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Ethnographic Research Methods
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Workplace Culture

Abstract:

Much research has been conducted within the workplace trying to discover the who's, what's, where's, when's and why's relating to individuals who make up the "workplace culture." Unfortunately though, this research has been overlooked by many of the inhabitants within the culture, and rather has been used by Human Resources to recruit employees. The problem exists when this information is not filtrated down to the employees themselves. In this research, I wish to examine and unveil the dynamics of the workforce and the workplace. Discovering why people work where they do and what retains them will hopefully benefit those individuals who are actively or even non-actively seeking new job opportunities. In this research, I have chosen to examine a "for-profit" corporation, Target Corporation, and a non-profit organization, Metro Transit. Examining two different organizations will hopefully reveal different dynamics within the workplace. This research will benefit not only the employer seeking quality candidates, but also more importantly, the employees themselves.

Introduction:

From the perspective of the social sciences and the workforce in general, there was a strongly felt need to provide reliable data describing the variations of working conditions (likes, dislikes, work environment) encountered by employed people in the U.S. This information is needed to complement the information already out there available to those seeking new employment. As mentioned in the abstract, the purpose of this research is to benefit primarily the employee, rather than the employer. Searching through the depths of research that has already been conducted on this subject matter, I feel there is a strong need for employees themselves, who are seeking new jobs, to have direct access to information (that has already been conducted but retained by employers) that will benefit them when seeking new jobs.

The majority of us have all searched for new employment. The only information we have to back our decisions is that given my Human Resources. What HR department isn't going to give ALL positive information

regarding their employees? What we (outsiders to the prospective employment) need is an inside look at what really goes on and how current employees really feel about their current position.

Why do people work where they do and who or what retains them in their current position?

This is the main question I have regarding this research. The following pages were extracted from my research questionnaire. Although I didn't blatantly ask the question, "Why," I feel my questions steer me in the direction of coming to a deductive conclusion that will answer questions raised in my introduction as well as abstract.

See Appendix for Interview Questions.

I have chosen these questions to indirectly answer my main questions about employment in the workforce. After the conclusion of my research, I realized that some questions are and will be irrelevant to the individual seeking new employment. I chose a lengthier questionnaire to give me as much information about employees in their current positions as possible. This also gave the interviewee an opportunity to express any and all concerns surrounding their current work environment and satisfaction with their current employers.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Although there is a plethora of research previously conducted on this subject matter, very few researchers, in this area, have collected qualitative data. Charles Spencer, author of "Blue Collar," did an internal examination of the workplace and the cultures within. Linda Rodgers (Team Dynamics), has researched workplace culture for many years, examining the environments in which people work. Robert P. Quinn and Graham L. Staines both from the Institute for Social Research have conducted research on the workforce as well as the workplace. Reading through their data "The 1977 Quality of Employment Survey," I found primarily quantitative data with very little qualitative analysis. Finally, I found a great website entitled "Coffee Breaks and Birthday Cakes." This site publishes a book that examines the workplace culture...it includes everything from what people wear to work, to how they talk and act and even how people get to work.

Methodology:

I chose to conduct my survey on a total of 18 subjects. Currently, I am an employee for Target Corporation, located in Minneapolis, MN. I asked 6

colleagues to participate and all agreed. My brother works for Metro Transit in Minneapolis, MN. He asked for 12 volunteers as well to help in this research project. After all 18 subjects agreed to participation, I began conducting my research topic and questioning. I randomly chose these 18 subjects. The 6 I chose from Target were “chance-encounters.” I didn’t set out beforehand to recruit any particular person for the research. The 12 from Metro Transit were recruited similarly to those from Target.

I collected my data through personal interviews. A sample of the questions I used precedes the abstract in the beginning of this paper. Interviews ranged from 15 minutes to 2 hours. A few subjects requested to complete the survey on their own. They felt too much stress having to answer questions in a given time period (one hour as described to them before interviewing them). A few colleagues also expressed concern regarding the confidentiality of their answers. I reassured all subjects that any information gathered would be kept in strictest confidence.

