RELATIONAL JOB DESIGN AND THE MOTIVATION TO MAKE A PROSOCIAL DIFFERENCE

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This article illustrates how work contexts motivate employees to care about making a positive difference in other people's lives. I introduce a model of relational job design to describe how jobs spark the motivation to make a prosocial difference, and how this motivation affects employees' actions and identities. Whereas existing research focuses on individual differences and the task structures of jobs, I illuminate how the relational architecture of jobs shapes the motivation to make a prosocial difference.

Why do I risk my life by running into a burning building, knowing that at any moment . . . the floor may give way, the roof may tumble on me, the fire may engulf me? . . . I'm here for my community, a community I grew up in, a community where I know lots of people, a community that knows me (firefighter; International Firefighters' Day, 2004).

On my bad days I feel I have wasted three years working here in the ghetto. . . . You can work four days straight, sixteen hours a day . . . until your eyes start falling out. . . . we charge one-tenth of what a lawyer would normally charge. . . . It's just physically too much—and emotionally. . . . You're aware of the suffering of your client. . . . You know the pressure he's under. It makes you all the more committed. We don't help them only with their legal problems. If they're suffering from a psychological problem we try to hook them up with a psychiatrist. . . . You get to know them intimately. We're very close. . . . The people I work with here are my life (inner-city attorney; Terkel, 1972: 538–539).

Employees often care about making a positive difference in other people's lives. In the popular press, it is widely assumed that employees want to make a difference (Bornstein, 2004; Everett, 1995; May, 2003; Quinn, 2000). In order to motivate employees, many organizations define their missions in terms of making a difference (Collins & Porras, 1996; Margolis & Walsh, 2001, 2003; Thompson & Bunderson, 2003). Qualitative research and quantitative research reveal that many employees describe the purpose of their work in terms of making a positive difference in others' lives (Colby, Sippola, & Phelps, 2001; Ruiz-Quintanilla & England, 1996), and research in diverse bodies of literature suggests that this motivation to make a prosocial difference is prevalent in a variety of work contexts. For example, in business, managers often attempt to improve the experiences of organizational members by persuading top administrators to address important issues (Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Meyerson & Scully, 1995) and by taking proactive steps to help protégés develop skills and advance their careers (Higgins & Kram, 2001). In public service, employees often place their own lives in jeopardy, beyond the call of duty, in order to protect the welfare of others: police officers chase armed suspects in order to safeguard their communities (Marx, 1980), and ambulance drivers speed through red lights at busy intersections in order to rescue victims (Regehr, Goldberg, & Hughes, 2002).

Despite the evidence that employees are motivated to make a positive difference in other people's lives, the organizational literature is relatively silent about the sources of this motivation. Existing research suggests that dispositions may shape employees' motivations to make a prosocial difference. Employees who see their work as a calling want their efforts to make

the world a better place, whereas employees with other orientations toward work usually do not (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). Employees with altruistic values are more concerned with making a positive difference in others' lives than employees with egoistic values (McNeely & Meglino, 1994; Meglino & Korsgaard, 2004; Penner, Midili, & Kegelmeyer, 1997; Rioux & Penner, 2001). Benevolent employees, unlike their less benevolent counterparts, are willing to give more to others than they receive (Huseman, Hatfield, & Miles, 1987). These findings suggest that employees' dispositional orientations and enduring values determine whether they are motivated to make a positive difference in other people's lives.

Aside from selecting employees with calling orientations, altruistic values, or benevolent dispositions, what resources do managers have for fulfilling organizations' missions—and employees' motives—to make a prosocial difference? Surprisingly little research has addressed the role of work contexts in shaping the motivation to make a prosocial difference. Several decades ago, Hackman and Oldham (1976, 1980) proposed that task significance—the degree to which an employee's work affects the health and well-being of other people—is an important characteristic of jobs. Task significance contributes to work motivation by enabling employees to experience their work as meaningful (e.g., Fried & Ferris, 1987; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Katz, 1978). Although Hackman and Oldham's model focuses primarily on how employees respond to the structural properties of their tasks, the construct of task significance provides clues that jobs may spark the motivation to make a prosocial difference by shaping how employees interact and develop relationships with the people affected by their work. However, the influence of job characteristics and interpersonal relationships on the motivation to make a prosocial difference has been neglected, since the construct of task significance largely has been abandoned in theory and research (Dodd & Ganster, 1996: 331; Ferris & Gilmore, 1985; Gerhart, 1988; Hogan & Martell, 1987; Sims, Szilagyi, & Keller, 1976).

Based on current trends in theory, research, and practice, the time is ripe to examine how the relational design of jobs can support organizations' efforts, and fulfill individuals' motives, to make a prosocial difference. In a recent General Social Survey, Americans reported that important, meaningful work is the job feature they value most—above promotions, income, job security, and hours (Cascio, 2003). A growing body of research suggests that interpersonal relationships play a key role in enabling employees to experience their work as important and meaningful (Barry & Crant, 2000; Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000; Gersick, Bartunek, & Dutton, 2000; Kahn, 1990, 1998; Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003). Furthermore, research on social networks indicates that interpersonal relationships often enhance employees' motivations, opportunities, and resources at work (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Ibarra, 1993; Leana & Rousseau, 2000; Rangan, 2000). Despite these relational advances in organizational research, a relational perspective has not yet been incorporated into theories of job design and work motivation. Whereas traditional models of job design focus on the task structures of jobs, such as task identity, variety, and feedback (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, 1980), little research on job design examines the relational structures of jobs (Grant et al., in press; Latham & Pinder, 2005). Similarly, most research on work motivation overlooks the relational context of work (Locke & Latham, 2004; Shamir, 1991).

As illustrated later in this article, the motivation to make a prosocial difference is an inherently relational phenomenon; interpersonal relationships both cultivate and result from the motivation to make a prosocial difference. The motivation to make a prosocial difference is a timely topic, given that the importance of relationships increasingly is being emphasized at work. The service sector, a context in which work is defined in terms of relationships, has the highest rate of job growth in the United States, and more than three-quarters of Americans now work in service jobs (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001; Cascio, 1995; Johnston, 1993). The service sector is also growing rapidly in Europe (European Commission, 2004; Parker, Wall, & Cordery, 2001). Managers are emphasizing the importance of relationships both externally, with clients and customers (Cascio, 1995), and internally, with a greater focus on teamwork and collaboration (Osterman, 1994, 2000). In these external and internal relationships, employees are encouraged by their organizations to make a positive difference in the lives of coworkers, su-

pervisors, subordinates, clients, customers, students, and patients.

In light of these trends, both researchers and practitioners need a deeper understanding of how work contexts cultivate the motivation to make a prosocial difference. Although the dispositional perspective discussed earlier illuminates the characteristics of particular employees who tend to care about making a prosocial difference, it offers little information about the role of work contexts in motivating employees to care about making a prosocial difference, an issue of considerable interest to scholars and practitioners. Hackman and Oldham's construct of task significance offers valuable but incomplete insights into how jobs cultivate the motivation to make a prosocial difference. In this article I build on these insights to introduce a model of relational job design. My goal is to revitalize research on job design and work motivation by accentuating the relational architecture of jobs and examining its influence on the motivation to make a prosocial difference. This endeavor to recast job design as a relational phenomenon fills a gap in the organizational literature about the role of work contexts in cultivating the motivation to make a prosocial difference, and it unpacks and broadens current understandings of the design and experience of meaningful work.

