

How Does Intra-Firm Blogging Affect Organizational Climate, Trust and Knowledge-Sharing?

“In Blogs We Trust”

Daniel C. Smith

September 28, 2007



Blogs: New, Easy-to-Use Medium

- Arguably a new, “participatory medium” (Blood 2004)
- The essential elements are social, not technical – sociability, linking, authenticity
- Technology however facilitates desirable social interactions: social networking, easy posting & commenting, linking & back-tracking, and RSS feeds to inform communities of interest



The McGraw-Hill Companies

BusinessWeek

MAY 2, 2005

www.businessweek.com

Blogs

will change your business

Look past the yakkers,
hobbyists, and political mobs.
Your customers and rivals are
figuring blogs out. Our advice:
Catch up...or catch you later.

[MORE ON PAGE 56 >](#)

More on blogs
online only at
[businessweek.com](#)

BLOGSPOTTING

Our new blog
on blogs debuts
online with
Stephen Baker and
Heather Green



PROFILE

The young
blogger king
of New York
real estate,
Lockhart Steele

CASE STUDY

How Stonyfield
Farm's yogurt
culture spreads
through the
blogosphere



SIX TIPS

Experts weigh in
on the do's and
don'ts of corporate
blogging

[BusinessWeek](#) [online](#)



CIS @ UH Manoa



April 27, 2006

[Squeet your way to Feed Buzz stats](#)

[Squeet just shipped](#) a new version today which lets RSS feed producers (aka bloggers) watch how much buzz their RSS feeds are generating.

To me, though, Squeet is a cool way to convert RSS feeds into emails. Good way to get your favorite blog emailed to you. Never miss when your mom posts again. 😊

Filed under: [Uncategorized](#), [RSS](#) @ 7:42 pm # [Comment](#)

[How much do you search?](#)

Joe Schmidt asks "[how much do you Google?](#)" and then shares his stats.

I wish MSN had a feature like that so I could watch how much I use it vs. Google and share that with you. It would make a killer blog sidebar gadget, too. "Watch Scoble as he searches."

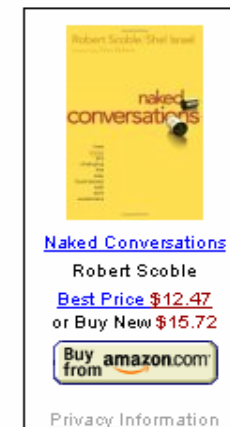
Hmmm.

Filed under: [Uncategorized](#), [Search](#) @ 7:40 pm # [Comment](#)

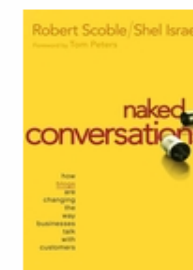
[Another test of "is Microsoft listening?"](#)

Rod Boothby, a manager with Ernst & Young, has [an awesome post](#) about what he wants from a Web Office, among other things. He wants us to make a decent internal enterprise blogging platform. Why? When it's already done. It's called Blogtronix. I got another demo the other night and it's much better

Buy from Amazon:



Buy from
Barnes and Noble:



Beyond Journals & Marketing

- Building relationships



- Sharing knowledge
- Seeking help
- Fostering a climate



Research Objectives

- Gather systematic data on the extent, purposes and policies about blogging (or not) in firms
- Assess the impact of organizational climate, particularly including trust, on blogging in firms, and vice versa
- Explore the addition of blogging to models of organizational climate and positive outcomes especially knowledge sharing and expanded contacts.



Sources of Theory

- Organizational Climate
- Trust
- Social Capital



Organizational Climate

- The concrete expression of organizational culture
- Multi-dimensional
- Some examples: Fairness, affiliation, innovativeness, attitude toward knowledge sharing, anticipated reciprocal relationships, subjective norm to share knowledge, autonomy, trust



Organizational Culture and Climate as Resources of the Firm



Organizational climate dimensions have been linked to productivity gains. (e.g., Patterson, Warr & West, 2004)

Knowledge Management (KM) is a common goal for beneficial outcomes and one to which Blogging can contribute . . .