In the following section, I will define the settings of each organization in greater detail. What these companies publish to the general public about their organization is very important to that information gathered from the interviews. Finally, after all the information was gathered from interviewees, it was time to analyze the data. I have set up several spreadsheets in Excel and SPSS to help analyze the quantitative data I have gathered. The qualitative data will be expressed in the findings/results section. Since my subjects are being kept anonymous, I will openly discuss dialog and information they shared with me leading to the answer of my questions raised in the abstract. The following section, Findings/Results/Ethnographic Narrative, will be the most beneficial section of this research. I will hit at the heart of every question I posed in the abstract and to those I interviewed.

Target Corporation’s Culture:

At Target, “Fast, Fun and Friendly” describes their work atmosphere as well as their guests’ shopping experience. At Target, a positive attitude is not only part of their corporate culture, but comes naturally when working for one of the world’s most successful retailers.

Target believes in celebrating success, applauding risk and bringing out the best in teams and individuals. As you may know, Target works on a “Team-work” employee atmosphere. Employees are referred to as “team members” rather than employees. To that end, Target encourages personal and career development through individual growth plans designed by team members, an array of training programs, regular performance feedback and more. Together, Target team members are more than a sign of the times. They’re a sign of the

future.

Each week, Target Corporation gives over \$1 million to the communities they serve. This dedication to supporting local communities and schools makes it easy to feel good about coming to work every day. As a whole, Target team members donate over 170,000 hours to 5,000 projects and raise millions of dollars for the United Way every year.

Target prides themselves with their vast diversity within the corporate culture. It's people who make Target successful. Individuals with a wide range of ages, beliefs and backgrounds. At Target, valuing diversity is more than a slogan, it's a mission. Target corporation is a performance-based company with equal opportunities for all who perform.

Diversity at Target is an attitude and commitment that extends to team members, to guests and to their business equally. Target defines diversity as individuality, or anything that makes someone unique. Listening to, valuing and responding to each individual translates into innovative products and solutions, a friendly environment and future success for everyone.

Finally, diversity has been one of the strengths of Target Corporation and will continue to be an important part of their business strategy as they expand into new and different markets and position their business for success in the 21st century.

About a month ago, Target re-launched their "Fast, Fun and Friendly" slogan. Prior to this "motto," Target used the "All For One" slogan. "All For One" backed up Target's philosophy of teamwork. Target's main goal was to initiate a work environment that would propel team members to work for one another. Although Target's organization is separated by divisions (Lead, Supervisor, Manager, V.P., etc), Target believes that everyone is equal in their own job and without one position, the work could not be done.

-www.target.com

Metro Transit's Culture:

The mission of the Metropolitan Council is to improve regional competitiveness in the global economy so the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan region is one of the best places to live, work, raise a family and do business.

Metro Transit is one of the country's largest transit systems, providing roughly 95 percent of the 73 million bus trips taken annually in the Twin Cities. Each weekday customers board Metro Transit buses an average of 250,000 times. Metro Transit operates 132 routes -- 63 are local-service routes and 48 are express routes -- and 31 contract service routes, using a fleet of 939 buses. The majority of the company's fleet (792) are standard 40-foot buses while 120 are articulated ("accordion") buses, with 25 small buses, and two coach buses. All

new buses will be equipped with wheelchair lifts or ramps -- currently this equipment is available on 776 buses.

Metro Transit is an Equal Opportunity Employer and an Affirmative Action Employer committed to cultural diversity in the workplace.

-www.metrotransit.org

The Problem:

We hear a lot about a company's culture, but what determines culture, and why is it important? Random House (www.randomhouse.co.uk/home.htm) defines culture as the “behaviors and belief characteristics of a particular group.” Workplace culture is the sum of the formal and informal behaviors that an organization adopts as their way of doing business. The formal side will include written statements of value, such as respect for individuals, and a written organizational chart. The informal side deals with how work gets done--whether through written procedures or by circumventing those, how employees treat one another, how willing they are to share ideas and information, and how the hierarchy allows employees to cross "turf" boundaries to get work done.

