudiced but become prejudiced by in-group learning (Newcomb, 1965). Individuals who have an orientation towards social dominance are more likely to be prejudiced and promotion to a position of social dominance increases an individual's orientation towards social dominance (Guimond, Dambrun, Michinov & Duarte, 2003). Prejudice serves the purpose of creating and maintaining differentiation between groups of people in society. To accentuate this differentiation groups in some cases apply double standards, prescribing behavior towards out-group members which would be unacceptable towards in-group members. Prejudice and double standards are part of in-group norms and thus part of the individual's socialization into a group. People's need for differentiation into subgroups and use of prejudice becomes increasingly important the more they perceive that society has categorized them together in a relative low status group (Newcomb, 1965).

Stereotyping and prejudice has traditionally been linked together (Ehrlich, 1973). Social interaction elicits processes which in interaction determine and activate stereotypes and prejudice (Lowery, Hardin & Sinclair, 2001). Stereotypes assigned to ethnic groups by another group often have normative characteristic and they are consistent and persistent over time. This consensus in assigned stereotypes and their stability over time indicate that individual social categorization alone can not fully account for prejudice, and that stereotyping of a category of people takes place in interaction with the individual's social environment (Ehrlich, 1973). People who are cognitively busy are less likely to acquire a stereotype but more likely to apply an already acquired stereotype (Gilbert & Hixon, 1991).

Research made by Sherif (referred to in Doise, 1978) on inter-group conflict shows that during inter-group rivalry or conflict the cohesiveness and solidarity within respective group increases; allied groups and especially rival groups become less favorably evaluated and in-group performance is exaggerated (Doise, 1978). In addition research has found support for the idea that out-group estimates are being overgeneralizations and that judgments based on out-group stereotypes were overestimated (Judd, Ryan & Park, 1991). During competition out-group members are seen as less variable than in-group members while at the same time competition increases memory about individual out-group members (Judd & Park, 1988). Discrimination of out-groups enhances in-group members self esteem (Lemyre & Smith, 1985). This rivalry tension can be overcome only by introduction of inter-group superordinate goals and the mutual cooperation towards these goals (Doise, 1978). If groups are arranged under a common membership or if this membership is made more significant then inter-group discrimination will decrease (Deschamps & Doise, 1978).

Object relation

Object relation is a theory of Klein (1975) which describes children's adaptation to and development of relations with the outer world. The theory can be used to understand group processes with the knowledge that individuals sometimes come together in groups to develop a common inner understanding and view of the outer world and that this common inner notion elicits action (Granström, 2000). Introjection and projection is a simultaneous process which starts at birth and continues throughout life. This process

creates a balance between the inner and the outer world of the individual and is constantly moderated due to the process of maturation (Klein, 1975). *Projection* is the process of attributing perceived good or bad personal characteristic onto an object and the result is strong liking or disliking of the object. Projection is a means to unload disappointment and anger and is a help to recent and suppress perceived bad personal feelings, thoughts and actions. Projection is also a means of creating a harmonic world in which we feel good and where perceived good feelings, thoughts and actions are reinforced and internalized. Projection is a psychic defense which is used to protect a positive self image (Granström, 2000). Research suggests that perceived similarity leads individuals into increased projection and decreased stereotyping. Hence individuals rely on projection for people perceived as similar to them and stereotyping of people perceived as different (Ames, 2004). *Introjection* is the process of internalizing characteristics from organizational front figures or from the organization itself, which are considered by the individual or group to be ideal raw models for their own personality. To defend this ideal individuals and groups become blind to organizational defects and may blame themselves for organizational shortcomings in order to preserve the ideal. *Projective identification* is a process where the target for projection internalizes projections made by the social environment. The target for projection need not have the characteristics projected for projective identification to take place, but the phenomenon occurs when those projecting start to behave as if the target actually has the characteristics. Sheer social pressure may eventually lead to the target thinking, feeling and behaving in accordance with the projections made by the surrounding social environment (Granström, 2000).