Trust

- Multi-dimensional and can cross levels of analysis.
- Fukuyama (1995): “. . . the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest and cooperative behavior based on commonly shared norms on the part of members of the community”
- Key concepts: Risk and Spontaneous Sociability
- Fukuyama considers trust more important than financial or physical capital.



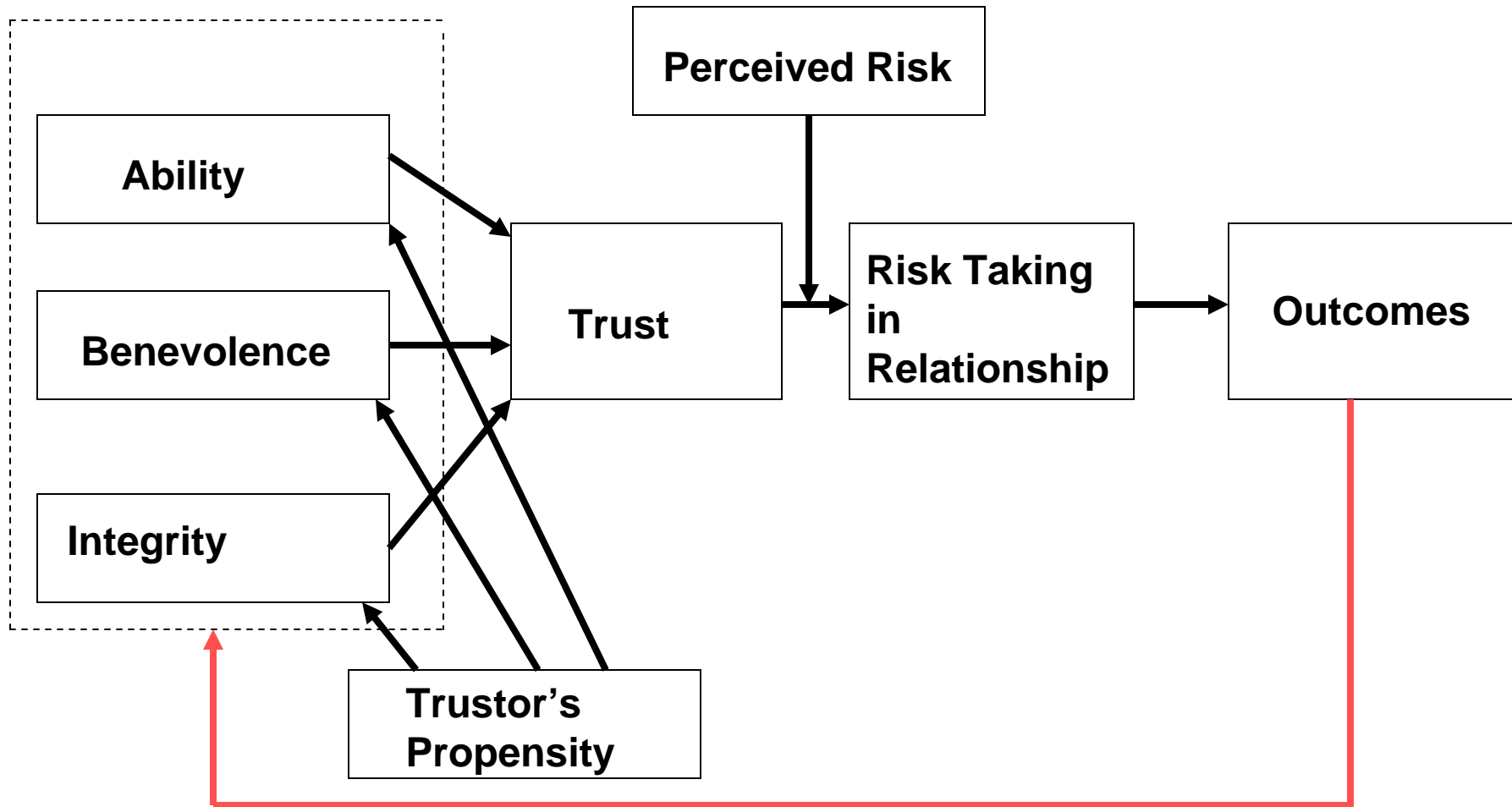
Trust

- Trust has recently grown in research importance due to the Web and e-commerce.
- “. . . the willingness of one party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party” (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995, 712).
- Allows delegation and interdependence
- Not a free resource – requires resources to maintain in firms (Houtari & Iivonen, 2004)