Highly structured hierarchical organizations are quick to reinforce boundaries of position, often slowing processes. Conversely, teams who can address issues, and form "snap-in" temporary teams to address roadblocks, can move work more efficiently, and enhance systems in the process.

Workplace culture filters through to customers and vendors. An employee who feels undervalued and frustrated will project that to customers and coworkers. We've all experienced "unhealthy" culture, whether as customers or employees. In the former, we may get the opportunity to wait to be acknowledged by a sales clerk while they look up a phone number. In the latter, we may have experienced the down side of the company rumor mill. Either way, we're dealing with people who are or aren't giving their best to the organization.

As a senior who is currently seeking new employment, I find myself running into several roadblocks when looking at “corporate or workplace cultures.” I've always been told to investigate the organization and find out as much information as one can before actually applying for a position with them. But where do we start? What characteristics or beliefs should we look for in an organization? The answer to this question is quite simple. First, invest time in yourself and discover what your individual needs and wants are. Second, begin searching job-databases that list companies with your expectations and values. I guarantee that there are companies out there that will fit your needs. For example, when I began looking for a weekend job

during my college years, I had only a few requirements. First, I needed an employer who was non-discriminatory...an open-ended non-discrimination policy, particularly sexual orientation in my case. Second, I needed to know how the management system was set up. And finally, I needed a leadership style that was flexible and one that would challenge me. In the end, Target Corporation fulfilled all of my needs.

Once again, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the workplace cultures of two different organizations. Meeting with individuals who make up these cultures and recording their experiences within the workplace will hopefully help the reader discover what they want in a workplace culture.

Participant Observation:

I felt it was imperative that I include observations from both of these organizations. I have worked for Target Corporation in the same position for 2 ½ years. After taking a more in-depth look at both work place cultures, I can conclude that they have many similar characteristics, yet differ in many ways as well.

In my department, where I did most of my interviews, the majority of the team members are middle-aged females. The atmosphere is very casual. We are allowed to wear pretty much anything all seven days of the week. Yes, Target Financial Services is open seven days a week and nearly 360 days a year. It is a very relaxed department. In the summers we are allowed to wear sandals and shorts. Most team members enjoy this casual atmosphere where they don't have to spend great deals of money on new clothing every month. The department I work in is called RPC (Remittance Processing Center). RPC is made up of approximately 60 people. In RPC, we collect all of the credit card payments for the Target, Target Visa, Marshall Field's and Mervyn's credit cards. The process consists of opening the mail, separating the stubs from the checks, keying in the amount of the checks, and finally sending the checks back to the appropriate banks. Of course in this day and age, many machines do the actual physical labor (opening and separating). Most of the team members don't have time to mingle around and visit with other departments. The majority of the team members come in, punch in, take their timely breaks and then punch out for the day. The workday is very structured and monotonous with little time to deviate away from the schedule.

Every month, RPC has a "monthly" birthday party to celebrate any team members' birthdays during that month. The manager of RPC gives a little feedback of how the company is doing, but his comments can be summed up in a matter of minutes. Quarterly, RPC has meetings to discuss in more detail the financial background of Target Corporation. We look at RPC's financials as well as Target as a whole. 75% of RPC team members don't have financial

background to understand what the manager is talking about. In many ways, I think most team members see these meetings as a waste of time. I could only suggest that these meetings be brought down to “laymen’s” terms for those who don’t even understand what EBIT stands for. Some people I asked during my participant observation think EBIT (Earnings Before Interest Taxing) stands for Early Breaks in Transit. Transit is the sub-department I work for.

