

Helping Employee Thrive

The effects of managers and their leadership behaviors

Joyce E. Bono

(and many wonderful colleagues at U. Iowa and U. Minnesota)

Center for Human Resources and Labor Studies

University of Minnesota

April 28, 2008

What motivates my research

> **Employee Thriving**

- > Improving, growing, or succeeding steadily:
flourishing, prospering
 - Sense of Meaningful work
 - Internally (autonomously) motivated
 - Pursuing goals that match values and interests
 - Work relationships are positive and supportive
 - » Job satisfaction
 - Physical and psychosocial health

> **Fundamental Human Need for Autonomy, Competence, Relatedness**

- Desire to “make a difference”

What has NOT motivated my research, but matters

- > Employee Job Performance
- > Corporate Profitability

These are topics I hope we can talk about in our discussion

Today . . .

- > Briefly, look at stable differences between individuals in thriving
- > More extensively, review a series of studies that link managers behaviors to employee thriving
- > Discuss (all of us)
 - > What is the business case for thriving employees
 - > How can we build an MBA curriculum that helps future managers nurture and support employee thriving
 - > How can we build – in our organizations – cultures, policies and practices that support employee thriving

What I have become convinced of . . .

> **Compelling evidence**

- > Individuals vary in the extent to which they “thrive” at work.
- > Inspiring (transformational) leaders can aid employee thriving
- > Incivility in the environment (abusive supervision) can reduce employee thriving.

Personality

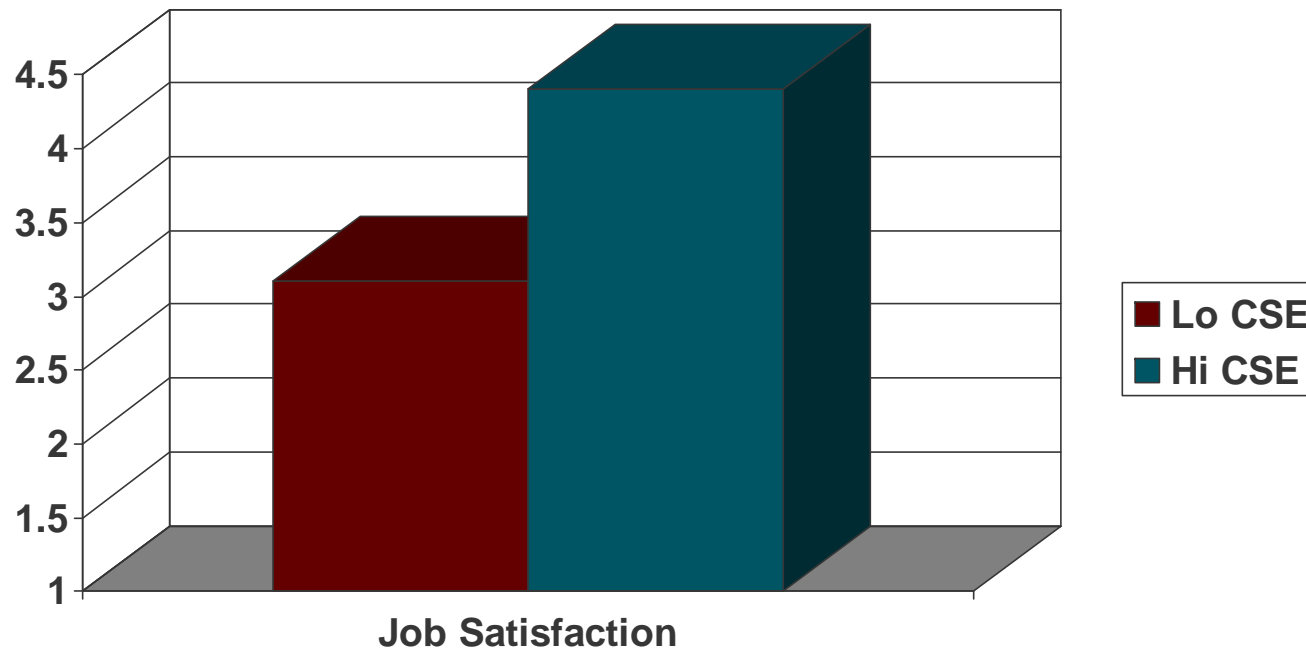
Core Self-evaluations

(self-esteem, self-efficacy, emotional stability)

Extent to which individuals evaluate themselves positively

- feel they are worthy
- believe they can accomplish goals
- feel they have control of some outcomes
- generally positive outlook on life

Core Self-Evals & Job Sat



1 – 5 scale

Most days I am enthusiastic about my work.

Each day at work seems like it will never end (R).

I find real enjoyment in my work.