Factors of Perceived Trustworthiness

Mayer, Davis & Schoorman Model (1995)



The Many Faces of Trust

- Dispositional trust from Psychology & Economics (General trust in others)
- Institutional Trust from Sociology (Trust in the structures/organizational climate)
- Interpersonal Trust from Social Psychology (Trust in specific others / situations, e.g. bloggers?)
- (Following McKnight & Chervany (2002))



Social Capital

- “Social capital . . . [is] *investment in social relations by individuals through which they gain access to embedded resources to enhance expected returns of instrumental or expressive actions*” (Lin 2001 17-18, italics in the original)
- Portes (1998) attributes the first contemporary usage of the term to Bourdieu in the 1980’s. Many say term abused, overused.



Social Capital

- While social capital is an individual, relational asset, its aggregation in an organization benefits the collective. (Lin 2001)
- There is some debate about the importance of network closure (Coleman, 1988) vs “structural holes (Burt 1992, 2001). It’s best to have both. (Burt 2001; Reagans & Zuckerman 2001)



Research Questions

- Research Question 1: How do organization's blogging policies vary in relation to corporate goals and objectives?
- Research Question 2: If and how does blog and wiki usage correlate with a positive organizational climate encouraging innovation, knowledge sharing and knowledge creation?
- Research Question 3: How do psychological, sociological, and social-psychological trust in individuals in organizations foster blogging behavior?
- Research Question 4: How do blogs change the patterns of communication and discourse in firms?



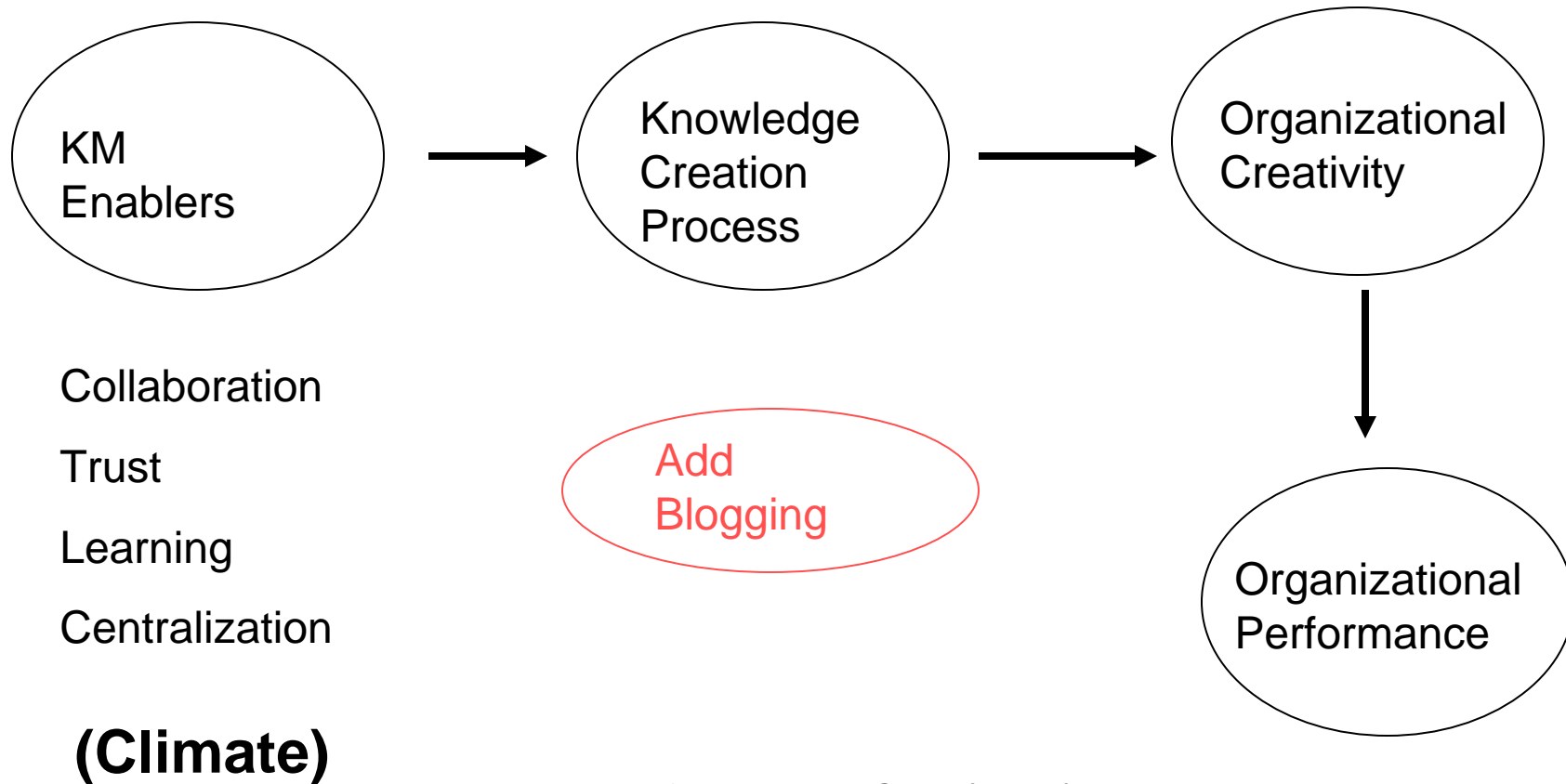
RQ 1: How do organization's blogging policies vary in relation to corporate goals and objectives?