The first section of this article introduces relational job design and the components of the relational architecture of jobs—job impact on beneficiaries and contact with beneficiaries. The second section introduces the constructs of perceived impact on beneficiaries and affective commitment to beneficiaries—the psychological states that energize the motivation to make a prosocial difference—and illustrates how they are cultivated by relational job design. The third section examines how the broader social, organizational, and occupational contexts in which jobs are embedded moderate these psychological effects of relational job design. The fourth section explores the behavioral and psychological effects of the motivation to make a prosocial difference on employees. The concluding section delineates theoretical and practical implications and directions for future research.

RELATIONAL JOB DESIGN

Scholars have traditionally defined jobs as collections of tasks designed to be performed by one employee, and tasks as the assigned pieces of work that employees complete (Griffin, 1987; Ilgen & Hollenbeck, 1992; Wong & Campion, 1991). This definition of tasks as the sole building blocks of jobs overlooks the fact that jobs are designed with elaborate relational architectures that affect employees' interpersonal interactions and connections. Although the majority of job design research focuses on task structures and neglects these relational architectures, organizational researchers have offered hints that they not only exist but also shape employees' experiences in important ways. For example, the literature on task and goal interdependence reveals that jobs structure the nature and content of employees' relationships with coworkers by configuring particular patterns of interaction, cooperation, and collaboration (e.g., Kiggundu, 1983; Stewart & Barrick, 2000; Thompson, 1967; Wageman, 1995; Wong & Campion, 1991). Similarly, the literature on emotional labor and that on customer service behavior indicate that jobs structure the quality and quantity of employees' interactions with customers (e.g., Gutek, Bhappu, Liao-Troth, & Cherry, 1999; Hochschild, 1983; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). Furthermore, theoretical work on job crafting suggests that jobs are designed with relational boundaries, as well as task boundaries, that provide and curtail opportunities for employees to alter their work environments and experiences (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Together, these bodies of literature indicate that the relational architecture of jobs merits further attention.

The emphasis in this article is on the relational architecture of jobs that increases the motivation to make a prosocial difference by connecting employees to the impact they are having on the beneficiaries of their work. Beneficiaries are the people and groups of people whom employees believe their actions at work have the potential to positively affect. I define beneficiaries from the employee's perspective based on past research indicating that relationships with intended beneficiaries (McNeely & Meglino, 1994) and perceived beneficiaries (Maurer, Pierce, & Shore, 2002) are important influences on employees' experiences and behaviors. I explore the sources of employees' attitudes toward beneficiaries later in this article; here, my central point is that the definition of beneficiaries adopts the employee's perspective, which signifies that beneficiaries can in-

clude individuals and social collectives internal or external to the organization, such as coworkers, supervisors, subordinates, clients, customers, patients, and communities.
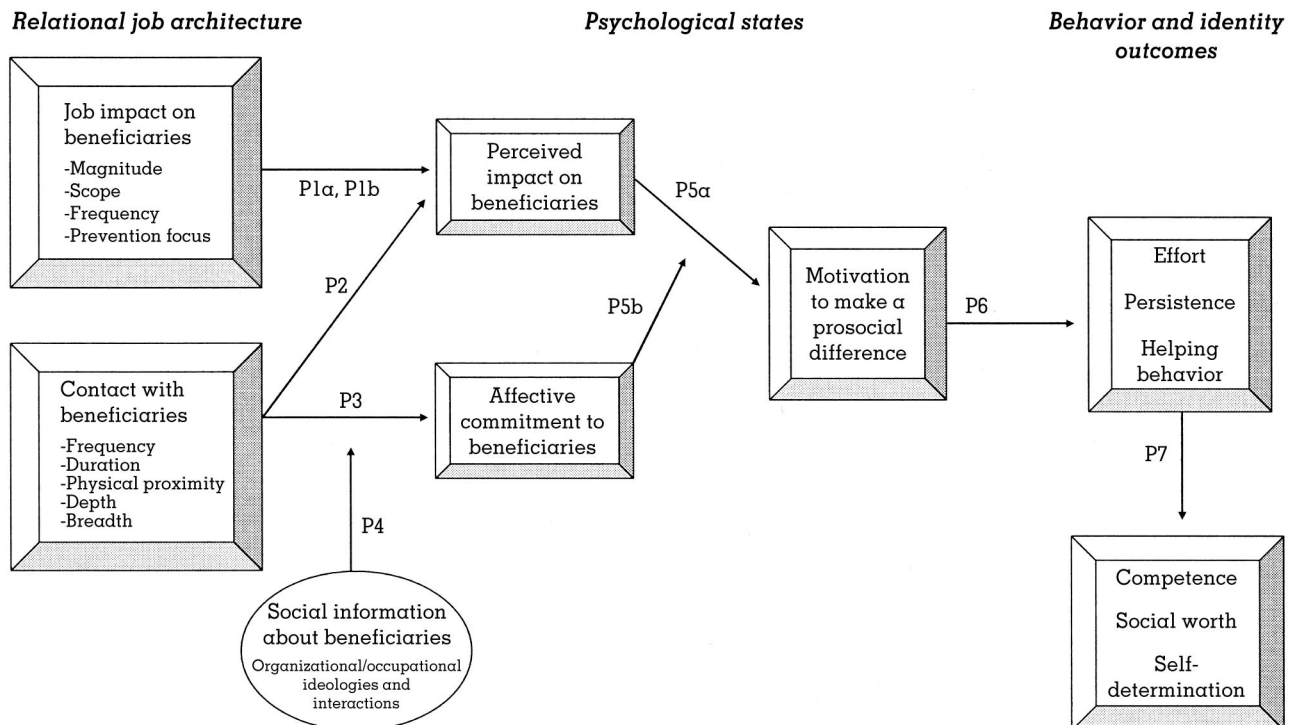
In the following sections I introduce the relational architecture of jobs that structures opportunities for employees to have impact on, and form connections with, beneficiaries. I propose that jobs vary in whether they enable employees to make a lasting difference or an ephemeral difference in beneficiaries' lives, affect many or few beneficiaries, impact beneficiaries daily or occasionally, and prevent harm or promote gains to beneficiaries. Together, these dimensions describe the potential impact of a job on beneficiaries. However, the motivation to make a prosocial difference is not merely shaped by the opportunities for impact that a job offers. I introduce contact with beneficiaries as a second relational characteristic of jobs that enhances the motivation to make a prosocial difference by enabling employees to perceive their impact on, and become attached to, these beneficiaries. Figure 1 displays the job impact framework—the conceptual model that provides the scaffolding for this effort to explain how work contexts motivate employees to care about making a positive difference in other people's lives.

The Relational Architecture of Jobs

The *relational architecture of jobs* refers to the structural properties of work that shape employees' opportunities to connect and interact with other people. Here I focus on the relational architecture of jobs that connects employees to the impact of their actions on other people. For example, firefighting jobs typically involve enriched relational architectures (e.g., Thompson & Bono, 1993). They provide frequent opportunities to make a lasting difference in the lives of many beneficiaries, as well as meaningful contact with these beneficiaries through physically and emotionally close interactions that occur in the performance of fire rescues, delivery of emergency medical services, and instruction of community fire safety courses. Conversely, janitorial jobs typically involve relatively depleted relational architectures (e.g., Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). They provide few opportunities to have an enduring impact on beneficiaries' lives, as well as little contact with these beneficiaries

FIGURE 1
The Job Impact Framework

as a result of job specifications, managerial decisions, scheduling discrepancies, and social stigma.