Why/How does CSE → Job Sat

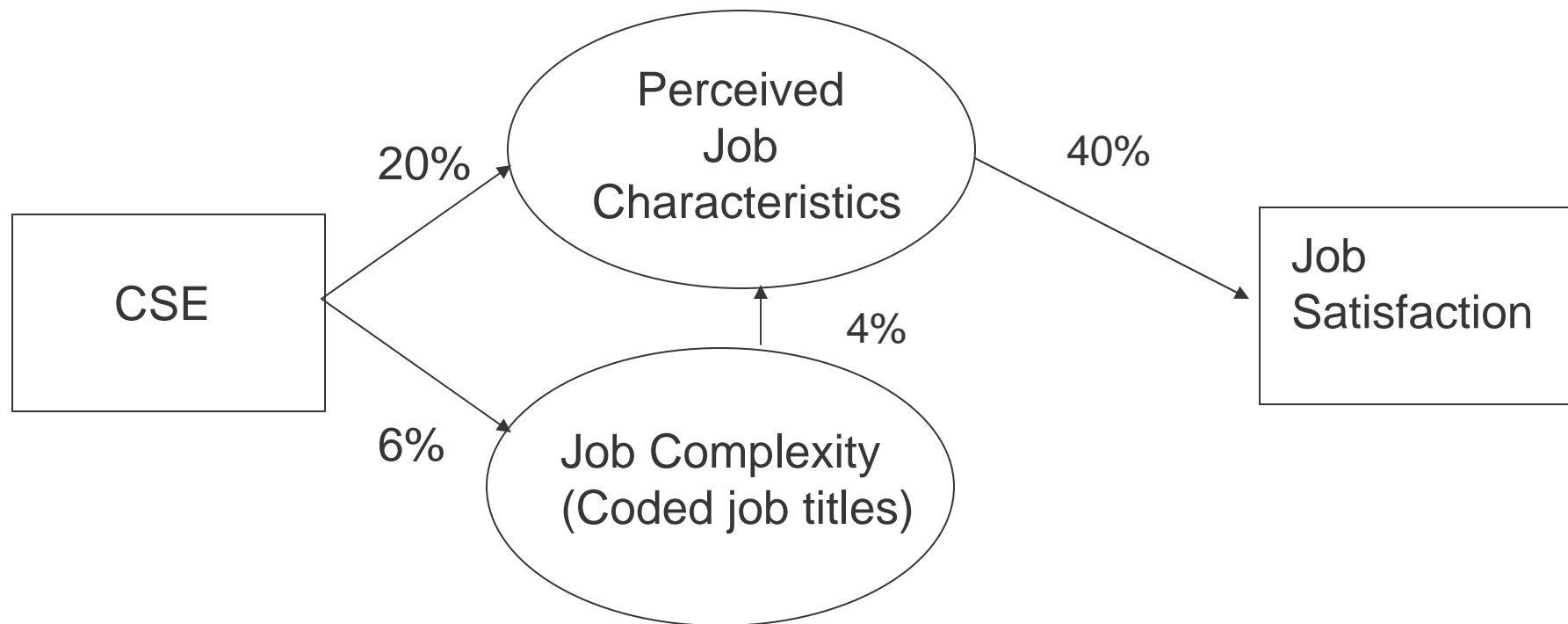
- > Dispositionally Polly Anna?
 - > Rose colored view of the world

- > Different behaviors and actions at work that lead to better jobs (something to be happy about)?
 - > More opportunities or promotions because of self-confidence

- > Different perceptions of the same job . . .
 - > Boring task made more interesting (stuffing envelopes)

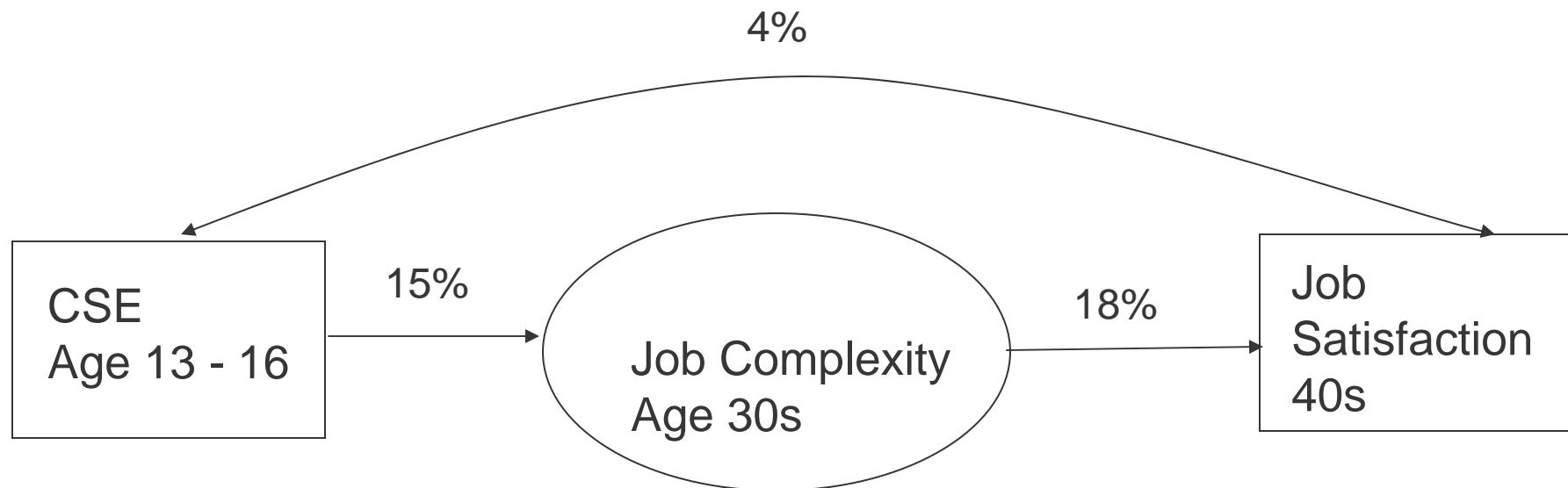
- > Goal Attainment
 - > CSE → set goals and work hard → attain goals → job satisfaction

Do people with Hi CSE get (or create) more interesting jobs??



Midwestern working adult sample

Do people with Hi CSE get (or create) more interesting jobs??



- 15% of the differences in people aged 41 – 50 could be explained by their personality at age 13 – 16.
- This was due – in part -- to a better job – higher in task significance and identify, challenge, meaningfulness

CSE and Autonomous Motivation

We asked more than 1000 workers about their work goals and WHY they pursued those goals

Hi CSE individuals set more self-concordant work goals (they were autonomously motivated)

- > I pursue this goal because I really believe it is an important goal to have”
- > I pursue this goal because of the fun and enjoyment it provides”

VS

- > “I pursue this goal because I would feel guilty, anxious, or ashamed if I did not”
- > “I pursue this goal because somebody else wants me to or because the situation demands it”

Effects of Autonomous Motivation

(vs. controlled motivation)

Thriving!!

- > Increased goal effort
- > Increased goal attainment
- > Increased satisfaction with goal attainment
- > Increased job satisfaction
- > Increased life satisfaction
- > Improved psychological well-being

What I have become convinced of -- through my own research.

Compelling evidence

- > Individuals vary in the extent to which they “thrive” at work.
 - Create or attain more interesting work
 - Set and pursue work goals that are more meaningful to them

BUT, there is lots of room for environmental impact
so I focused on managerial behavior

Managers and their (leadership) behavior.

Inspiring (transformational) leaders influence

1. sense of important and meaningful work
2. autonomous motivation
3. employee mood (happiness, optimism)
 - These lead to work enjoyment (job satisfaction).