Organization

Social systems are comprised of different roles which each member of the system is obliged to perform; norms which prescribe and sanction the role behavior of each member and values in which the roles, norms and sanctions are embedded. The roles in the system are interdependent of each other. Thus, the members of the system become interdependent of each other. Norms play the part of getting the system's member to accept the prescribed role and perform according to expectations set by the norms. Values play the part of setting objectives for the system, which the members of the system dedicate themselves to (Katz & Kahn, 1966). Attitudes, sentiments, aspirations and goals lie implicit in the group's norms and values. Norms define the expected behavior, relate to goals and motives in common and set the reciprocal expectations between members and concern the existence of the group (Sherif, 1962). Thus roles, norms and values play the part of building a cohesive group out of individuals. The organization comprises subsystems which are interdependent of each other in the same way as the members of a social system or group are interdependent. Every organization needs to motivate and secure the reliable role behavior it requires consequently it aims at reducing the unpredictable and variable behavior of the individual. This becomes increasingly important the more divided the organization is into specialized tasks, thus requiring more differentiated patterns of behavior. This is done by prescribing role behavior for its members, instigation and enforcement of rules and an institution of legitimate power in forms of superiors who dictate the law for the subordinates of the organization (Katz & Kahn, 1966). The organization's many subsystems have their own power structure

composed to be in harmony with the total organization. The subsystems are rivals for organizational common resources and subordinate to the elite in the organizational hierarchy. The survival of the members of a subsystem is dependant upon the representation of them made by their leaders to the elite; this gives the sub-leader power over the members of the subsystem. The elite transfer its will down the organization through sub-leaders to the members of the subsystems. This reinforces the sub-leaders power over the subsystem's members and makes the elite somewhat dependant upon them. The sub-leaders are dependant upon the elite to insure their career. To sum up: the organizational system insures that members of the organization have an upward orientated obedience and gives sub-leaders some scope to defend the subsystem's interests and thereby insure leadership loyalty from its members (Presthus, 1962).

Power

Virtually all relationships involve a power structure where the participants differ in the relative power to influence one another. It is essential to analyze the distribution of power if one wants to understand the flow of interaction within a group, between groups and within a larger social organization (Secord & Backman, 1964). Compliance exists in all social unities and is a part of the relation between those who have power and those who have not. Compliance is in the center of the organizational structure and the emphasis on compliance is what differentiates the organization from other social structures (Etzioni, 1970). There are systems of roles with precise assignments of authority and status in organizations which demand accommodation from the member of the organization. The power and influence of organizations over subgroups and its individuals is pervasive and ranges from coercion to subtle appeals for conformity completed as a web of sanctions and rewards. Authority rests upon official hierarchical positions and has the function to evoke compliance (Presthus, 1962). Research indicates that people accurately perceive the power of other people and the power of themselves when they interact. Various strategies are used to shift the relative power balance and people may disguise their dependency of the other part (Secord & Backman, 1964). A distinctive psychological climate is produced in large bureaucratic systems where hierarchy, specialization and authority occur together. The organization expects its members to be loyal, behave predictably and to conform to professional and technical criteria set by the organization. Hence organizational members are set to defer to the authority of the organization's leaders (Presthus, 1962).

The basis of power is a relationship between two persons or groups A and B. Cases are rare where the basis of power can be limited to a single source. Normally the basis of power stems from several sources in combination. Five such sources which are especially important and common can be defined: (1), *Reward power* is the ability for A to mediate rewards to B. This power is dependant upon A's control over the distribution of positive valences. The strength of this power is increased the more B perceives and believes that A can mediate rewards to B. The range of reward power is limited to areas where A can mediate rewards to B. The use of reward power may foster an independent system, it reduces resistance and makes A more attractive in the eyes of B. (2), *Coercive power* is the ability for A to mediate punishments to B. This power is dependant upon A's control over the distribution of negative valences. The strength of this power depends on how B perceives the negative valence of the punishment multiplied by the