Along with varying between job types, relational architectures can vary within job types. For example, journalism jobs can involve either enriched or depleted relational architectures (e.g., Eide & Knight, 1999; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996). Journalism jobs with enriched relational architectures provide opportunities to communicate valuable information and advice to broad audiences, sometimes including lifesaving warnings about impending risks such as natural disasters. These jobs also provide opportunities for journalists to have contact with the beneficiaries of their work through focus groups, public presentations, and feedback from and dialogue with readers. Journalism jobs with depleted relational architectures, however, provide opportunities to communicate relatively trivial information to small audiences with little interaction.

Now that I have given these examples to briefly illustrate how relational architectures can vary both between and within job types, in the following sections I introduce the two components of the relational architecture of jobs discussed in this article: job impact on beneficiaries and contact with beneficiaries.

Job Impact on Beneficiaries

Job impact on beneficiaries is the degree to which a job provides opportunities for employees to affect the lives of beneficiaries. I assume that opportunities for impact are motivating at the level of the job—how employees experience their collections of tasks—rather than at the level of the single task (Wong & Campion, 1991). The rationale behind this assumption is that, within a job, tasks can vary in their impact on beneficiaries. The global properties of the job appear to be substantially more influential than single tasks in shaping employees' experiences, given that it is psychologically, statistically, and practically difficult to aggregate the large number of single tasks that employees carry out into the experience of a whole job (Taber & Alliger, 1995).

Jobs can impact different aspects of beneficiary well-being. Opportunities to impact the physical well-being (Danna & Griffin, 1999; Edwards, 1992) of beneficiaries are prevalent in jobs that protect and promote the health and safety of others (e.g., nurse, police officer, security guard). Opportunities to impact the hedonic well-being (Kahneman, Diener, & Schwarz, 1999) of beneficiaries are common in jobs that increase the positive emotions and satisfaction experienced by others (e.g., chef, magician, musician). Opportunities to impact the eudaimonic well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001) of beneficiaries are pervasive in jobs that promote the growth, fulfillment, and development of others (e.g., career counselor, coach, teacher). Opportunities to impact the material well-being (Alwin, 1987; Groenland, 1990) of beneficiaries are widespread in jobs that protect and promote the socioeconomic prosperity and instrumental "affordances" of others (e.g., accountant, attorney, construction worker). In order to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of job impact on beneficiaries, it is useful to examine the dimensions of the construct that capture the extent of opportunities for impact that the job provides.

Four key dimensions are likely to describe the potential impact of a job on beneficiaries. The first dimension is the *magnitude* of impact—the degree and duration of the potential effects of the job on beneficiaries. For example, surgeons have opportunities to save victims' lives, resulting in significant, enduring impact (Edmondson, Bohmer, & Pisano, 2001), whereas cashiers have opportunities for relatively insignificant, fleeting impact on their customers (Stone & Gueutal, 1985). The second dimension is the *scope* of impact—the number or breadth of people potentially affected by the job. Automotive design engineers have opportunities to carry out work that impacts many drivers; speech therapists generally have opportunities to impact a smaller number of people. The third dimension is the *frequency* of impact—how often the job provides opportunities for affecting others. Restaurant chefs prepare meals that impact patrons many times per day, whereas research chemists typically produce findings that affect others less frequently. The magnitude, scope, and frequency dimensions of job impact can each be characterized in terms of a fourth dimension of job impact, the *focus* of the impact—whether the job primarily provides opportunities to prevent harm or promote gains to other people. For instance, lifeguards prevent harm of high magnitude by protecting swimmers from drowning, whereas gasoline station attendants prevent

harm of lower magnitude by protecting owners from theft; special needs teachers promote gains of high magnitude by educating developmentally disabled students, whereas comedians promote gains of lower magnitude by entertaining audiences. In summary, the potential impact of a job on beneficiaries can be captured by examining the magnitude, scope, frequency, and focus of opportunities for impact that the job provides.

Contact with Beneficiaries

Contact with beneficiaries is the degree to which a job is relationally structured to provide opportunities for employees to interact and communicate with the people affected by their work. Contact with beneficiaries can range from having no exposure to beneficiaries, seeing them briefly, or exchanging occasional emails and letters to carrying out intense, daily interactions with them (Gutek et al., 1999). This relational job characteristic is virtually orthogonal to job impact: jobs vary in their degrees of contact with beneficiaries independent of their degrees of impact on these beneficiaries. Support for this notion appears in a multidimensional scaling study conducted by Stone and Gueutal (1985), which suggests that the extent to which a job involves interacting with, entertaining, or providing a service to beneficiaries is an important dimension in an employee's experience and is distinct from the opportunities for impact on beneficiaries provided by the job.

Stone and Gueutal's (1985) findings that contact with beneficiaries appears to be distinct from impact on them indicate that job impact does not capture employees' personal relationships with the beneficiaries of their work. An employee can be carrying out impactful tasks without having a personal, emotional connection to the beneficiaries of these tasks. Employees not only seek meaningful tasks but also seek meaningful relationships (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Kahn, 1998; Wrzesniewski et al., 2003). For example, as a police officer explains, "We have lost complete contact with the people.... They have taken me away from the people I'm dedicated to serving—and I don't like it" (Terkel, 1972: 134). Although the officer knows that his job impacts citizens, he craves contact with these citizens. When employees have contact with the beneficiaries of their work, their experiences be-

come emotionally charged; they are more affectively engaged in their work as a result of first-hand exposure to their actions affecting living, breathing human beings.

From the literature on customer service behavior and on emotional labor (e.g., Gutek et al., 1999; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987), I find five dimensions of contact with beneficiaries meriting consideration. The first dimension is the *frequency* of contact—how often the job provides opportunities to interact with beneficiaries. For example, taxi drivers are able to communicate more frequently with their passengers than are commercial pilots. The second dimension is the *duration* of contact—the length of time for interactions with beneficiaries that the job provides. Hairstylists and attorneys generally have extended interactions with clients, whereas flight attendants generally have brief interactions with passengers. The third dimension is the *physical proximity* of contact—the degree of geographic and interpersonal space in the interaction that the job provides. Clinical psychologists tend to have physically proximate interactions with clients, whereas manufacturing employees tend to have physically distant interactions with recipients of their products. The fourth dimension is the *depth* of contact—the degree to which the job enables the mutual expression of cognitions, emotions, and identities. Social workers typically have deep, expressive interactions with clients, whereas directory assistance telephone operators typically have more superficial interactions with callers. The fifth dimension is the *breadth* of contact—the range of different groups of beneficiaries the job places in communication with the employee. An orchestra musician may have broad contact with beneficiaries, from fellow musicians and conductors to audience members, whereas a clerical worker who interacts only with a supervisor has narrow contact with beneficiaries.

These five dimensions may be integrated under the general rubric of experienced meaning: the more frequent, extended, physically proximate, expressive, and broad the contact with beneficiaries, the more meaningful the contact is to employees. Now that I have defined the relational job characteristics of job impact on beneficiaries and contact with beneficiaries, I turn to their psychological effects on employees.

THE MOTIVATIONAL IMPACT OF RELATIONAL JOB DESIGN

In this section I examine how relational job design cultivates the psychological underpinnings of the motivation to make a prosocial difference. Motivation is a set of psychological processes that directs, energizes, and sustains action (Mitchell & Daniels, 2003; see also Ambrose & Kulik, 1999; Campbell & Pritchard, 1976; Donovan, 2001; Katzell & Thompson, 1990; Pittman, 1998; Staw, 1977). When employees are motivated, they have "an inner desire to make an effort" (Dowling & Sayles, 1978: 16). Regardless of whether their dispositional orientations are egoistic or altruistic, employees can experience the *motivation to make a prosocial difference,* a psychological state—a fluctuating internal condition that is usually caused externally (Chaplin, John, & Goldberg, 1988)—in which they are focused on having a positive impact on other people. This motivation to make a prosocial difference is an allocentric psychological state—the employee's attention is directed toward the thoughts, feelings, preferences, and welfare of other people in the interest of improving their lives (Staub, 1984).