Abusive leaders (negative, disrespectful) influence

4. employee health (outside of work)

Transformational (inspiring, visionary) leadership

#1 has inspiring vision and is optimistic about achieving it

Small “v” vision

Optimism (vs. enthusiasm)

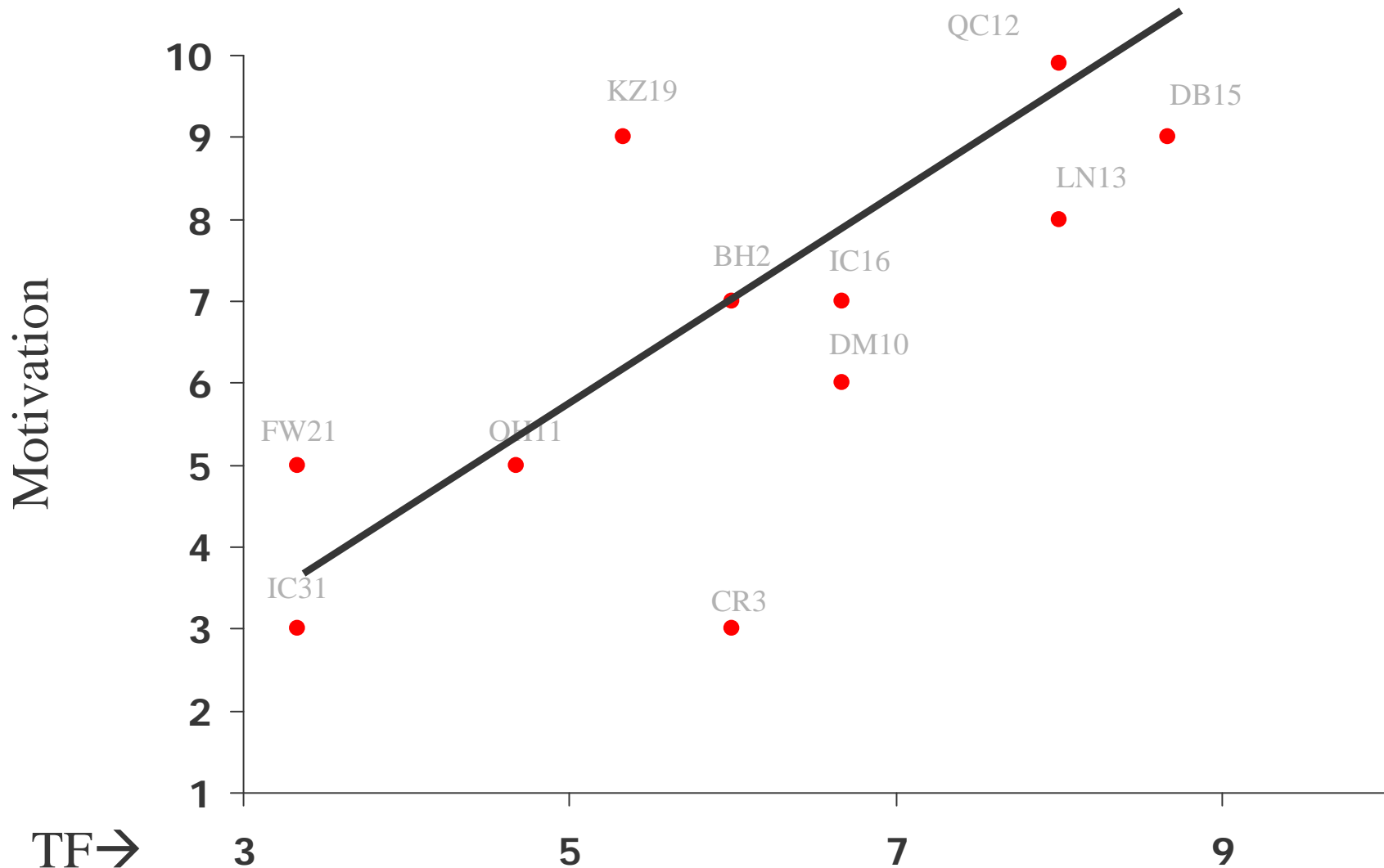
#2 stimulates divergent, creative and engaged thinking and participation

#3 has and shows concern for employees as individuals’, with a focus on supporting their growth and development.

Duh . . . employee like these behaviors
from their boss (74% accurate)

Satisfaction w/ Leader	High	<p>13%</p> <p>24/181</p>	<p>42%</p> <p>76/181</p>
	Low	<p>32%</p> <p>58/181</p>	<p>13%</p> <p>23/181</p>
		Low	High
		Transformational Leadership Score	

Duh . . . employee say they work harder for these behaviors from their boss



3 Ways that Managers affect Thriving

- > Creating a sense of important and meaningful work
- > Supporting autonomous motivation
- > Influencing employee mood states

Sense of important and meaningful work

- The job gives me considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do the work.
- The job itself is *not* very significant or important in the broader scheme of things. (r)
- The job provides me the chance to completely finish the pieces of work I begin.
- This job is one where a lot of other people can be affected by how well the work gets done.