possibility to escape the punishment by conforming to A. There is a need for A to restrain B to A's area of coercive power to prevent B from leaving the power area. The use of coercive power fosters a dependant system, it creates resistance and makes A less attractive in the eyes of B. (3), *Legitimate power* exists when B has internalized values that dictates A to have the legitimate right to exert influence over B and that B is obliged to conform to this influence. This power is very similar to authority but can stem from other sources such as culture and social structures etc. In an organization this relationship is to a large extent between offices and thus depersonalized. This power is designated to A by a legitimizing agent that is accepted by B. The range of power is often described in writing. (4), *Referent power* exists when B desires the identity of A, and B has a feeling of unity with A. If B is highly attracted to A then B will strive to be associated with and seek to maintain a relationship with A. This power is established and maintained if A perceives, believes and behaves like B *(see Newcomb under Theory, above)*. Even though B may be unaware of this ability A still has the power to exert influence over B. The more B identifies with A the stronger is the referent power. The range of referent power is limited to the area of identification or attraction. (5), *Expert power* stems from the perception of B that A in their relation has the superior knowledge within certain areas. A's expert power will exert a major influence over B within the given area. Expert power is in proportion to B's perception of or attribution of knowledge to A. B will initially be dependant upon A, but information from additional sources will eventually make B more independent of A (French Jr. & Raven, 1959).

Hierarchy is not the sole basis for authority; superiors may defer to the opinion of specialists when in their area of expertise (Presthus, 1962). If one part of a group has social influence over another part it can be defined as leadership. It is usually the case that every group member has some influence over others. Thus leadership usually is thoroughly distributed in a group. In a formal organization leadership is in part determined by the roles and positions that every organizational member occupies. Thus leadership in organizations involves both interpersonal relations and role relationships (French Jr. & Snyder, 1959).

Method

Data were collected by means of a questionnaire, complemented by interviews with one project leader and one committee steering chairman.

Informants

The area of research was project-members and steering-committee members. In order to extend the amount of possible respondents the research included four companies/departments within the global business corporation.[2] 178 names and e-mail addresses were found and selected from available information on the global business corporation's Sweden intranet. Usable questionnaires were received from Brazil, France,

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[2] These companies/departments were recommended by the contact person since they have many projects operating.

Sweden and USA. Out of 44 respondents, 38 defined themselves as management while 6 respondents defined themselves as support.

One experienced project-leader and one experienced steering committee chairman was interviewed. The steering committee chairman was a person with 30 years of work experience and a university graduation from field of expertise. This person is a member of several steering committees on a global corporate level. Concerning the field of expertise this person is responsible for corporate strategies and policies implemented in the global business corporation. When steering committees are working in this person's area of expertise then this person often is chairman of the steering committee. The project-leader was a person with 10 years of work experience and a university graduation from field of expertise. Previous work experience includes diverse project experiences such as working with quality certifications and implementing quality management, IT-systems and work processes. The project-leader was working full time in a project and had a nationwide corporate responsibility in a global scale corporate project.

Steering committee members have a very varied background in terms of education and work experience. They normally have seniority and experience from management or project experience, it may be someone who is extremely well informed on the area of enterprise. Basically they are principal receivers or administrators of the project product. The recruitment of steering committee members is based solely on careful mapping of competencies needed in the project to make it successful; this mapping is to be consistent with the scoop of the project and to meet its challenges. Steering committee members are actively searched out. Project-members have a very varied background in terms of education, work experience and corporate position. Most of them have a background from the projects contextual field of expertise; there are many engineers complemented with e.g., IT-people, economists and behavioral scientists. Experience from working with projects is diverse as is educational status. Project-members whose educational status is below university degree have a long time work experience in the balance. The recruitment of project-members is a preplanned process where every recruit has a pre-specified function to fill within the project. Employees apply for pre-specified functions and are temporarily allocated from the line organization to a project organization.

Instruments

The questionnaire study used the questions below together with instructions. Two background questions were asked. The first question asked respondents to define themselves as either steering-committee member or project-member. The second question asked respondents to give the closest general definition of them; the alternatives given were management or support.