I didn’t see many people talking about personal issues at work. Their conversations were pretty much restricted to “shop talk.” On breaks, the smokers would congregate together and talk about the weather...that was the easiest thing for them since they were outside. Some would even talk to others from different departments while they were outside. Most of the time, I just heard a great deal of bitching going on. If it wasn’t their supervisors who were pissing them off, it was a co-worker who wasn’t doing their share of the work. As I mentioned previously, Target just launched the “Fast, Fun and Friendly” slogan. A few days after hearing the spiel on that, we were sent a memo from the V.P. of Target Financial Services. We are no longer allowed to wear shorts in the summer, no sandals, no sweatsuits and no shirts with printing on them. The shirts can have the little Polo or Tommy sign on them, however nothing can be worn with printing across them...sorry grandma’s, no more sweatshirts made by your grandkids that say “I love my Grandma.” My entire casual wardrobe of Abercrombie and Fitch will now need to be saved for those “extra” casual moments. After we received this memo, I thought WWII was going to break out. I would say this “issue” was the talk of the shop for nearly a week. I couldn’t believe how upset most team members were. “The mere fact that Target just re-launched ‘Fast, Fun and Friendly,’ and now we are not allowed to have as much fun anymore really upsets me...” This phrase was resounding throughout the entire department. “Oh well, it’s just a job...as long as I get my paycheck...life will go on.” And that final statement was the overall consensus of how Target team members feel about their workplace culture.

Metro Transit was certainly a much different environment to observe than I would have imagined. As previously mentioned, my brother has worked for the Metropolitan Council for three years. I have visited him numerous times and was always amazed at how “relaxed” a public government agency’s environment was. Metro Transit’s workplace culture is much different than that of Targets. I am comparing “office” people to Target’s “office” people. As people read through this research, I want to be very clear that I am comparing apples with apples and not apples with oranges...bus drivers. The people who make up Metro Transit are different than those at Target. From the Administrative Assistants to the Operations Analysts, the majority of the MT

people have four-year college degrees.

The majority of the people who work for Transit dress in business casual attire. I didn't see a single person wearing jeans or tennis shoes. There, of course, are still some people who wear suits and ties to work every day. The age group ranged from early 20's to mid-60's. I didn't notice a single "time-clock" at Transit. I observed Transit on a number of occasions and always went in to work with my brother around 7:00. He is not required to work at 7:00, but pretty much sets his own schedule. As long as the employees work their 8 hours, I don't think they run into many problems. After talking with several people about their schedules, most said they are in to work by 8:30 and leave around 5:00. If they have an appointment, they will either come in later or work later without having to request any time-off. In my opinion, Metro Transit's work philosophy is... "you are on your own, as long as the work gets done, come and go as you please..." Now, I don't know if this is the way upper management feels, but this is the feeling I got.

I felt there was a great deal of interaction between co-workers during the work day. A number of my brother's colleagues stopped by to visit him and ask how his weekend was. One of his colleagues spent 2 hours sitting in his office just "chewing the fat" with us. For lunch, a number of the employees left together and went downtown to eat. When I went with my brother and a few others to lunch, not once did they discuss work issues. Their philosophy was "when at work, talk work." When outside of work, "don't talk work."

Employee relations didn't seem to be a problem with any of the people I observed. I would hear a few gripes about another colleague, but that was because of a project that needed to be completed by a certain time. I found that deadlines were the topic of conversation at work. Service Planning, the department that creates bus schedules, seemed very tense and uptight all the time. This could be because of the new schedules that need to be completed fairly soon.

I felt that Metro Transit had a much warmer work environment than that of Target's. Although it seemed like Transit's biggest employee relation's issues were deadlines, everyone seemed to work together to get things done.