The motivation to make a prosocial difference emerges through the experience of two psychological states: perceived impact on beneficiaries (an awareness that one's actions affect other people) and affective commitment to beneficiaries (a concern for the welfare of these people). The basic rationale for these two psychological states shaping the motivation to make a prosocial difference is that both behavior-outcome contingencies and valuing of outcomes are critical to directing, energizing, and sustaining motivation (Staw, 1977; Vroom, 1964). Perceived impact signifies that outcomes are contingent on employees' behaviors, and affective commitment signifies that employees value these outcomes. I address this issue in further detail later in this article; in the following sections I examine how relational job design affects these two components of the motivation to make a prosocial difference.

Perceived Impact on Beneficiaries

Perceived impact on beneficiaries is the degree to which employees are aware that their actions affect others. For example, coaches are typically aware that their feedback affects the skills and performances of work teams (Hackman & Wageman, 2005), and members of flight crews are generally attuned to how their work affects coworkers (Weick & Roberts, 1993). Perceived impact is not only a state of awareness or attunement; it is also a state of subjective meaning, a way of experiencing one's work as significant and purposeful through its connection to the welfare of other people. When employees perceive impact, they are cognizant that their actions have consequences for other people, and, accordingly, they experience their actions as meaningfully connected to these people. In the two subsequent sections I examine how the relational architecture of jobs affects perceived impact.

Job impact and perceived impact. Early job design researchers assumed a strong correspondence between the opportunities for impact provided by the objective structures of a job and an employee's subjective awareness of the impact (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). In general, objective opportunities for impact on beneficiaries leave an imprint on the subjective experiences of job incumbents, who are likely to identify their work at a high level in terms of its meaning or purpose, rather than at a low level in terms of the physical and cognitive processes involved in carrying out the work (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; see also Vallacher & Wegner, 1987). However, it is important to examine how the specific structural dimensions of job impact affect an employee's perception of impact.

Research suggests that the greater the magnitude, scope, and frequency of job impact on beneficiaries, the greater an employee's perception of impact on these beneficiaries. First, when jobs provide opportunities for impact of high magnitude, the well-being and potential ill-being of beneficiaries is particularly salient to employees, who become aware that their efforts can have a substantial impact on the beneficiaries. This notion is supported by research indicating that people are more likely to recognize the potential impact of their actions on others when they encounter objective opportunities to significantly benefit others (Batson, 1991; Latané & Darley, 1970). For example, an ambulance driver's impact is salient in the face of an opportunity to save a victim's life, whereas a restaurant cashier may not be able to discern his or her impact on customers paying bills. Second,

the broader the scope of job impact, the more attentive employees may become to their impact, since a larger number of beneficiaries provides more sources of information that others are depending on their efforts. This idea is supported by findings that individuals are more willing to help large groups of people than small groups (Burnstein, Crandall, & Kitayama, 1994). Third, the more frequently a job provides opportunities for impact, the more occasions employees have for grasping their impact, and the more likely they are to attribute the impact to their own personal actions, rather than exogenous circumstances or chance, as suggested by attribution research (Heider, 1958; Weiner, 1986).

> *Proposition 1a: The greater the magnitude, scope, and frequency of job impact on beneficiaries, the stronger the employee's perception of impact on beneficiaries.*

The focus of job impact is also likely to affect the employee's perception of impact. Extensive evidence suggests that loss aversion is a robust human tendency; people are more attentive to losses than gains (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001; Rozin & Royzman, 2001; Tversky & Kahneman, 1992). The awareness that others may be harmed typically leads people to experience empathy and to search for opportunities to prevent or redress the harm (Batson, 1990, 1991, 1998). In loss prevention modes, people tend to be especially attentive to threats and vigilant in their efforts to counteract these threats (e.g., Brockner & Higgins, 2001). Accordingly, when employees work in jobs with a prevention impact focus, they are more likely to become attuned to their impact on beneficiaries. For example, public relations managers whose jobs involve preventing crises and image threats may be more aware of their impact on organizational members than public relations managers whose jobs involve promoting positive images of the organization. As such, I predict that jobs focusing on the prevention of harm are more likely to draw an employee's attention to impact than are jobs focusing on the promotion of gains.

> *Proposition 1b: The greater the prevention focus (as opposed to promotion focus) of job impact on beneficia-*

> *ries, the stronger the employee's perception of impact on beneficiaries.*

Contact with beneficiaries and perceived impact. Jobs that provide opportunities for impact do not always enable employees to grasp the impact of their actions on others. Without contact with the beneficiaries of their work, employees can find it difficult to know how their work is affecting these beneficiaries. For example, when production teams become isolated from their customers, they lose awareness of customers' expectations and specifications (Hackman, 1990; see also Hackman, Oldham, Janson, & Purdy, 1975) and may be uncertain about how their work is affecting customers.

Conversely, contact with beneficiaries provides employees with access to feedback about their impact. Beneficiaries convey a series of nonverbal and verbal cues about how employees are affecting them. For example, at Microsoft, software developers designed programs to benefit users but were often unaware of how their programs were affecting users. When Microsoft introduced a program enabling developers to observe users testing new programs, the developers were able to receive feedback about the impact of their programs on users (Cusumano & Selby, 1995; Heath, Larrick, & Klayman, 1998). Developers likely received nonverbal feedback about their impact from beneficiaries in the form of smiles and frowns, and verbal feedback in the form of expressions of gratitude (e.g., Bennett, Ross, & Sunderland, 1996; Lawler, 1992; McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, & Larson, 2001) and hostility (e.g., Grandey, Dickter, & Sin, 2004).

Both positive and negative feedback convey information to employees that their work has the potential to affect beneficiaries. The more frequent, extended, physically proximate, and deep the contact with beneficiaries provided by the job, the greater the employee's access to nonverbal and verbal feedback. The broader the contact with different groups of beneficiaries provided by the job, the greater the employee's access to diverse evidence of opportunities to affect others.

> *Proposition 2: The greater the frequency, duration, physical proximity, depth, and breadth of contact with beneficiaries provided by the job, the*

stronger the employee's perception of impact.

Affective Commitment to Beneficiaries

Thus far, I have focused on the role of relational job design in promoting perceived impact. However, being motivated to make a positive difference in others' lives consists of more than merely perceiving one's impact; it also involves caring about the people affected. *Affective commitment to beneficiaries* refers to emotional concern for and dedication to the people and groups of people impacted by one's work. For example, many domestic violence counselors care about their clients (Mann, 2002), and many teachers care about their students (Ashton & Webb, 1986). Consistent with past research on commitment (e.g., Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001), affective commitment to beneficiaries describes both the form (affective) and target (beneficiaries) of the employee's commitment. With respect to form, the commitment is affective because the desire to improve the welfare of other people is strongest when it is emotionally charged (Batson, 1991). With respect to target, the construct builds on research on affective commitment to supervisors (e.g., Becker, Billings, Eveleth, & Gilbert, 1996; Meyer, Becker, & Vandenberghe, 2004; Stinglhamber & Vandenberghe, 2003) by extending the target of commitment to any beneficiaries of an employee's efforts.