Descriptive research. This will be based on a random sample of publicly traded firms. Previous studies have relied on convenience samples. From the sample I will document organizations' blogging policies and how they relate to goals and objectives. The study will categorize the rules, approval processes, and hardware / software configurations that produce or are perceived to produce positive results.

Also provides the opportunity to ask for company survey results and ask for access for my survey.



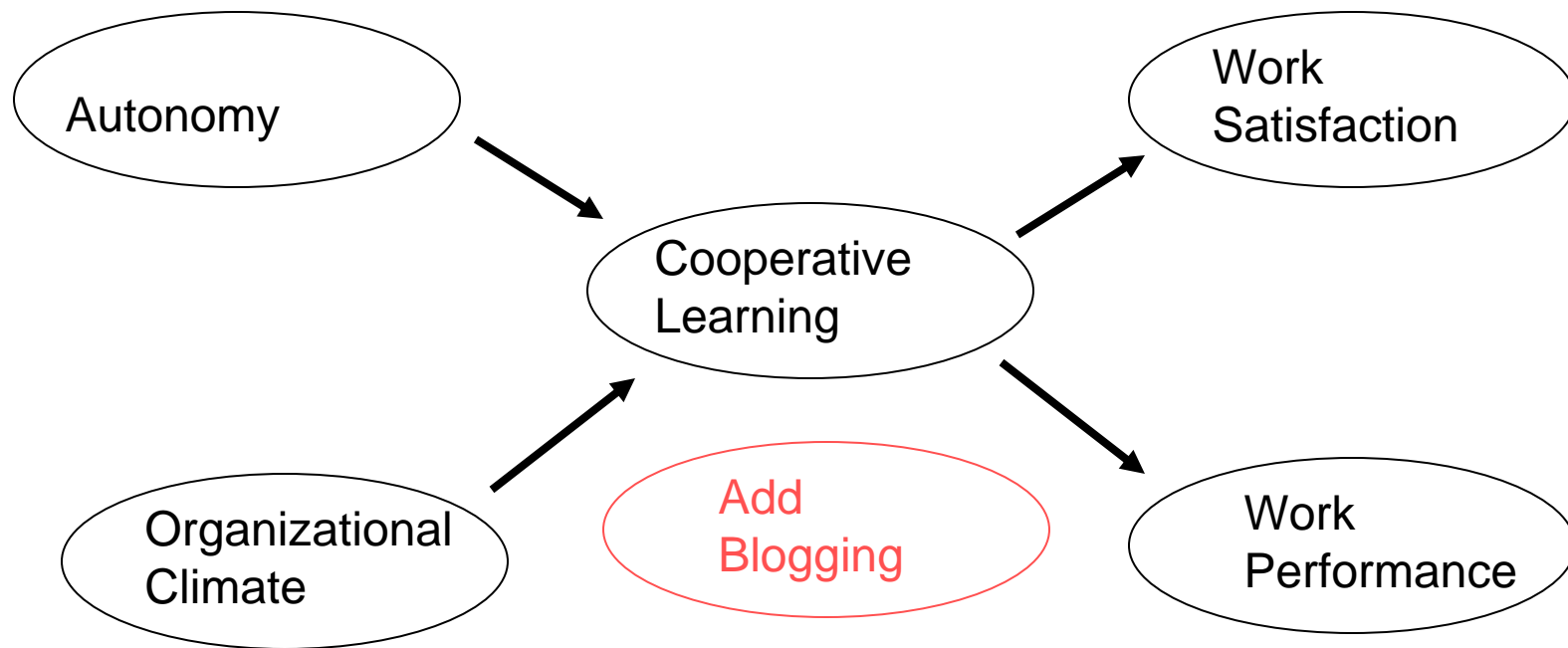
Climate as Enabler of KM



Adapted from Lee & Choi (2003)