The first seven questions of the questionnaire measured respondent's identification of groups and identification with groups. Respondents were asked in question 1-4 to what extent they perceived the (1) corporation, (2) steering-committee, (3) operative project, and (4) steering-committee & operative project as a coherent group. In question 5-7 respondents were asked to what extent they identify themselves as a member of (5) the corporation, (6) the steering-committee, and (7) the operative project. Respondents marked their opinion on a scale graded 1-10, 1 signified "not at all" and 10 signified "completely".

The questions 8-12 were based on Moxnes's (1991) theory of anxiety which is supposed to measure the characteristics of two dichotomous personality archetypes (see hypothesis) to be found in society. The scale of the Moxnes questions is a combination of quota, normative and ipsative scales. The questions appear to have a 1-10 graded scale, but are in fact graded 0-10. When a respondent score full to the left or right then the remaining value left to the other statement is nil. There are no psychometric values of nil why this value must be interpreted with caution. Experience suggests that the ipsative scale induces respondents to reflexively choose the alternative that they identify themselves with, even if the other alternative on the surface seems to be the more favorable (Mabon, 2002). Each of the questions was designed as two statements which were to be weighed against each other; the two statements were in opposition. To weigh one statement against the other respondents marked an X in the below scale graded from 1 to 10. If respondents favoured statement 1 more than statement 2 then they marked their X closer to the left on the scale (5-1). If respondents favoured statement 2 more than statement 1 then they marked their X closer to the right on the scale (6-10). Ex. if statement 2 got the value of eight then statement 1 automatically got the remaining value of two; if statement 1 got the value of three *it was interpreted as eight* and statement 2 automatically got the remaining value of two. Questions 8-12 below:

(8) 1, I seek new and ambiguous settings where I can learn new things!
2, I seek settings with systems and regulations which I can learn to master!

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Statement 1 is correct   Statement 2 is correct

(9) 1, I want full freedom to make my own decisions at work!
2, I want common principles to fully govern my decisions at work!

(10) 1, I stand up and defend my opinion and decisions against superiors even if it leads to negative consequences for me personally!
2, I withdraw and change my opinion and decisions when superiors imply that I am wrong!

(11) 1, I embrace my failures as learning experiences!
2, I hate my failures as they make it obvious I could not do it right!

(12) 1, Every new day at work should be a day full of opportunities and new choices!
2, Every new day at work should be a fully planned step towards a set objective!

Procedure

The questionnaire was sent out to the respondents by e-mail in an attachment. In an attempt to enhance the number of respondents the questionnaire e-mail was sent out through a set up corporate e-mailbox and with a supportive message from the contact person. To protect the anonymity of the respondents' questionnaires were preferred to be sent back through use of postal services even though the answers could be sent back

by e-mail and indeed were in some cases. The e-mailed answers were also included in the analysis. The first reminder was sent out two weeks later and a second reminder was sent an additional week later. Relatively few reminders were sent out since there is a known aversion against mass messages among the presumptive respondents.

The interviews were prepared as a structured interview where the same questions were asked to both respondents. The interview questions were prepared when the first preliminary result of the questionnaire research had been received and the result of theory and literature search were at hand. The first half of the interview gathered describing information about the respondents and the second half gathered information about areas where the researcher could anticipate differences in point of view. Both interviews were conducted within a timeframe of 40 minutes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed word by word. The first halves of the interviews were presented under *Informants*. The questions asked were inspired from the initial personal communication with the corporation contact person and the research question. Categories were execution, communication, result, support or execution, and finally if steering committee and operative project have a different view of the best way to see a project through. Representative quotations then were sampled from the material and subsequently compared to make an analysis of differences between the respondents. Quotations best illustrating differences were chosen to represent the material. Quotations then were cultivated and arranged to form a successive prose. Materials from the second halves of interviews were presented under *Result*.

Statistical analyses

Fault responses. Six questionnaires were excluded from the analysis. Two of them were incomplete; two were lacking the front page containing the background questions and information; two contained incorrect answers according to questionnaire instructions.