In addition to increasing an employee's perception of impact on beneficiaries, contact with beneficiaries serves a second function: it increases an employee's affective commitment to these beneficiaries. Employees can be aware of their impact without experiencing an emotional tie to the beneficiaries of the impact. When jobs do not provide contact with beneficiaries, even the most significant impact is impersonal and indirect. Contact with beneficiaries personalizes the experience of impact by embedding jobs in interpersonal relationships that can enable employees to care about beneficiaries. For example, as a firefighter explains, "Being in the fire department has changed my life. I'm ... more committed to helping people" (Smith, 1988: 311). As a second example, the medical technology company Medtronic holds annual parties at which employees meet patients whose lives have been improved by their products. According to the company's former CEO, "All Medtronic employees have a 'defining moment' in which they come face to face with a patient whose story deeply touches them" (George, 2003: 88). This appears to motivate employees to care about patients.

These assertions are supported by evidence that people often come to care about others as a result of having contact with them (e.g., Schoenrade, Batson, Brandt, & Loud, 1986). The general mechanism for explaining how contact enhances affective commitment is a sense of identification with beneficiaries. As Weick explains, "When two people encounter one another, there is some possibility that each can benefit the other. For each, the contact with another person affords the possibility of increased need-satisfaction and self-expression" (1979: 90).

First, frequent contact is likely to increase affective commitment, based on findings that increasing the frequency of exchange between people tends to increase identification and, therefore, cohesion (Lawler & Yoon, 1998). Second, high duration of contact is likely to increase affective commitment, drawing on evidence that extended interactions can enable service providers to identify and build close relationships with customers (Gutek et al., 1999). Third, physically proximate contact is likely to increase affective commitment, based on findings that increasing physical proximity between people tends to increase identification and liking (Bornstein, 1989; Festinger, Schachter, & Back, 1950; Saegert, Swap, & Zajonc, 1973), as well as perspective taking (Parker & Axtell, 2001). Fourth, deep contact is likely to increase affective commitment, drawing on evidence that increasing the expressiveness of interactions can enable people to experience empathy for, and a close sense of identification with, each other (e.g., Batson et al., 1997). Fifth, broad contact with beneficiaries from different social groups is likely to increase affective commitment, provided that the contact occurs under conditions of equal power and task and goal interdependence (e.g., Pettigrew, 1998; Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961). Because individuals organize their mental representations in terms of groups, contact with one beneficiary can make the entire group that the beneficiary represents more salient to the employee (Sia, Lord, Blessum, Thomas, & Lepper, 1999) and can lead the employee to care about the entire group of beneficiaries that the single beneficiary represents

(Batson, Chang, Orr, & Rowland, 2002). For example, when a novice domestic violence counselor meets a battered woman, he or she may come to care about the individual woman but also may learn to empathize with other women who have experienced similar ordeals (Mann, 2002), and he or she may become more affectively committed to this entire group of beneficiaries.

> *Proposition 3: The greater the frequency, duration, physical proximity, depth, and breadth of contact with beneficiaries provided by the job, the stronger the employee's affective commitment to beneficiaries.*

THE MODERATING ROLE OF SOCIAL INFORMATION ABOUT BENEFICIARIES

Thus far, I have focused on the psychological impact of relational job design. However, among the important insights to emerge from organizational research in the past three decades is that the broader contexts in which a job is embedded play an important role in influencing an employee's experience of the job. Whereas extant job design research has focused primarily on individual-difference moderators such as growth need strength, knowledge, and skill (Fried & Ferris, 1987; Hackman & Oldham, 1976), contextual moderators have sparsely been integrated into job design theory and research. Research indicates that employees' reactions to the structural characteristics of jobs are affected by the social, organizational, and occupational contexts in which these jobs are situated (e.g., Griffin, 1983, 1987; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Taber & Taylor, 1990; Tetlock, 1985). Specifically, employees' reactions to relational job design are likely influenced by social information that shapes the ways in which the employees evaluate the beliefs, emotions, behaviors, group memberships, and intrinsic worth of beneficiaries.

Social information about beneficiaries is communicated by organizational and occupational ideologies—the normatively espoused values and principles that surround jobs (e.g., Thompson & Bunderson, 2003). Organizational and occupational ideologies can serve as a form of social control (e.g., Hochschild, 1983; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996; Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989) by focusing on particular individuals as primary beneficiaries (Blau & Scott, 1962) and defining

these beneficiaries as important, valuable human beings (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). For example, Mary Kay's ideology focuses on enriching women's lives, and Wal-Mart's ideology portrays customers as people who deserve opportunities to buy valuable goods at reasonable prices (Collins & Porras, 1996; Thompson & Bunderson, 2003). Similarly, the occupational ideologies of restaurant chefs define consumers as important beneficiaries of their work (Fine, 1996), and the occupational ideologies of public defenders define defendants as innocent victims who deserve to have their constitutional rights protected (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

As well as esteeming beneficiaries, organizational and occupational ideologies can communicate information that stigmatizes, devalues, and degrades beneficiaries. For example, military ideologies define members of opposing armies as enemies (e.g., Fiske, Harris, & Cuddy, 2004; Gal, 1986), and sales ideologies often define coworkers as competitors (Puffer, 1987). As such, the organizational and occupational ideologies that surround jobs can provide favorable (positive) and unfavorable (negative) social information about beneficiaries.

Of course, social information about beneficiaries is also provided by interactions with the beneficiaries themselves. According to the literature on burnout, emotional labor, and customer service behavior, interactions provide favorable information about beneficiaries when beneficiaries appear amiable, receptive to help, or appreciative (Cohen & Sutton, 1998; Guerrier & Adib, 2003; Lively, 2002; Locke, 1996); even a mere smile from beneficiaries may encourage employees to be cooperative and trusting (Scharlemann, Eckel, Kacelnik, & Wilson, 2001). Interactions provide unfavorable information about beneficiaries when beneficiaries appear disrespectful, difficult to help, aggressive, rude, or hostile (Grandey et al., 2004; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Zapf, 2002). As such, interactions with beneficiaries can provide favorable or unfavorable social information about them.

SOCIAL INFORMATION ABOUT BENEFICIARIES MODERATES THE EFFECT OF CONTACT ON AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT TO BENEFICIARIES

When social information about beneficiaries from ideologies and interactions is favorable,

contact with them is likely to promote affective commitment to them. The mechanism underlying this proposition is the activation of a prosocial identity (see Grube & Piliavin, 2000, and Piliavin & Charng, 1990). Prosocial identity is the component of the self-concept concerned with helping and contributing; when it is activated, people experience their identities as oriented toward positively affecting others, and they are more likely to volunteer to help others (Nelson & Norton, 2005).

Exposure to favorable social information about a beneficiary activates employees' prosocial identities, which influence the relational models under which they operate: they are likely to enact their relationships with beneficiaries as communal relationships—connections that involve a concern for the welfare of others (Clark & Mills, 1979, 1993; Fiske, 1992). Accordingly, when employees are exposed to favorable social information about a beneficiary, contact is likely to increase their affective commitments to the beneficiary. Alternatively, when employees encounter unfavorable social information about a beneficiary, contact may actually decrease their affective commitments. Employees may see the beneficiary as incompetent (Fisher, Nadler, & Whitcher-Alagna, 1982; Lee, 1997, 2002), as deserving harm (Lerner & Miller, 1978), or as a stigmatized member of an outgroup (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Exposure to unfavorable social information about beneficiaries often brings about a fight-or-flight response: employees tend to lash out at beneficiaries or seek emotional distance from them (Sutton, 1991; Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989). Thus, social information about beneficiaries plays an important role in moderating the effect of contact with beneficiaries on affective commitment to beneficiaries.