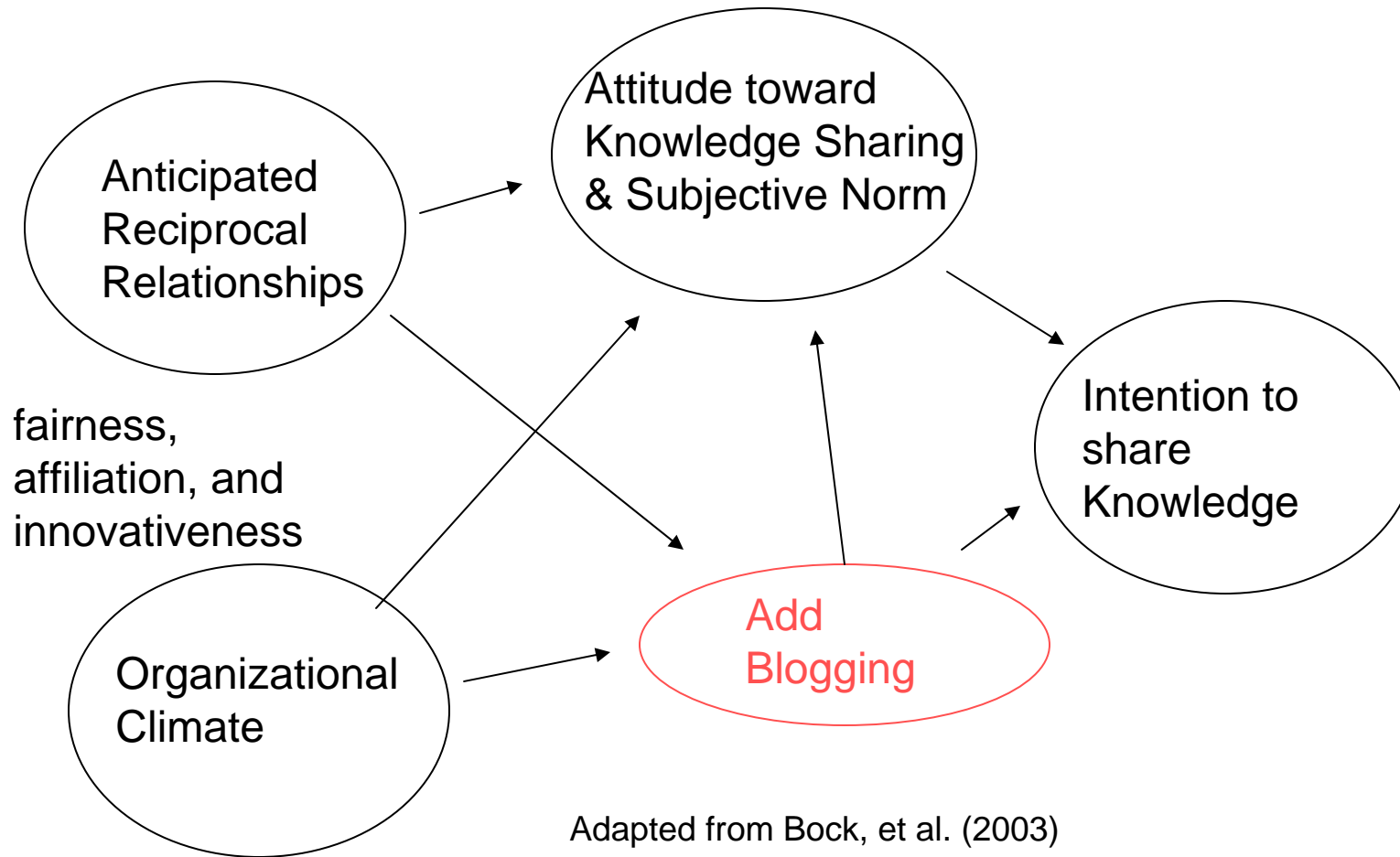
Climate as Antecedent of Effective KM