Homogeneity of variances. Since the two investigated groups largely vary in the amount of respondents they contain there was a risk that their variances would be heterogeneous (Hassmen & Koivula, 1996). This was the case for the two variables *Committee identification and *Freedom; for these variables t-tests where equal variance is not assumed were applied. Heterogeneous variance was found significant at the .05 level.

Analysis of mean differences. Since the variances were found not homogeneous the analysis initially used the Kruskal-Wallis test which is a non parametric test. Monte Carlo as well as asymptotic significance tests were run both showing the same significant differences at the .01 level. Independent samples t-tests (*p*) (two-tail) were run next since the test is robust to deviations from homogeneity of variance and normal distribution. The t-tests showed the same significant differences as the Kruskal-Wallis Test at the .01 level. The t-test results were used and presented in tables 1-3.

Result

The result is divided into four different sections. The first section answers the question of whether the respondents see themselves and others in the population as coherent groups or not; they all seemed to see themselves as one group while at the same time the two subgroups were recognized by all. The second section answers the question of whether the individuals identify themselves with a group or not; they identify themselves with the global business group (corporation) and with their respective subgroup. The third section answers the question of whether there are general personality differences between the investigated subgroups; no significant differences are found. The fourth section contains interview material on anticipated differences. Groups are (1), steering committee members and (2), operative project members.

Identification of groups

Table 1 shows to what extent steering committee members and operative project members perceived themselves and others to be a coherent group. The results show that the respondents to a fairly high degree recognized the corporation group, the subgroups Committee, Project and the Committee & Project group. No significant differences in perceptions are found between members of the steering committee and the operative project group.

Table 1

Extent to which the respondents perceived (variable) as a coherent group.

Variable	Group	Mean	N	SD	t	p
1: Corporation	Committee	7,7	15	2,3		
	Project	7,2	29	1,5	-,85	,40
2: Committee	Committee	7,4	15	1,1		
	Project	6,6	29	1,8	-1,60	,12
3: Project	Committee	7,6	15	1,3		
	Project	7,3	29	1,6	-,62	,54
4: Committee & Project	Committee	6,9	15	1,6		
	Project	6,1	29	1,9	-1,36	,18

Identification with group membership

Table 2 shows to what extent steering committee members and operative project members identify themselves with the corporation group membership and their identification with committee and project group membership respectively. The results show significant differences between groups. Respondents' identification with the corporation is high.

Table 2

Extent to which the respondents identified themselves as a member of (variable).

Variable	Group	Mean	N	SD	t	p
5: Corporation	Committee	8,3	15	1,5		
	Project	7,6	29	1,8	-1,30	,20
6: *Committee	Committee	8,1	15	2,0		
	Project	3,3	29	2,8	-6,58	,01
7: Project	Committee	5,9	15	2,7		
	Project	8,5	29	1,9	3,81	,01

*Equal variances not assumed.

General personality differences between groups

Table 3 shows the Moxnes's variables where steering committee members and operative project members were asked to weigh two statements against each other. The variables in the table are here named after the personal characteristics that they intend to measure to reflect the underlying variable. The result is presented by the scores on one of the statements of each question; the opposite statement holds the remaining value up till ten (see instructions in appendix). The values presented in the table represent the personality type need for security; the opposite values not presented represent need for personal growth (see hypothesis). The opposite of soft is firm and the opposite of resent is coping. There were no significant differences between steering committee members and operative project members to be found.

Table 3

The Moxnes's variables: group preference for respective variable.

Variable	Group	Mean	N	SD	t	p
8: Structure high	Committee	4,9	15	3,3		
	Project	3,5	29	2,8	-1,53	,13
9: *Freedom low	Committee	5,7	15	3,4		
	Project	5,0	29	2,7	-,76	,45
10: Opinion soft	Committee	3,0	15	2,6		
	Project	3,4	29	2,3	,53	,60
11: Failure resent	Committee	1,9	15	1,7		
	Project	2,5	29	2,4	,84	,41
12: Planned high	Committee	4,7	15	3,0		
	Project	4,4	29	3,0	-,37	,71

*Equal variances not assumed.