> *Proposition 4: Social information about beneficiaries moderates the effect of contact with beneficiaries on affective commitment to them such that the more favorable (unfavorable) the information, the stronger the positive (negative) effect of contact with beneficiaries on affective commitment to them.*

THE MOTIVATION TO MAKE A PROSOCIAL DIFFERENCE

The preceding propositions have focused on the contextual antecedents of perceived impact

and affective commitment to beneficiaries. I begin this section by describing how these two psychological states increase the motivation to make a prosocial difference—the desire to positively affect the beneficiaries of one's work—and then examine how this motivation affects employees' actions and identities.

Perceived Impact, Affective Commitment, and the Motivation to Make a Prosocial Difference

Perceived impact is likely to increase the motivation to make a prosocial difference. As discussed previously, when employees perceive impact, they recognize a connection between their behavior and outcomes in others' lives. Perceived impact signifies the behavior-outcome contingency that is instrumental to initiating and sustaining motivation. When people perceive behavior-outcome contingencies, they are motivated to set goals and to develop action plans and strategies; when they do not, they often respond with learned helplessness (Bandura, 1977, 1997; Pittman, 1998; Staw, 1977; Vroom, 1964). Thus, when employees perceive that their actions have an impact on beneficiaries, they are likely to engage in the pursuit of making a positive difference in these beneficiaries' lives. This pursuit can provide them with a sense of efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997)—they feel capable of making a prosocial difference. Conversely, when employees perceive that their actions do not have impact, they are not likely to pursue the outcome of making a prosocial difference, since they do not feel that they have the opportunity to achieve this outcome.

> *Proposition 5a: The stronger the employee's perception of impact on beneficiaries, the stronger the employee's motivation to make a prosocial difference.*

The awareness that behavior affects outcomes is necessary, but not sufficient, for motivation; in order to be motivated to pursue the outcomes that their behavior brings about, employees must value these outcomes (Ajzen, 1991; Staw, 1977; Vroom, 1964). Cross-cultural evidence suggests that employees generally value the outcome of prosocial impact. Benevolence, the value of protecting and improving the welfare of other people with whom one is in regular contact, is the most important value for the ma-

jority of the people in the majority of fifty-six cultures across the world (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz & Bardi, 2001). However, employees are most likely to value this outcome when they care personally about the beneficiaries.

Indeed, research indicates that individuals are motivated to expend more energy to benefit others who are important to them or emotionally connected to them (Batson et al., 1997; Burnstein et al., 1994; Korchmaros & Kenny, 2001). When employees care about the beneficiaries of their work, they begin to see their identities as overlapping with beneficiaries' identities (Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, & Neuberg, 1997), and they perceive acting in the interest of these beneficiaries as consistent with their core personal values (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001). Thus, I propose that affective commitment to beneficiaries increases the effect of perceived impact on the motivation to make a prosocial difference. When employees are affectively committed to beneficiaries, perceived impact signifies opportunities to achieve personally valued outcomes and, thus, is more likely to cultivate the motivation to make a prosocial difference.

> *Proposition 5b: Affective commitment to beneficiaries increases the positive effect of perceived impact on the motivation to make a prosocial difference.*

Consequences of the Motivation to Make a Prosocial Difference

The motivation to make a prosocial difference is not merely a psychological state cultivated by relational job design; it is also a driving force behind employees' actions and identity construction efforts. In the following sections I explore the behavioral and psychological consequences of the motivation to make a prosocial difference.

Behavioral consequences: Effort, persistence, and helping behavior. The motivation to make a prosocial difference is likely to increase effort, persistence, and helping behavior. Effort is how hard the employee works, and persistence is how long the employee works (Mitchell & Daniels, 2003); helping behavior encompasses the voluntary, extrarole actions that individuals undertake to benefit other individuals or groups

(Anderson & Williams, 1996; Brief & Motowidlo, 1986; George & Brief, 1992; McNeely & Meglino, 1994). When employees are motivated to make a prosocial difference, they are likely to invest considerable time and energy in their assigned work, as predicted by traditional expectancy and planned behavior theories of motivation (e.g., Ajzen, 1991; Staw, 1977; Vroom, 1964): because they are aware of behavior-outcome contingencies and value these outcomes, they are likely to invest high levels of effort in, and to persist in effectively completing, their assigned work.

The added behavioral value of the motivation to make a prosocial difference above traditional motivation theories is that employees are likely to provide help to beneficiaries beyond the prescriptions of their jobs. The rationale for this prediction derives from evidence that when employees care about others, they are more likely to help them (Batson, 1990, 1991, 1998), without contemplating the personal consequences of helping (Korsgaard, Meglino, & Lester, 1997; see also Carlson, Charlin, & Miller, 1988). Accordingly, employees motivated to make a prosocial difference are likely to invest time and energy in voluntary helping behaviors without being deterred by the personal costs of these behaviors. In support of these predictions, research suggests that when members of flight crews are aware of the impact of their actions on coworkers and care about these coworkers, they are often motivated to invest additional time and energy in their assigned tasks and to voluntarily provide help to coworkers (Ginnett, 1990; Weick & Roberts, 1993).

> *Proposition 6: The stronger the employee's motivation to make a prosocial difference, the greater the employee's effort, persistence, and helping behavior.*

Identity consequences: Competence, self-determination, and social worth. The effort, persistence, and helping behaviors cultivated by the motivation to make a prosocial difference are likely to affect employees' identities. Identity is an umbrella concept that encapsulates people's responses to the question "Who am I?" (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Psychologists have assembled evidence that people have basic motives to experience their identities in terms of competence, or self as capable; self-determina-

tion, or self as internally directed; and social worth, or self as valued in interpersonal relationships (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2001; see also Baumeister & Leary, 1995, and McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992). These themes of competence, self-determination, and social worth can be traced back to the etymology of the term *impact*. Its Latin root *impactus* refers to "effective action of one thing or person upon another," implying competent, self-determined action, and "to fix or fasten," implying pacts and bonds with others—that is, social worth (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989).

When the relational architecture of jobs sparks behavior directed at making a prosocial difference, employees are likely to develop identities as competent, self-determined, and socially valued individuals. With respect to competence, when employees dedicate greater effort and persistence toward reaching an outcome that is important to them, they are more likely to achieve, and feel capable of achieving, the outcome (Bandura, 1977, 1997; Locke & Latham, 2002). Furthermore, even if employees have not objectively succeeded, because they have voluntarily invested greater time and energy in their work in order to benefit others, they are likely to justify their efforts as successful (Bem, 1972; Festinger, 1957). With respect to self-determination, because employees feel that their own actions are affecting others, and because they feel personally responsible for the choice to expend greater effort, persistence, and helping behavior, they are likely to experience their actions as self-determined (Ryan & Deci, 2000). With respect to social worth, helping others appears to increase an employee's social status and worth (Flynn, 2003; Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin, & Schroeder, 2005). When employees engage in behavior directed at making a prosocial difference, they are often able to make important contributions to beneficiaries' lives, which enables them to feel valuable to, and valued by, these beneficiaries (Harkins & Petty, 1982; Rosen, Mickler, & Collins, 1987). Thus, when employees display high levels of effort, persistence, and helping behavior in the interest of making a prosocial difference, they are likely to construct identities as competent, self-determined, socially valued individuals.