A number of Transit people do smoke. I was surprised at the number of times people would go outside to smoke. I could almost set my clock by it. As I visited with a number of non-smokers, they said how frustrating it is seeing people, especially during the winter time, always going out for smoke breaks. In an 8 hour day, it is not uncommon for people to go out 8 times a day. During the winter, by the time people get their coats on, go outside for a smoke and return, 15 minutes is up...that's two hours a day that people are outside smoking. After I raised this issue to a few non-smokers, they did say how much they disliked the fact that people get away with smoking so much

during work. A few people even said they would love to only have to work 6 hours a day and not take any breaks! Overall, Metro Transit's actual culture seemed to be much more relaxed and casual than Target's. I found people weren't as stressed out about getting things completed. As for the company itself, everyone loved working for the company and was satisfied with where they are at. "There is always something for us to do. We work together to accomplish our goals. Metro Transit is a great company to work for and I love that what I do is important to so many millions of people who utilize our service."

Ethnographic Narrative/ Findings/ Results:

After my research was completed and I began analyzing my data, I found that my quantitative data surpassed my qualitative data by far. My research questions didn't hit at the major points of the workplace culture and why people work where they do. Several hours later after re-conducting some of my interview questions, I came up with what I needed. The following findings were gathered from personal interviews I had with 18 interviewees. Since my quantitative data is still very valuable, I will reference them throughout the narrative. For the purpose of organization and clarity, I will reveal the dynamics within Target Corporation first and then move into Metro Transit. In the end, I will compare the two organizations and point out the major differences within each organization's workplace culture.

When asked why they chose Target Corporation as a place of employment, I had varying answers from all 6 subjects at Target.

Target

My first interviewee(1T) has worked for Target for only two years, but chose to work at Target because of "Target's flexible hours, good pay and location." "Having a son and going to school full-time, I needed a job where I could pick my schedule and hours, yet maintain a healthy wage." Interviewee (2T) chose Target because "at the time, I was a day-care provider and watched television quite a bit. I saw an add on television about working for Target and the benefits they offered." "I was tired of being a stay at home mom (15 years) and wanted a change of pace." "Target had everything to offer to me, so that is why I applied." (3T): "I had worked in several jobs prior to my current one. The companies I had worked for were never very stable. I wanted a job where I knew I would have stability. Through stability (financial), I felt comfortable applying with Target because of their strong history." "Without an education, I also had the opportunity to move up within the company, something Target offers, without needing an education." (4T): "I have

shopped at Target for many years. It seems that I can never walk in the store without walking out of there under \$100.00. The company seemed to be doing well while I was just randomly looking for a new job. I figured the Target discount of 10% would really help me out.” “I had heard great comments from other people that Target was a strong, stable company to work for...so I applied.” Interviewee (5T) has worked in her current position for 7 years. Recollecting why she chose Target is a little vague to her. “After being in Finance for 8 years prior to Target, with no possibility of advancement, I knew I wanted a change. The company I previously worked for was unstable and I knew I should leave before getting canned.” “I knew that Target had an opening in their Finance department and so I applied. Target advertised their jobs as being flexible, stable and good pay. Those are the things that make a company a good company.” (6T): “As a college student, I needed a company that would be flexible and a fun atmosphere to work for.” “Prior to applying at Target, I had interviewed at several other places for weekend employment. After seeing what went on and the little interaction between employees, I knew those companies weren’t for me. I got a tour of where I would be working prior to being hired. This really gave me a feel for what I would be doing and who I would be working with. That is why I chose Target.”

Metro Transit

I asked Metro Transit (MT) employees the same question. (1MT): “I have been in the business for many years now. I chose Metro Transit because of the lack of Service Planning they had. My services would have and have benefited them greatly. I chose Metro Transit because of their need for help.” (2MT): “Metro Transit has a long history of good service providing millions of people with bus rides. I have had a passion for the industry and have lived in Minneapolis for a number of years. When you have a passion for something like Transit, your options for other jobs within one city are very limited. Transit is a very stable organization with great benefits. I had heard in the past that Transit valued their employees and gave them a sense of being...that is what I was looking for in a company.” (3MT): “I have a passion for what I do. My wife and I live in Minneapolis and Metro Transit was the best organization that would fulfill my passion to work in the public sector of transit.” (4MT): I have worked for Metro Transit for nearly 15 years. I don’t recall exactly why I chose Transit in the first place. I do remember, though, that I would ride the bus quite frequently when I was younger. The bus drivers were always friendly to me. I would see recruiting signs on the bus looking for bus drivers. My education was framed at service development. I knew the organization was strong and healthy. I wanted to work for a company that