Interviews

During the interview respondents were asked to: *Please answer the following questions as you perceive that operative project (if project leader) or steering committee (if committee chairman) members in general view them and voice their opinion on the issues.* This was done in an attempt to get a more general view of these issues.

What characterizes a good execution of a project? A good execution involves a good understanding between steering committee members, the chairman and the project leader; that they are focused on the task and working together in cooperation towards a mutual objective; that there is a determination to see objectives and goals through. Also that the receiving organization in the end is well trained and prepared and thus able to get a positive effect out of the project's efforts (committee chairman). Speaking in general terms it is the early identification of activities and a careful planning of the execution of these activities, and then the ability to execute the activities according to plan. A good execution involves having project members working together in the same direction and the ability to keep a time schedule (project leader).

What are the hallmarks of good communication within a project? Openness is probably most important, that every issue is brought up immediately and that nothing is kept away, then there is always time to correct errs. There shall of course be an established plan for communication, including activities, which is followed as intended to secure that all parties involved are properly informed (committee chairman). It is difficult to have a strict structure for communication since a project is very unpredictable. You try to set a formal structure for meetings and networks to have an overall structure but good communication relies profoundly on complementary daily and frequent contacts through informal channels. You make spontaneous contacts to inform other members on progress and handling of trouble issues (project leader).

What characterizes a successful project result? An indication is when project members, steering committee and receiving organization are satisfied and happy with their work and perceive themselves to have made a difference. For the project organization itself the result is defined by the interplay between steering committee and project members (committee chairman). It is when the project has done what the owner has set out for the project to do and when you can see that the receiving organization has understood a change and is working in the way that the owner intended. The project result is evaluated through asking questions and in dialogue with the receiving organization (project leader).

What is the main purpose of a project: support to the organization or execution of executives' will? It is more of a supportive role than an executive role. The organization is to do what is decided by their executives and if you can support the organization then they will accomplish decided objectives i.e. the executives will (committee chairman). The responsibility for carrying out a change lies on line management and a project is established to help line management to carry out the change. The project can be supportive in certain types of activities, structure and method but the change must be understood and made by the line organization who owns the change (project leader).

Do steering committee and operative project organization have a different view of the best way to see a project through that you sense or are aware of? Absolutely! There are always differences in opinion, if there weren't there would be lots of ditches to fall into. It is a good thing to have differences in opinion from where you can pluck the best ideas to find the optimal solution; not saying compromises but certain elements from differ-

ences in opinion may address an important dimension of the problem you are trying to solve, thus integrating that dimension will provide a much better solution. The steering committee often views several changes simultaneously and have a long perspective of time while the operative project is focused on its particular assignment at a particular moment of time. The operative project often is better at creating a change while the steering committee is more suited to assess the actual change (committee chairman). The steering committee's concern is budget and result. The committee does not question activities, so there is no difference in that regard. I sometimes would prioritize the economy differently but I do not make an issue of it; I ask the steering committee what to prioritize and then I trust their judgment. It is the steering committee that decides; after all they are supposed to have the general overview and to know what is best for the company and business. There is a difference in perspective, at one side I can see that their decisions lead to consequences that the committee can not see; at the other side the decisions I would have made would lead to consequences which I can not see. One sometimes would want the steering committee to focus more on the content of the project and not so much on cost issues; to be more informed on project details and activities and not only following up on budget plans and time schedules (project leader).