> *Proposition 7: The greater the effort, persistence, and helping behavior cul-* tivated by the motivation to make a prosocial difference, *the stronger the employee's identity as competent, self-determined, and socially valued.*

DISCUSSION

Although recent trends in theory, research, and practice have designed and depicted jobs and organizations as composed of and shaped by interpersonal relationships, researchers have sparsely incorporated this perspective into theories of work design and motivation. I have proposed that jobs with enriched relational architectures can motivate employees to care about making a positive difference in other people's lives and can affect what they do and who they become. When jobs provide opportunities to affect the lives of beneficiaries, employees become aware of their impact on these beneficiaries. When jobs provide opportunities for contact with beneficiaries, employees become more aware of their impact on beneficiaries, and they also come to care about the welfare of beneficiaries, provided that they are exposed to favorable social information about these beneficiaries. When the relational architecture of jobs enables employees to perceive their impact on and care about beneficiaries, employees are motivated to make a positive difference in the lives of these beneficiaries. As a result, they invest time and energy in prescribed and voluntary activities, which enables them to construct identities as competent, self-determined, socially valued individuals. Relationships thus shape and are shaped by the motivation to make a prosocial difference. With these insights, this article expands existing knowledge about why employees are motivated to make a positive difference in other people's lives and how the relational architecture of jobs affects the actions and identities of employees. As such, this article offers valuable contributions to our understanding of job design, work motivation, self-interest, and cooperation, as well as meaning making and identity construction in organizations.

Job Design

Research on motivational job design has largely stagnated in recent years, and many scholars have assumed that this stagnation is

warranted (Ambrose & Kulik, 1999). Declarations of the death of job design research may be premature in light of recent calls for systematic research on issues of practical relevance in organizations (e.g., Aldag, 1997; Dutton, 2003; Ford et al., 2003; Ghoshal, 2005; Heath & Sitkin, 2001; Larwood & Gattiker, 1999; Latham, 2001; Lawrence, 1992; Pearce, 2004; Rynes, Bartunek, & Daft, 2001; Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006). As managers search for new levers of motivation, particularly in a resource-sparse, growing service economy, researchers can make a more significant difference in practice by examining how jobs can be relationally structured to enhance and sustain employee motivation. By introducing a set of relational job characteristics, elaborating their dimensions, and examining their effects on employees, I take a step toward expanding and reorienting job design research and practice to the relational sphere of work. The focus on job impact on beneficiaries and contact with beneficiaries illustrates the larger relational architecture of jobs and articulates one set of links among this architecture, employee motivation, and the desire to make a prosocial difference.

Further, existing organizational research provides relatively little information about how jobs shape opportunities to affect the lives of others and how these opportunities are sources of both motivation and meaning at work. I have unpacked and elaborated the construct of task significance to explore how the multiple dimensions of job impact affect employees. Impactful jobs can be characterized in terms of how often they provide opportunities to make a difference, how enduring the difference is in beneficiaries' lives, how many beneficiaries are affected, and whether the job prevents harm or promotes gains in different aspects of beneficiaries' lives. However, an employee's experience of an impactful job is not only shaped by the opportunities for impact that the job provides. The relational architecture of the job also shapes the nature and forms of relationships that the employee builds with beneficiaries of the impact. As such, the employee's experience of impact depends on jobs providing opportunities to both affect beneficiaries' lives and form connections with these beneficiaries. These insights expand our understanding of impactful jobs as those that spark the motivation to make a prosocial difference by providing meaningful opportuni-

ties for impact on and relationships with beneficiaries.

Work Motivation, Self-Interest, and Cooperation

In addition to advancing job design research, this article extends our understanding of work motivation, self-interest, and cooperation. In focusing on the motivation to make a prosocial difference, I move beyond predominantly individualistic, rationalistic theories of work motivation (see Kahn, 1990; Michaelson, 2005; Shamir, 1991) toward an understanding of employees as motivated to experience their actions and identities as meaningfully connected to other people. Organizational scholars have devoted extensive attention to understanding whether employee motivation is self-interested (e.g., Barry & Stephens, 1998; Bolino, 1999; Ferraro, Pfeffer, & Sutton, 2005; Locke & Becker, 1998) and, as discussed previously, have abandoned the assumption that all employees are motivated by self-interest in favor of an individual-differences approach suggesting that some employees are motivated by other-interest (e.g., Chen, Chen, & Meindl, 1998; Huseman et al., 1987; Meglino & Korsgaard, 2004; Rioux & Penner, 2001). Alternatively, I suggest that it is prudent to move beyond these questions of "*Do* employees care about others?" and "*Which employees* are likely to care about others?" to ask, "*When and under what conditions* do employees care about others?"

The framework presented here represents one step toward understanding when and under what conditions employees are motivated to care about others. Rather than concentrating on whether employees are ultimately self-interested, I have suggested that well-designed jobs can motivate employees of all dispositions to care about improving the welfare of other people. Indeed, altruistic and egoistic motives may be complementary in the process of making a prosocial difference, as employees face opportunities to benefit not only others but also themselves through constructing valued relationships and identities.

Accordingly, this article furthers our understanding of how it is possible to build conditions in organizations that motivate employees to care about and thus cooperate with others. This understanding is important not only in organi-

zational research but also in fields across the social and natural sciences. Self-interest and cooperation is an issue hotly contested in economics (e.g., Margolis, 1982; Rabin, 1998), sociology (e.g., Etzioni, 1988; Piliavin & Charng, 1990), psychology (e.g., Batson, 1991; Schroeder, Penner, Dovidio, & Piliavin, 1995), biology (e.g., Dawkins, 1976, 1986; Wilson, 1975), and political science (e.g., Axelrod, 1984). Based on current research suggesting that virtually all people have the capacity to care about others (e.g., Batson, 1990, 1991, 1998; Eisenberg, 2000; Penner et al., 2005; Rabin, 1998; Schroeder et al., 1995; Schwartz & Bardi, 2001), social and natural scientists have become increasingly interested in building groups, communities, and societies characterized by care, compassion, and cooperation (e.g., *American Behavioral Scientist*, 2002; Smith, Carroll, & Ashford, 1995; Van Vugt, Snyder, Tyler, & Biel, 2000). An understanding of the role that work contexts play in motivating employees to care about others can contribute to these interdisciplinary efforts.

Meaning Making and Identity Construction in Organizations

This article also advances existing knowledge about meaning making and identity construction in organizations. People generally are motivated to understand their actions as purposeful and meaningful, as suggested by organizational researchers (e.g., Alderfer, 1972; Brief & Nord, 1990; Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Shamir, 1991; Wrzesniewski et al., 2003), as well as anthropologists (e.g., Becker, 1974) and psychologists (e.g, Frankl, 1959; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff, 1989). In order to experience their work as meaningful, people often aim to construct identities that are simultaneously distinguished from and integrated with others' identities. This presents an "optimal distinctiveness" challenge to strike a balance between fitting in and standing out (Brewer, 1991; see also Lawrence & Nohria, 2002; Lee & Tiedens, 2001; Meyerson & Scully, 1995).

Brewer and colleagues (Brewer, 1991; Roccas & Brewer, 2002) propose that people resolve this tension between differentiation and integration by affiliating with groups that permit them to achieve an ideal balance between the two. Little research has examined how people negotiate the tension between differentiation and integration through means other than group member-

ship. This article provides an alternative pathway to solving this puzzle, suggesting that jobs with enriched relational architectures can enable employees to strike a balance between differentiation and integration. A sense of differentiation is achieved through feelings of competence and self-determination that result from making distinct, volitional contributions to others' lives. A sense of integration is achieved through feeling valued by and connected to the beneficiaries of these contributions.