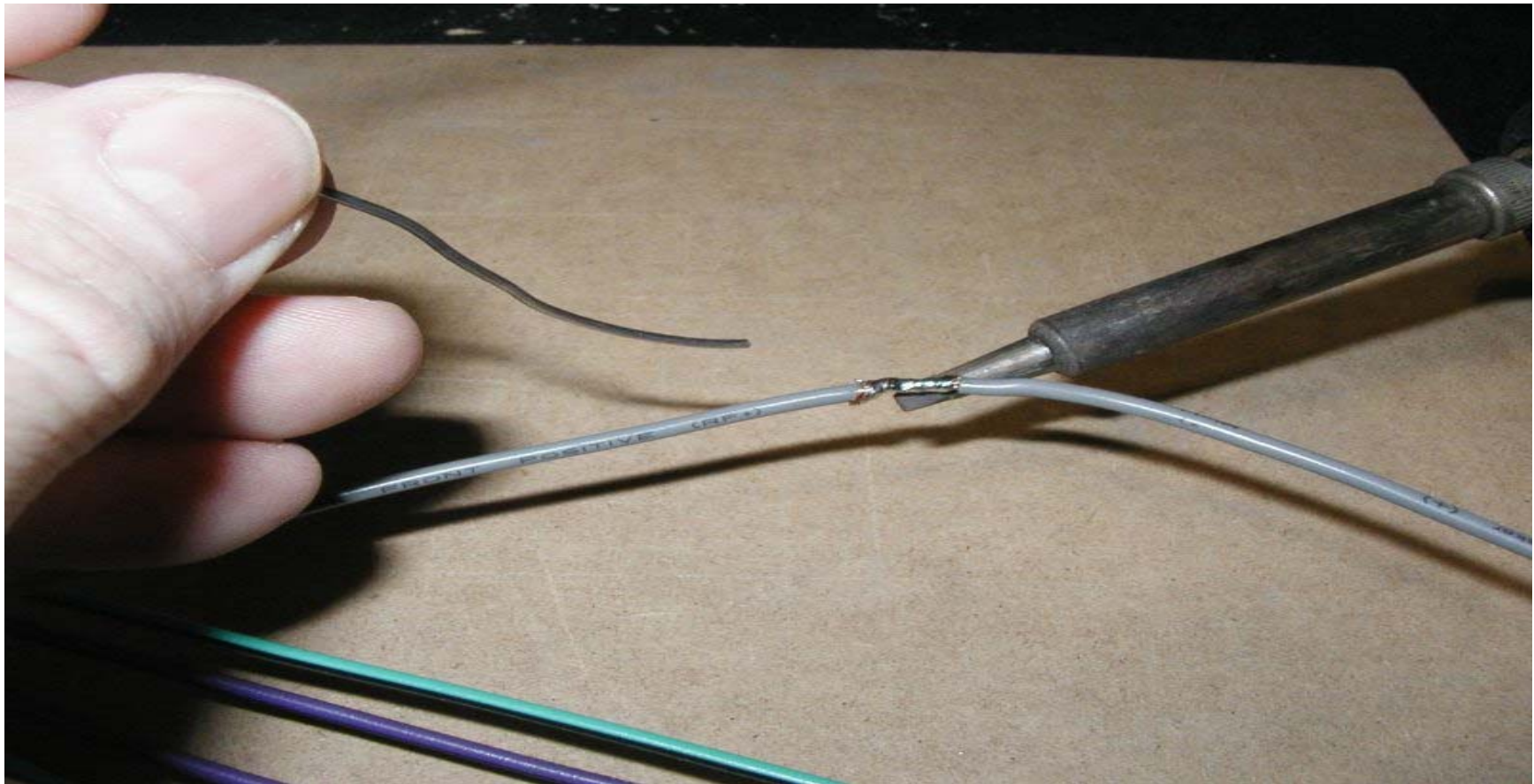
Do managers' leadership behaviors influence the way employees think about their work??

Line (manufacturing) employees of large aerospace manufacturer.

Internet survey.

- > Team members reported on managers' behavior.
- > Individuals reported on their job perceptions

Production Assistant's Job



Are managers' behaviors (transformational leadership) related to employees' perceptions of their jobs??

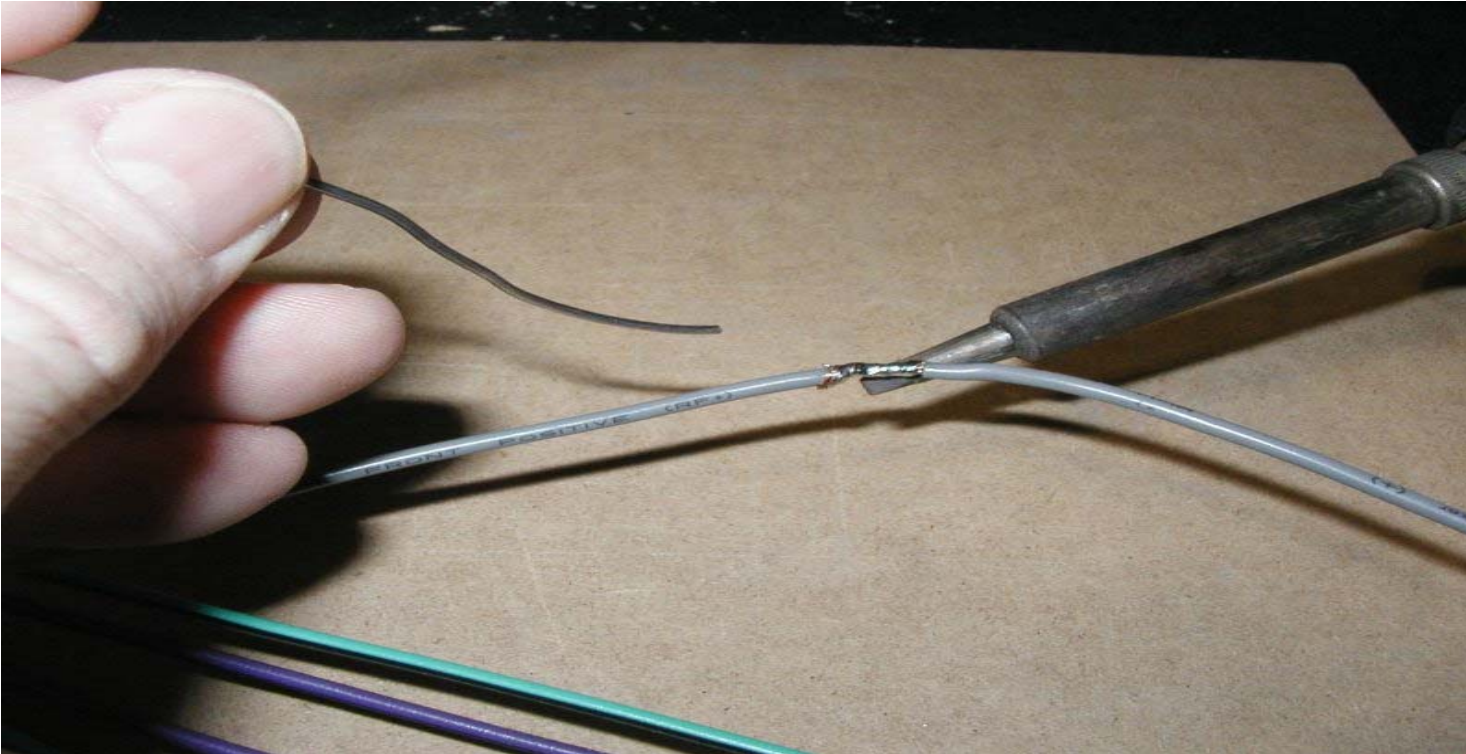
69 Production Associates

- > Same job
- > Same company

15% of differences between people in perceptions of the job explained by leader behavior

- > Managers with a vision and enthusiasm, who talk about the value of the work and encourage employees to think about their jobs have employees who feel their jobs matter.