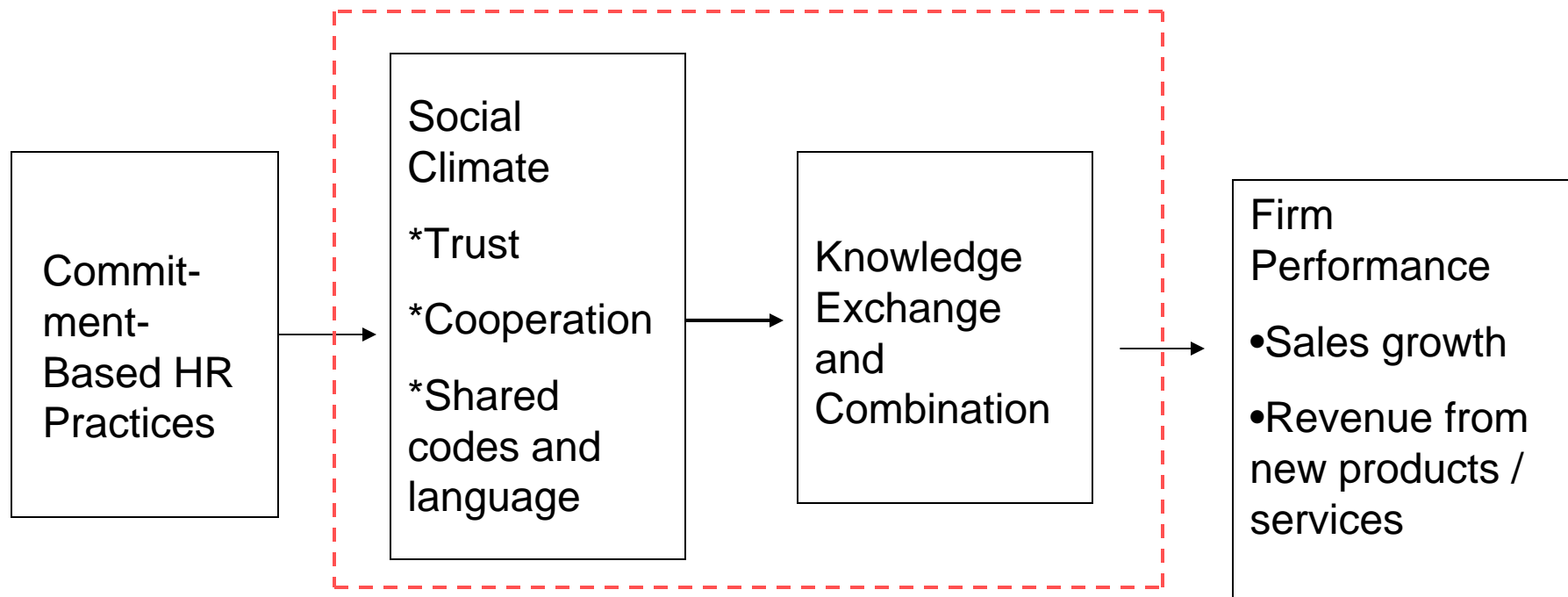
Adapted from Janz & Prasarnphanich (2003)