everyone knew about. What better organization to work for than one that millions of people know about...the Metro Transit.” (6MT): I had always wanted to work in the public sector of transit. Growing up and staying in Minneapolis, the MTC was my only option.” (7MT): “ I graduated from school a few years ago. I have always had an interest in the mass transit industry. I had an internship with Metro Transit my Senior year of college. The organization is very well structured and that is why I applied to work for Metro Transit. I have looked at many other large city transit systems, however, Metro Transit was a developing transit system that would work with me as I was getting my feet wet.” (8MT): “Metro Transit had some really good wages to offer me. I worked in another organization similar to Metro Transit. I was really pleased with the organization and the people after coming here for an interview.” (9MT): “I chose Metro Transit because they were the only ones to hire me for an internship. I didn’t know much about the company before applying but it’s been pretty cool working here. I guess I just chose Metro Transit because they’re the ones that hired me!” (10MT): “I had several friends who worked for Metro Transit that raved about the company. I decided to look into it and found that Metro Transit was the organization I was looking for. I was fresh out of school and needed a job. My background was fitting for the position. I guess I chose Metro Transit through word-of-mouth and my first lasting impressions.” (11MT): “I worked for the MTA in Houston for only seven months. I didn’t care for the position but wanted to stay in Transit. I decided looking elsewhere and Metro Transit had a clean, healthy environment, a great pay structure and advancement opportunities, so that is why I chose Metro Transit.” (12MT): “I chose Metro Transit because of their advancement opportunities. I had always seen commercials on television for bus drivers. It seemed like they offered a competitive wage and were very flexible.”

After asking all 18 subjects different questions relating to different characteristics about themselves and their occupation, I defined workplace culture to them “as the behaviors and belief characteristics of a particular group. Workplace culture is the sum of the formal and informal behaviors that an organization adopts as their way of doing business.” I asked them to describe to me their experiences and how they feel they fit into Target’s and Metro Transit’s workplace cultures.

Target

(1T) “Target’s culture is a very friendly and open atmosphere. I enjoy working for them because of their great benefits and the interactions I have with my co-workers. I feel that because Target is so large, I don’t really directly effect the company as a whole. I know my peers see what I do and appreciate that.” (2T) “I feel very much like a part of a very large community within a community. I

enjoy doing things with my colleagues at work. I wish we would do a few more things outside of work. I feel valued in what I do.” (3T): “Does Target have a culture? To me, I don’t really see any striking characteristics about this company. In many ways, it just seems like an uncollective effort to get the job done. The Fast, Fun and Friendly atmosphere has no direct reflection on the culture itself. I thought individuals within cultures usually work together.” (4T): “Within Target’s culture, I can easily say we are a Fast, Fun and Friendly company. I’ve worked here for only a few years, but this company almost feels like home to me. When I shop at a Target store, I see the same attitudes in the store clerks as I do in the office. We are a Fast, Fun and Friendly environment.” (5T): “Over the last seven years, I have seen Target change in many ways. Right now, I feel as much a part of the organization as I ever have. I love my job and the company itself. We work hard for one another and work together to get jobs done. No one is better than anyone else and all of our work is recognized. Our great team cards (cards given out to anyone doing a good deed) are a way of acknowledging others’ work. I feel very much a part of this culture. We are ‘all for one and one for all.’” (6T): “I guess if I am to look at the formal and informal behaviors within Target, I would say that Target’s workplace culture is a Fast, fun and friendly one. Our culture is made up of many diverse employees who all have one mission...to satisfy millions of peoples wants and needs. I feel privileged to work for the “bulls-eye” company. We are everywhere. When I think about a culture, I think demographically to one particular area. When looking at Target, our culture is spread out all over the country!”