Is this job really more meaningful?

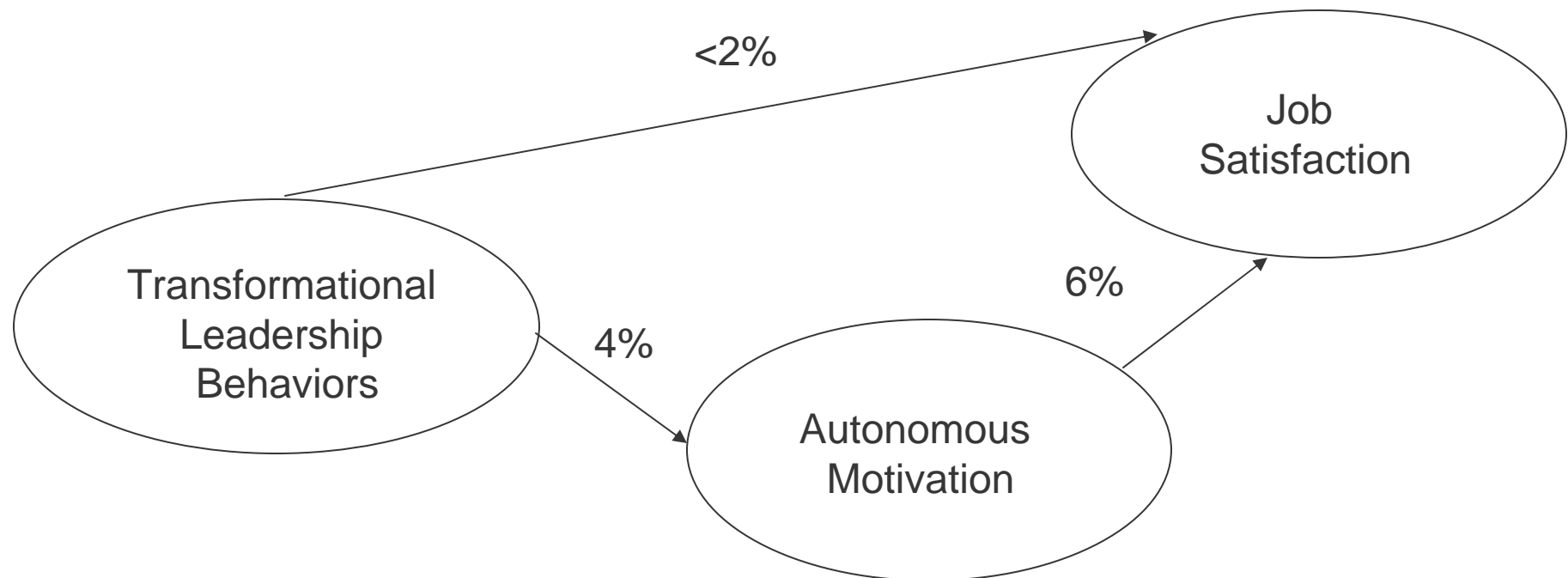


> http://metacafe.com/watch/338511/plane_crash

Supporting Autonomous Motivation: A field study

- > 954 employees; 247 leaders; 2 Fortune 500, several small organizations
- > Web-based survey
- > Time 1
 - > Leaders' Transformational behaviors
 - > Employee goals and WHY
 - I pursue this goal because I really believe it is an important goal to have"
 - I pursue this goal because of the fun and enjoyment it provides
- > Time 2 – 60 days later
 - > Job satisfaction