Discussion

Research question

Do steering-committee and operative project organization have a different view of the best way to see a project through? The proposed answer to this question is that steering committee and operative project organization are recognized as two separate groups having a different view of a single project. The steering committee seems to view a project as a piece of a jigsaw puzzle contributing to the whole picture while the operative project seems to view the project as the whole picture with a lot of jigsaw puzzle pieces. Such a difference in view would result in a different focus on information and methods for seeing a specific project through; where the steering committee would have to handle a relative abundance of information and hence being forced to systematize and simplify in order to be able to integrate a specific project with other projects and plans running; while the operative project focusing on the specific project and disregarding other projects is able to elaborate detailed information and work out tailor-made solutions to solve project specific issues but in the process losing the overall perspective. Steering committee- and operative project work thus is two specialized functions to be coordinated (compare Rapp Ricciardi & Schaller, 2005). Since steering committee and operative project perceive themselves as different groups they will also tend to their own needs before tending to common needs in cooperation (see Turner, 1978). Member's high identification with respective group is also a source for some degree of stereotyping and prejudice (see Ehrlich, 1973; Tajfel, 1978a) hence group members will to some degree take for granted that the other group has certain characteristics and behaviors to go with these characteristics. The power relation is exceedingly unevenly distributed between steering committee and operative project leading to the operative project having a tendency for instant compliance to the opinion of the steering committee. The exceedingly uneven power relation and specialization may be an obstacle hindering the

open communication which is necessary to question prevailing stereotypes and prejudices and thereby hindering an enhanced coordination between steering committee and operative project organization. There are no signs of general personality differences between steering committee and operative project organization (table 3) which would lead to a different point of view.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis that steering committee members would be prone to a need for security and operative project members would be prone to a need for personal growth failed (see table 3) in this research. One main reason for the hypothesis failure is probably the fact that both steering committee members and project members are carefully selected, especially steering committee members. Every project position is mapped out to fit the needs of the project in diverse dimensions and people are recruited to fit these positions thus the theory of Newcomb (1965) do not apply since people are not free to move in to these positions out of interest but are placed in position based on experience, skills or knowledge to fit into a ready mix of people serving the project's alleged best interests (see *Informants*).

Differences in point of view

Identification of groups. Respondents identified the corporation, steering committee and operative project to be coherent groups (table 1). The recognition of in- out-groups is enough to start inter-group discrimination. When individuals recognize themselves as belonging to a group they will favor in-group needs before out-group needs (Tajfel, 1981). However preceding actions of inter-group cooperation will modify this behavior towards common interests (Doise, 1978; Deschamps & Doise, 1978). Self interest though seems to be in the center and guiding the individual's actions (Turner, 1978). Social categorization is in progress in order for each group to define the other (Tajfel, 1981); hence each investigated group is a social category, a somewhat simplified and systematized image.

Identification with group membership. Respondents identify themselves with the corporation and respective subgroup. Identification with respective subgroups (table 2) is enough for group members to start differentiate between groups in inter-group relations (Jetten, Spears & Postmes, 2004). This means that similarities within groups and differences between groups are accentuated leading to some degree of social stereotyping between groups (Tajfel, 1978a). These stereotypes facilitate new group members adaptation to the group and set the rules for inter-group relationships (Tajfel, 1981). The stereotypes are intertwined with a certain degree of prejudice (Ehrlich, 1973), i.e. the other group is expected to behave in a certain way to which there are certain appropriate responses. This is leading to perceived behavioral predictability in the organization i.e. certain reactions are taken for granted without being tested. Using the theory of projective identification (Granström, 2000) (social pressure) one can predict that a group in an organization to some extent will identify with common stereotypes and prejudice thus making them reality. This will be a process of mutual adjustment of relationships between different groups. Similar groups (projects or committees) will engage in projec-

tion and introjection in attempts to define and adjust organizational relationships. These gradual adjustment processes facilitates efficiency in a stable environment but are slow to adjust efficiently to a changing environment; since the environment is in constant change (personal communication; Interviews) there is nothing concrete to adjust to, hence constant adjustment is a waste of energy. Hence the operative project needs *some* room to operate free from the restrain of adjusting to organizational stereotypes, prejudice and projections in order to focus their energy on the task and thereby become more effective (compare Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch, 1974). At the same time the steering committee needs to incorporate operative projects with the mother organization and reduce uncertainty stemming from unpredictable variable behavior. This is done by introducing role descriptions including norms and values to be followed (Katz & Kahn, 1966). These role descriptions reduce the need for stereotyping and prejudice since expectations and reciprocity are regulated, they may also prescribe a certain degree of autonomy to please an operative project group. There are no signs of, and should be no inter-group rivalry between steering committee and operative project since all respondents strongly identify themselves with the corporation (table 2) and they also share mutual objectives pulling the two groups together in cooperation towards mutual interests (see Doise, 1978).