Climate and Intention to Share Knowledge



Build On One of Several Well-Conducted Organizational Climate & Performance Studies

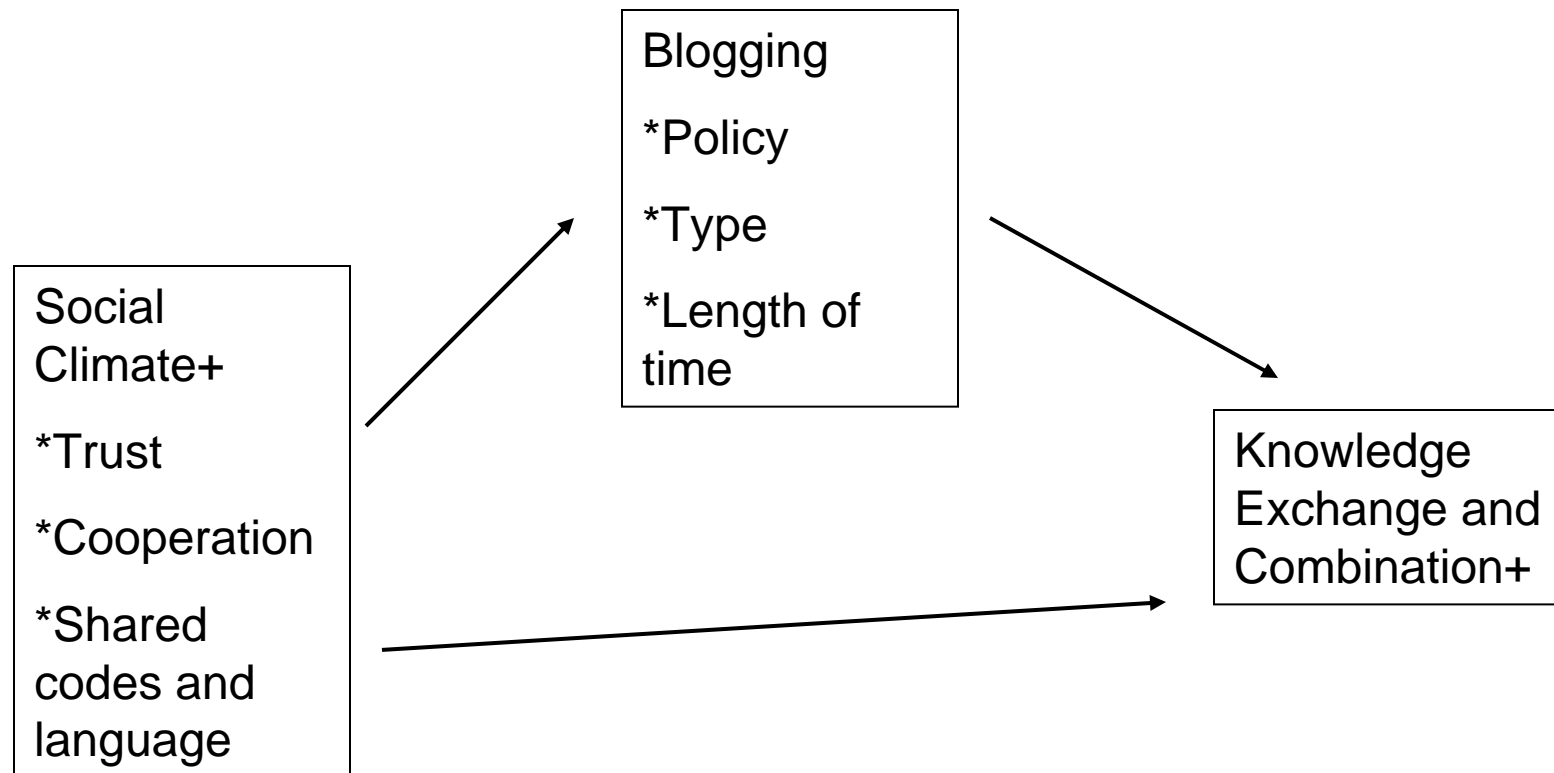


Adapted from Collins & Smith (2006), Figure 1, p 545

They have a compact, practical set of measures with sufficient reliability to which blogging variables could be added. I would propose to omit the HR variables and focus on social climate, blogging, and knowledge exchange and combination. Firm performance would be future work.