Leadership, Autonomous Motivation, Job Satisfaction

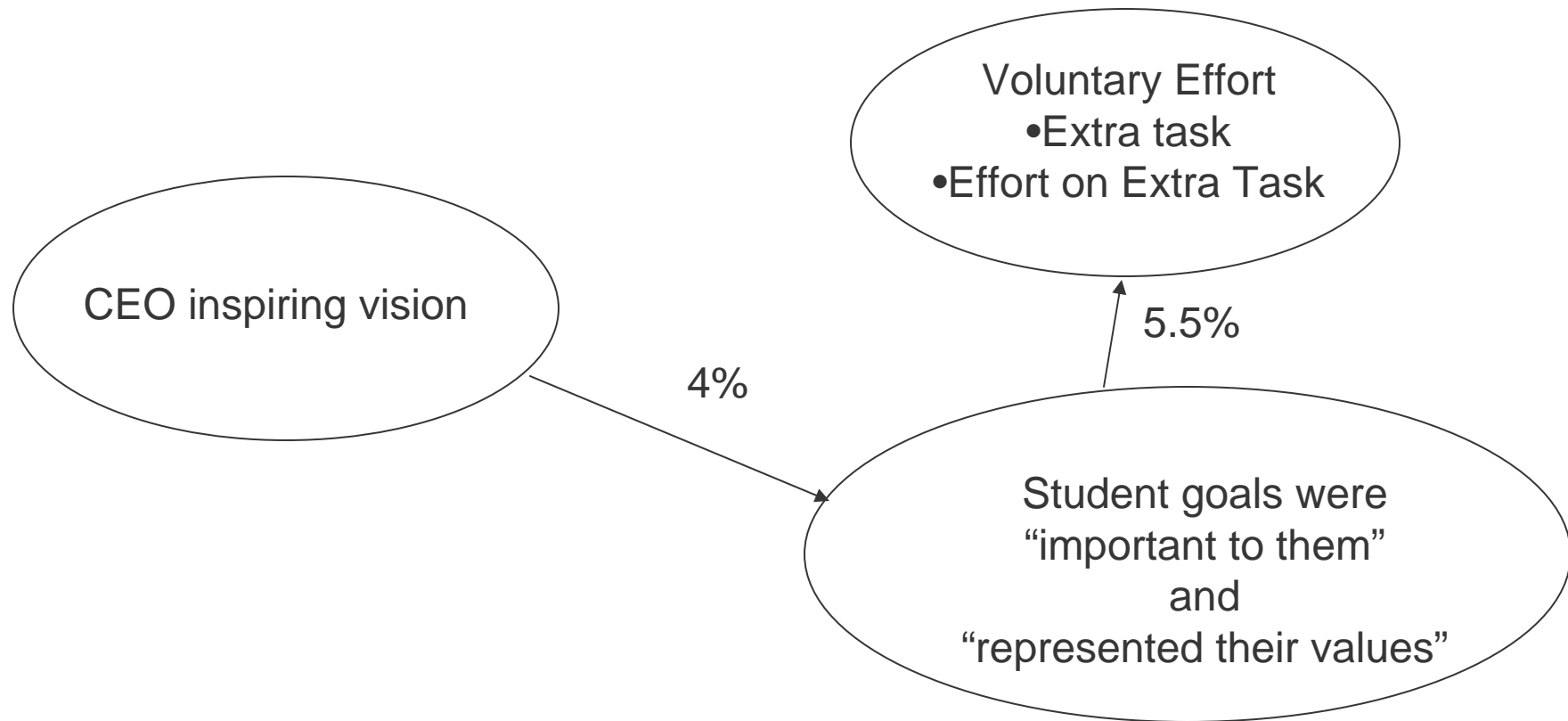


Does the leader really CAUSE this reaction??

Experimental study

- > 162 management undergraduates
- > Computer business simulation
 - > New college town restaurant
 - > Hired actor to be CEO of new restaurant - 6 minute speech
 - Vision and information VS information
- > Tasks
 - Accuracy (find mistakes in menu)
 - Creativity (ideas for names and logo for restaurant)
 - Extra Effort
- > Goals
 - Set goals for the task
 - Reasons for that goal -- Autonomous Motivation

Do managers' behaviors (transformational leadership) CAUSE employee internal (autonomous) motivation and voluntary effort??



Influencing Employee Mood

- > Is transformational leadership associated with the expression of positive emotions (e.g., optimism, enthusiasm)
- > Do these expression of positive emotions influence employee moods/emotions?

Are managers who get high ratings of transformational leadership really more optimistic?

- > MBA students
 - > Ratings of leadership behaviors at work – 360
 - > Influence speech on first day of leadership class
 - Videotaped
- > Community Leadership Program Participants
 - > Ratings of leadership behaviors at work – 360
 - > Written vision statements for “their own work group”

Do effective leaders express more positive emotions?

- > Observers rated speeches of MBA students
 - > Positive correlation between transformational leadership ratings and expression of optimism and enthusiasm
- > Transcribed speeches submitted to computer program that counted positive words
 - > Managers who used transformational leadership behaviors at work used a higher % of positive words
- > Vision statements rated by MBA students
 - > Positive correlation between TF and optimism ratings
- > Vision statement submitted to computer program
 - > Managers who used transformational leadership behaviors at work used a higher % of positive words

Do leaders expressions influence employee mood?

- > Students watched videotapes (hi and low positive emotional expressions)
 - > Positive mood was significantly higher when the leader use positive emotions

Do manager's behaviors systematically affect employee emotional states - in the real world?

Conducted leadership assessment for health care organization.

- > Ambulatory health care clinics
 - 125 managers; 800ish employees
- > All employees reported on supervisors' leadership behavior
 - 86% response rate
 - Managers received a feedback report

2 months later: randomly selected non-management employees invited to participate in experience sampling study.

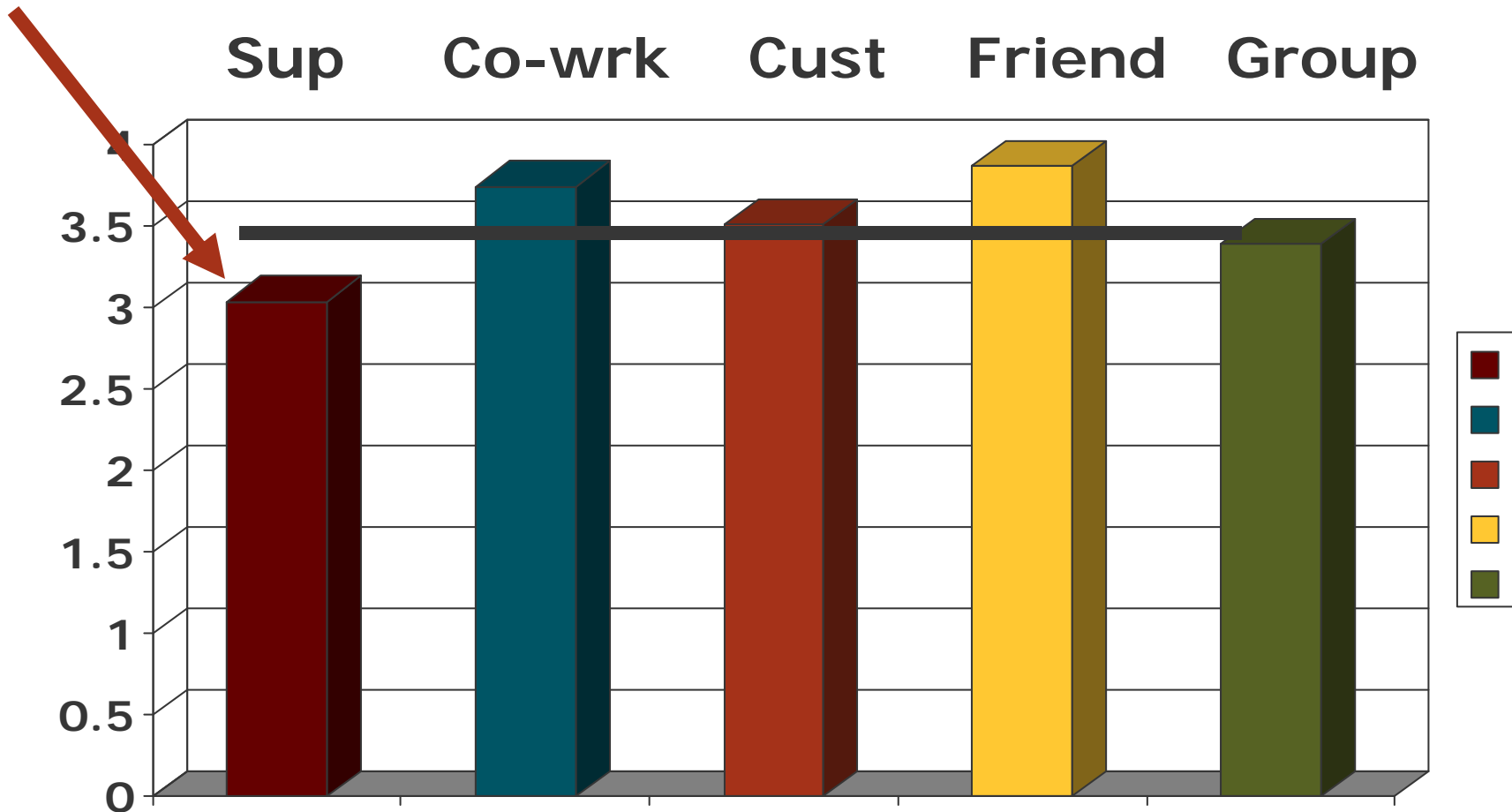
- > 73 invited, 57 agreed, good data from 54
- > Jobs: Full range of health care – nursing to billing to lab tech to HR (93% female)