Metro Transit

(1MT): “I never really thought of Metro Transit as having a culture. Rather, I’ve thought of it as many cultures making up an organization. Truly though, it seems like we all work for the same goals and objectives...why can’t we be many organizations within a culture...a group of people with individual ideas and diverse characteristics.” (2MT): “As the ---- -----, I feel I play a very important role in Transit’s system. I believe that we all play important roles in our service to the people. I think it is very rare for an accomplishment to go unnoticed.” (3MT): “Metro Transit has a very strong, individualistic culture. Most people are driven to accomplish things on their own. Most people I know don’t wait around for someone to ask them to do something, they find things on their own. I know my work is valued around the office. We work together which is very important.” (4MT): “No comment” (5MT): “I see Metro Transit as having a very strong culture. We are a very healthy organization which is reflected not only in the office but out on the streets as well. Our ethical behaviors in the workplace represent who we

really are out on the streets in Minneapolis. I feel like a big part of Transit's culture. Our work relations don't stop at 5:00 at the end of the day. When looking at other "cultures," people don't just live in their cultures for a few hours a day, they continue on as long as they are a part of that culture. I AM a part of the Metro Transit culture." (6MT): "Metro Transit's culture is very unique. We behave in a very professional manner when at work and outside of work. Seeing that our culture can be viewed by so many people, we strive to do our best when presenting ourselves." (7MT): "Workplace culture is not only the formal and informal behaviors a workplace adopts, but rather it is also the people who make up the culture. I feel that it is the people who mold the behaviors that the companies adopt, which then become the culture of the company. My experiences thus far have been very positive. I work hard, have fun and enjoy what I do for this organization." (8MT) and (9MT) chose not to answer this question. (10MT): "I feel like I fit perfectly into Metro Transit's culture. I am diverse, just as everyone is. I have a strong work ethic just like Metro Transit's culture and behavior is." (11MT): "Metro Transit is valued in the public eye as well as the private eye. We do what we need to in order to satisfy our customers. Are dedicated behaviors to the public is what we stand for. I feel I fit in to this culture very well. My working conditions are favorable and that's what I look for in an organization and a culture." (12MT): "My position with Metro Transit is valued by most all of my co-workers. Taking pride in what I do is what Transit stands for. Sometimes, I feel like I initiated Metro Transits culture. I think they got their culture from me!!"

Finally, I asked my subjects "what motivates you to show up to work every day and what or who keeps you with the company you are currently with?"

Target

(1T): "The people I work with motivate me to show up to work everyday. If I didn't have the great people I work with, I probably wouldn't stay with Target." (2T): "The challenge of my job. It's not always the same thing to do each day. The people I work with. They all motivate me to show up to work every day." (3T): "Bill, bills, and more bills. Family responsibilities are the only thing keeping me with Target." (4T): "Money is what motivates me to show up to work every day." (5T): "Responsibility to the family, Accountability on my behalf and respect for those I work around are what motivate me to show up to work every day and are what keep me with Target." (6T): "Money of course is a motivating factor for me... I guess the flexibility and thought of having a job that changes every day is what keeps me with Target. I love the benefits and Target treats me with respect. The least thing I can do for them is show up and do my best."