Directions for Future Research

This article poses a series of important directions for future research, the first set of which pertains to job design. Researchers should develop instruments to measure the relational architecture of jobs and test the propositions presented in this article. Further, although promising steps have been taken in critical reviews (Parker & Wall, 1998), expanded and interdisciplinary models of job design (Campion & McClelland, 1993; Edwards, Scully, & Brtek, 2000; Morgeson & Campion, 2002; Parker et al., 2001), and theory on necessary evils—tasks that require employees to harm others in the interest of a "greater good" (Molinsky & Margolis, 2005)—the job design literature focuses on a rather narrow, limited set of job characteristics defined largely by Hackman and Oldham's model. A deeper understanding of the diverse relational features of jobs, and the mechanisms through which they affect the actions, relationships, experiences, and identities of employees, is needed.

The sources of relational job design also merit exploration. The relational architectures of jobs may in large part be shaped by managers' goals and organizational structures (Morgeson & Campion, 2002; Oldham & Hackman, 1981; Parker et al., 2001), but employees themselves may also play a role in shaping these architectures. Whereas job design research treats employees as relatively passive recipients of jobs, recent scholarship suggests that employees can be active crafters of jobs (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Research that examines how, why, and when employees exercise agency in crafting the relational architectures of their jobs, and that aims to integrate these apparently competing job design and job crafting perspectives, will be fruitful. Toward this end, the framework

presented in this article suggests that relational job design may actually spark the job crafting process. Relational job design promotes cognitive job crafting by enabling employees to become aware of their impact and to redefine their work in terms of making a prosocial difference, and it promotes physical job crafting by motivating employees to incorporate new activities into their jobs in order to help beneficiaries. Furthermore, insofar as relational job design enables employees to construct identities as competent, self-determined, socially valued individuals, employees may begin to expand their roles (Morrison, 1994; Parker, Wall, & Jackson, 1997) to recognize, seek, and create more opportunities for impact. Thus, future research should build on this framework to advance toward the theoretical integration of top-down and bottom-up perspectives on work design and motivation.

Future research should also explore additional implications of this framework for research on work motivation. First, although I have focused on the motivation to make a prosocial difference, researchers should explore how work contexts support, sustain, and undermine an employee's perceived and actual ability to make a prosocial difference (e.g., Small & Loewenstein, 2003). Second, although this article has painted a largely rosy picture of the motivation to make a prosocial difference, researchers should explore its dark sides, which may include positive illusions about one's capabilities and achievements (Taylor & Brown, 1994) and a vulnerability to social control (e.g., Lofland, 1977; Lofland & Stark, 1965; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996; Pratt, 2000). Moreover, trade-offs may exist between meaning and manageability (Little, 1989, 2000; McGregor & Little, 1998) such that individuals find high levels of the motivation to make a prosocial difference depleting and difficult to sustain (e.g., Bolino & Turnley, 2005; Bolino, Turnley, & Niehoff, 2004; Kiviniemi, Snyder, & Omoto, 2002). Third, the relationship between the motivation to make a prosocial difference and intrinsic motivation is not yet clear. On the one hand, the two states may be complementary, given that competence, self-determination, and social worth are important enablers of intrinsic motivation (Amabile, 1993; Gagné & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000). On the other hand, the motivation to make a prosocial difference may undermine intrinsic motivation by overjustifying work so that it is no longer interesting for its

own sake (Staw, 1977, 1980). These two perspectives may be reconciled by classifying the motivation to make a prosocial difference not as pure intrinsic motivation but, rather, as a state of integrated regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000) in which employees are working toward value-congruent, personally meaningful outcomes (see also Clary & Snyder, 1999). Future research will be instrumental in addressing these questions.

Next, in order to identify conditions under which relational job design is more or less likely to cultivate the motivation to make a prosocial difference, researchers may focus on adverse conditions—work circumstances that inflict unusual physical, social, psychological, and/or economic costs on the employee. Researchers have studied dangerous work (Britt, Adler, & Bartone, 2001; Harding, 1959; Jermier, Gaines, & McIntosh, 1989; Suedfeld & Steel, 2000) and dirty work (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Hughes, 1951, 1962) as examples of adverse conditions in which employees are subjected to negative physical, social, psychological, and/or economic outcomes. Adverse conditions are cases of insufficient justification (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978): the conditions make it difficult for employees to justify carrying out the work. Employees are highly motivated to publicly and privately rationalize and justify working in such conditions (Bem, 1972; Festinger, 1957; Staw, 1980; Weick, 1995; Wong & Weiner, 1981). Accordingly, relational job design may be particularly important in adverse conditions because the costs inherent in the work prevent employees from understanding its purpose in terms of standard physical, social, psychological, and economic benefits for themselves. When these justifications are absent, relational job design can provide employees with a justification for doing the work: it affects, and has the potential to improve, the welfare of others. Thus, researchers should examine whether adverse conditions amplify the effect of relational job design on the motivation to make a prosocial difference.

Similarly, along with examining the moderating role of work contexts, researchers should consider how individual differences moderate the motivational impact of relational job design. For instance, employees with strong communal motives may be more responsive to relational job design than employees with predominantly agentic motives (e.g., Chen, Lee-Chai, & Bargh,

2001). As a second example, employees' deep-seated beliefs and values may play an important role in shaping their affective commitments to beneficiaries. Employees are likely to evaluate beneficiaries who are members of their in-groups more favorably than those who are members of outgroups, being prejudiced and discriminating against beneficiaries who are dissimilar to them (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; cf. Stürmer, Snyder, & Omoto, 2005) and favoring beneficiaries with similar backgrounds and experiences (Bunderson, 2003). Furthermore, employees may differ in their trust of and cynicism toward beneficiaries, openness to emotional cues from beneficiaries, and receptivity to information about beneficiaries (e.g., Kramer, 1999; Swann & Rentfrow, 2001; Tetlock, Peterson, & Berry, 1993). Therefore, researchers should explore how individual differences that affect the processes of filtering, encoding, and interpreting information about others moderate employees' reactions to relational job design.

Practical Impact of the Job Impact Framework

Hackman and Oldham (1976, 1980) developed their model in part because they believed that changing the work itself was more practical than changing organizational cultures or employees. Nevertheless, job redesign interventions can be laborious and can sometimes have weak effects and unintended negative consequences (e.g., Morgeson & Campion, 2003). One limitation of job redesign interventions may be that they focus primarily on enriching tasks with less attention to enriching the relational architectures of jobs. Whereas tasks are largely specified by external requirements of products and services and the expectations of clients and customers, relationships may be more flexible, tractable, and actionable for interventions. Managers need relatively little time and effort to increase an employee's contact with beneficiaries. Introducing a textbook editor to a group of students who benefit from her editing, for example, may enhance her motivation to make a prosocial difference. As such, relational job redesign may give rise to motivation that managers and employees alike can harness to energize action.

CONCLUSION

John Lubbock wrote, "To make others happier and better is the highest ambition, the most elevating hope, which can inspire a human being" (1923: 202–203). Whereas existing research focuses on individual differences and the task structures of jobs, I have proposed that the relational design of jobs can motivate employees to care about making others happier and better. This perspective fits with recent relational trends in theory, research, and practice and adds conceptual rigor to recurrent discussions in the popular press about "making a difference." It puts a human, social face on the design and experience of jobs, highlighting how the structure of an employee's work plays a critical role in shaping this employee's relationships with other people. It advances both the job design and work motivation literature with the assertion that jobs have important relational architectures that can motivate employees to care about improving the welfare of other people. This article thus enriches our understanding of how making a difference makes a difference for employees and their organizations.

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