Interviews. When it comes to communication steering committees seem to view an openness to share trouble issues as the important feature but are also relying on ready communication plans to be followed. In operative projects on the other hand ready communication plans seem to count for only rudimentary communication while spontaneous informal contacts between project members is essential as the operative project reality is unpredictable. Steering committees, to a certain degree, seem to welcome differences in opinion as a source for ideas for better solutions. It seems like operative projects though might not be fully aware of this openness for divergent ideas but instead trust steering committees to provide project strategic decisions. Both steering committees and operative projects seem to recognize that there is a difference between steering committees and operative projects in focus of both time and strategic level. Steering committees are looking at the possible outcome of several projects in combination while operative projects are focused on their specific assignment. Steering committees also have the longer perspective of time while operative projects only see the short time perspective of the project life period. Steering committees and operative projects thus are recognized as specialized functions in cooperation.

Power. In an analyze of power relations between the steering committee and the operative project one can conclude that the steering committee has got a firm hold of five power bases while the operative project has got hold of one. The steering committee has the power to reward the operative project, to use coercive power by means of punishments, is given the legitimate power by the organization, is in possession of referent power as a group of superior managers and in possession of expert power as experts on a strategic level. The only base for power that the operative project has got hold of is expert power as an expert in the operative area of the project (see French Jr. & Raven, 1959). In an organization the exertion of power ranges from open coercion to subtle appeals for compliance where often authority and status are the visible signs of power (Presthus, 1962). Hence project members are prone to respond to steering committee members' vague signals sent calling for conformity while project members would have to send significant signals to evoke the same conformity among steering committee members. Add to this relation the fact that project conditions are in constant change thus

there often are no sure answers in advance and you will find it difficult as a project member to find significant arguments. Respondents seem to stand pretty firm (*Means* 6,6 & 7,0; table 3 values subtracted by ten) by their opinion but operative project members (*Mean* 6,6) will have no more than expert power to rely on in defense of their opinion against steering committees. Some courage to balance power relationships can be found in the corporation's policy booklet concerning leadership where leaders are encouraged to be prepared to challenge decisions of senior managers and have confidence in their own opinion and ability.

Strength and weakness of this research

Strength. Theories and models are important tools for analyzing data in the cross-sectional study. These models were developed before conducting the study and drawing conclusions about what causes effects in the dependant variables. It is the theories and models that validate the research conclusions. In order to build evidence for causal explanations and make meaning of the results the research collected additional information by interviews after the quantitative study was conducted. The cross-sectional design requires structured sets of data which can be systematically compared but no specific method for gathering data is stipulated (de Vaus, 2001). The strength of this research lies in the fact that it follows an established research method; and is correcting for the method's main weaknesses, namely problems in establishing causal explanations and interpretation of the results, by conducting complementary interviews.

Weakness. The main weakness of this research lies in the fact that the measured sample is small and groups are uneven in number of respondents; it is therefore difficult to make generalizations towards a larger population. The external validity therefore relies on the question of whether people reading this report find value in the results or not. It is also difficult to get a clear picture of the population since employees working in projects are temporarily allocated to projects and the projects themselves have limited lifetimes. As it seems few people work in (with) projects as a permanent full time occupation. Complete registers of employees working in projects are therefore not easily attained. This study may therefore be considered to be a preliminary study and a snapshot of the project world in a global business corporation anno 2006.

Further research

Coming research may put time and effort into mapping out the population of project employees to guide research on more specific issues. An interesting area for coming research is the function of the coordination between steering committees and operative projects.

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