Metro Transit

(1MT): “The challenge of serving the public is what motivates me to show up to work every day. The fact that what I do has such an impact on the city of Minneapolis is overwhelming. I love what I do and that’s what keeps me with Transit.” (2MT): “I like my job. I like the diversity of our employees and customers. I like new challenges and opportunities to think outside of the box. I think it’s important for me to lead by example, which in this business is reliability and attendance. I like to make the employees laugh and interact with them so I got to see them to do so.” (3MT): “I have a family to support and ultimately this is what motivates me to show up to work every day. I love what I do and that’s why I stay with Transit.” (4MT): “The pride I have in what I do is what motivates me to show up to work every day. The respect I get from colleagues and the atmosphere I work in is what keeps me with the Metro Transit.” (5MT): “I have pride in workmanship.” (6MT): “I like my job and I believe in our product. This is what motivates me to show up to work every day and why I stay with Metro Transit.” (7MT): “Knowing there is a job to be done, that I enjoy for the most part, and being successful at that job is what motivates me and keeps me with Metro Transit.” (8MT): “I like who I work with...very cohesive team.” (9MT): “The idea that this job will put me in the right direction for my next job and money are the two motivating factors. I stay here for the money...until I can find another better paying job.” (10MT): “I have pride in what I do and enjoy the job that I do. Coming in to work is satisfying to me. (11MT): “Knowing I do make a difference in the performance of my job and see results is what motivates me and keeps me with Metro Transit.” (12MT): “Money motivates me to stay with Metro Transit.”

Summary and Conclusion.

As you can see, there are some major differences in the behaviors and attitudes of those individuals who work for Target compared to those who work for Metro Transit. The three main questions I asked are questions I would like answered from current employees regarding the companies they work for. What Target and Metro Transit publicly publish and say to recruit members varies from those ideas of individuals within the workplace. I have come to realize that individual personalities also play a great role in workplace culture. Those who are just working a “job,” tended to have a negative attitude about the company they worked for. Individuals from Metro Transit, where the majority of them were executing a passion, enjoyed where they worked and had a much more positive outlook on the environment they were working in.

Do organizations create the “workplace culture” in which individuals work

OR do individuals create “workplace culture” that organizations adopt? Looking at the behaviors and attitudes that make up “workplace culture” within Target, I feel that the organization itself has created a culture in which the individuals within that culture are going against what Target wants to represent to the public. These individual’s personalities and work ethics are working against what Target has created for them. For Metro Transit, I feel that the individuals are what created the organization’s workplace culture. Their positive attitudes, behaviors and ethics create Transit’s culture and how they want to be seen and viewed to the public.

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www.metrotransit.org

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Appendix A. Interview Questions

Workplace Culture

Interview questionnaire

Age_____

Highest Education_____ (Be specific)

Name of Company_____

Job occupation_____

What exactly does your job entail you to do?

What are your hours?

Do you work weekends?

How long have you been in your current position? _____

What was the last job you held?

For how long?

What are the three most important qualities you look for in a job when seeking new employment?

a)

b)

c)

What two characteristics of a company do you steer away from?

a)

b)

How important are company benefits to you?

Currently, which benefit do you value and utilize the most? Why?

If this benefit was taken away from you, would you consider leaving the company?

How influential is your wage/salary in keeping you with this company?

If your wages/salary were cut, would you consider leaving the company?

What is more important to you...making more money or enjoying what you do?

Do you consider this occupation to be a job or an execution of a passion?

Are you happy where you are at?

Salary/Wages?

Job satisfaction?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how stressful do you feel your current job is? (One being low stress, 10 being high stress) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What factors contribute to your stress level at work?

What kind of interactions do you have with your co-workers/colleagues? Do you do things together, either at work or outside of work?

Is maintaining a healthy relationship with your co-workers important to you?

If you could change three things about your current job, what would they be?

- a)
- b)
- c)

If you could change three things about the company you work for, what would they be?

- a)
- b)
- c)

How much contact do you have with your direct supervisor? Hourly/daily/monthly (Describe in detail)

Would you like to change the amount of interaction you have with your supervisor?

When problems arise, do you feel like you can talk openly to your supervisor about

Work Issues?

Personal issues?

Does your company keep you informed of what's going on around you...goals/objectives within the organization?

Is this important to you?

Finally, what motivates you to show up to work every day and why do you stay with the company you are currently with?