Experience Sampling Period

- > 2 weeks, 4 signals a day
 - Who were you interacting with when the signal sounded?
 - At this moment: Emotions
 - Positive Affect: Happy, Enthusiastic, Optimistic
 - Negative Affect: Irritation, Anxiety, Anger

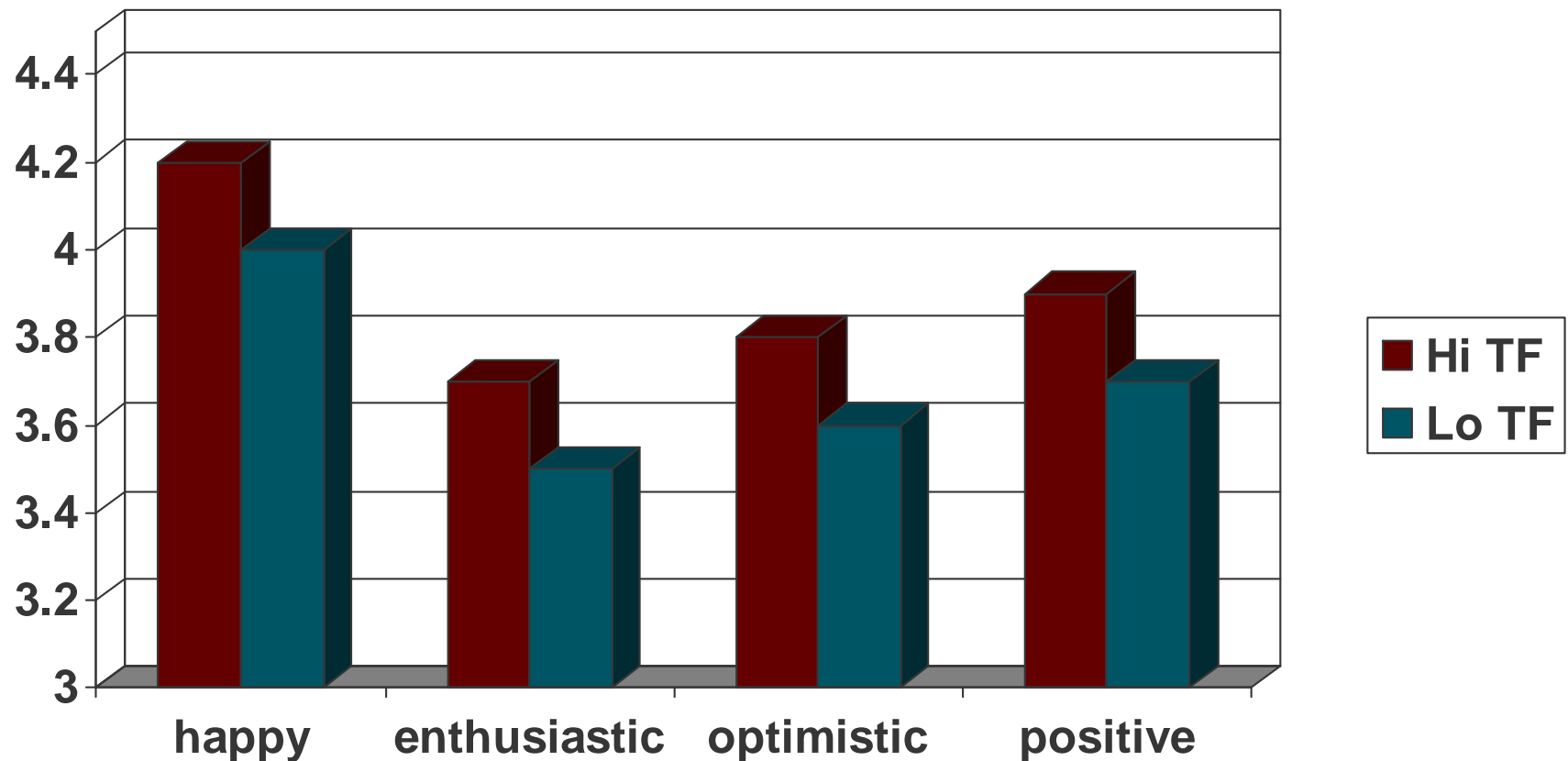
- > Responses
 - 93% of signals during the day (1983 total responses)
 - 52% were at work with someone when the signal sounded (N=889)

Positive Emotions (in the moment)



*** Significant differences across groups*

Employees emotions over a two week period – randomly sampled 4 times daily



The flip side . . .

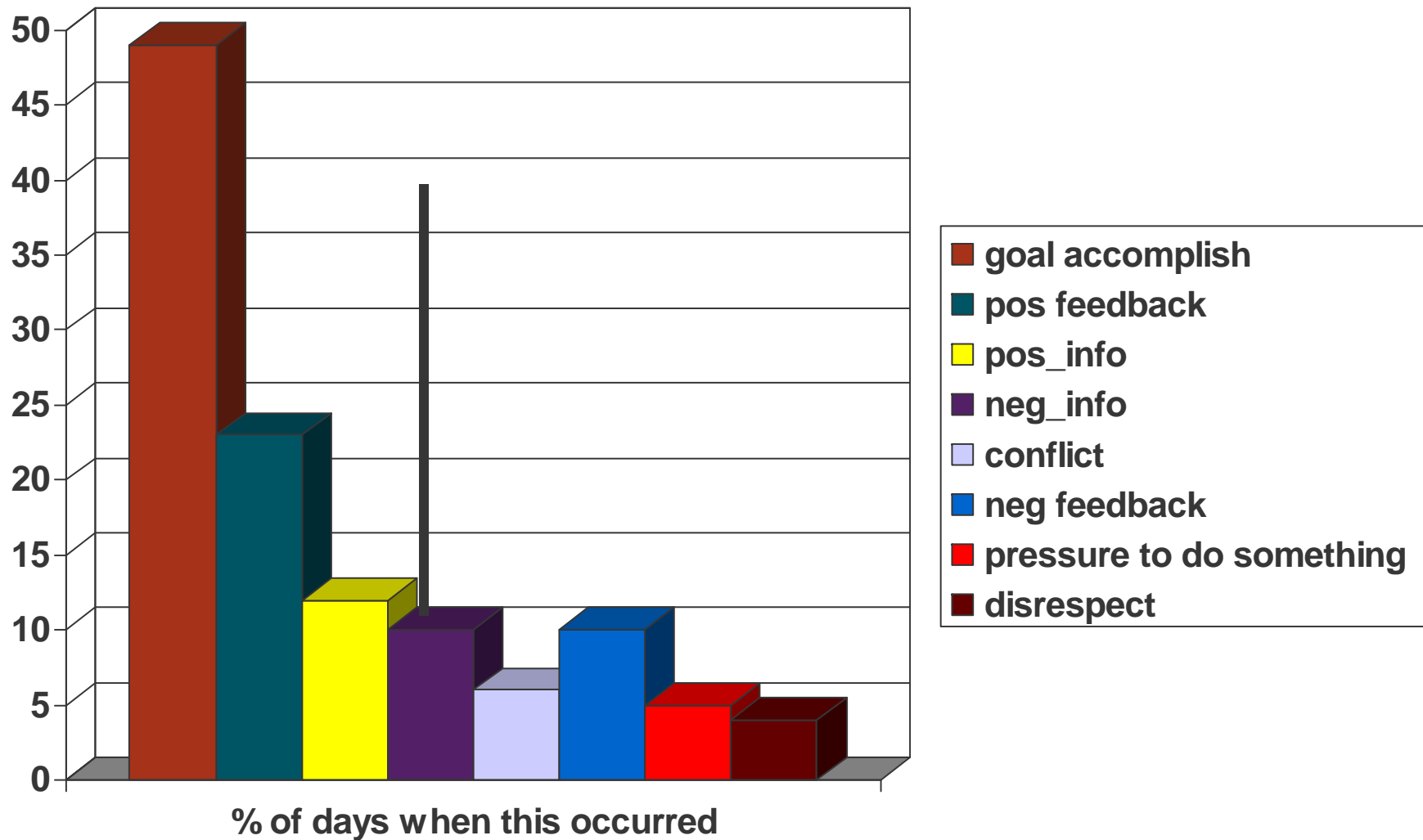
Abusive Supervision

- > Affects the types of experiences employees have at work
- > Indirectly influences employees physical and mental health

Work Experiences and Employee Health

- > 70 Workers – twice daily internet surveys for two weeks
- > Background survey
 - Abusive Supervision
- > Twice daily web-based surveys at work
 - Positive events (praise, goal accomplish)
 - Negative events (criticism, conflict, pressure)
- > Bedtime survey about health
 - Rumination, difficulty concentrating, spinning head
 - Headaches, neck pain, muscle tension, stomach ache

Positive and Negative Events



Effects of work events on health

- > Physical Health
 - > Positive work events REDUCE headaches and muscle tension
 - > Negative work events not related to headaches and muscle tension
- > Mental Health
 - > Negative events INCREASE stress, rumination, difficulty concentrating, difficulty switching-off
 - > Positive work events not related to stress, rumination, difficulty concentration

The role of managerial behaviors

- > Abusive supervision is associated with FEWER positive work events
- > General incivility in the workplace is associated with FEWER positive work events
- > Neither were associated with more negative work events.

Manager behaviors (abusive) → FEWER positive work events → MORE headaches, stomach aches, and muscle tension

Compelling evidence

- > Individuals vary in the extent to which they “thrive” at work.
 - Create or attain more interesting work
 - Set and pursue work goals that are more meaningful to them

- > Inspiring (transformational) leaders can aid employee thriving
 - Increased autonomous motivation
 - Increased experience of positive emotional states
 - Create or attain more interesting work
 - Work deemed more meaningful

- > Incivility in the environment (abusive supervision) can reduce employee thriving.
 - Reduced positive work events
 - Increased physical health complaints after work

Like Dick Cheney, when told that a large proportion of Americans oppose the war in Iraq, we must ask this question . . .



White House photo by David Bohrer

SO?

Implications

1. We should accept – that some employees will be more likely to thrive than others.

2. But, we should also recognize that managers behaviors CAN facilitate employee thriving. Subtle changes in managers behavior (optimism, vision, concern for employees, rude and disrespectful behavior) can have an important influence on employee thriving.
 1. Sense of important and meaningful work
 2. Autonomous Motivation
 3. Positive Mood and Emotions
 4. Positive Work Experiences

3. Which lead to increased Job Satisfaction and Improved Employee Health

Food for thought

- > The managerial behaviors I studied are not rocket science
 - > Vision = know where you are going
 - > Optimism = approach obstacles and opportunities with positive expectations
 - > Intellectual stimulation = involve those who do the job in improving the job
 - > Employee growth and development = ask employees what they want and support their growth efforts
 - > No abusive supervision = treat other human beings (even employees) respectfully

- > No magic bullet, just daily doses of these small things lead to employee thriving.

Issues for us to wrestle with . . .

- > Is there a business case for employee thriving?
- > Should we be spending more time in business school classrooms on leading people
 - > Vs. leading organizations or driving profit?
 - > Two primary competencies – strategic and human?
- > What types of experiences can we give managers (in the classroom and on the job) that encourage their use of behavior linking to employee thriving?
- > What aspects or elements of our organizational cultures enhance or mitigate the likelihood of managerial behaviors associated with employee thriving
- > Is this research relevant to your workplace?