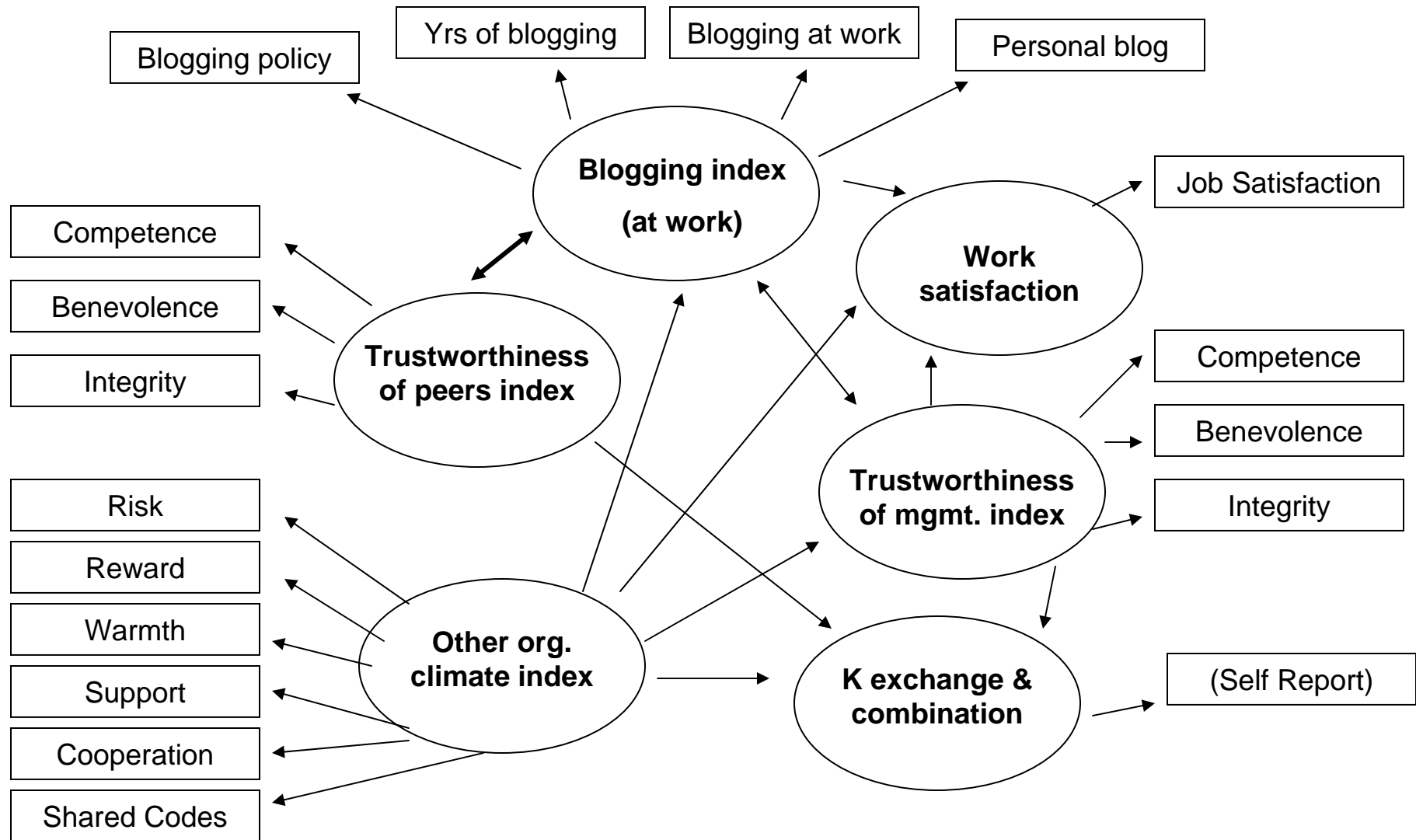
Cut to the Core Collins & Smith (2006)+. Ask “Does Blogging Add Any Value?”



Firm performance would be for future research. Could add “meat” with Job Satisfaction, etc.

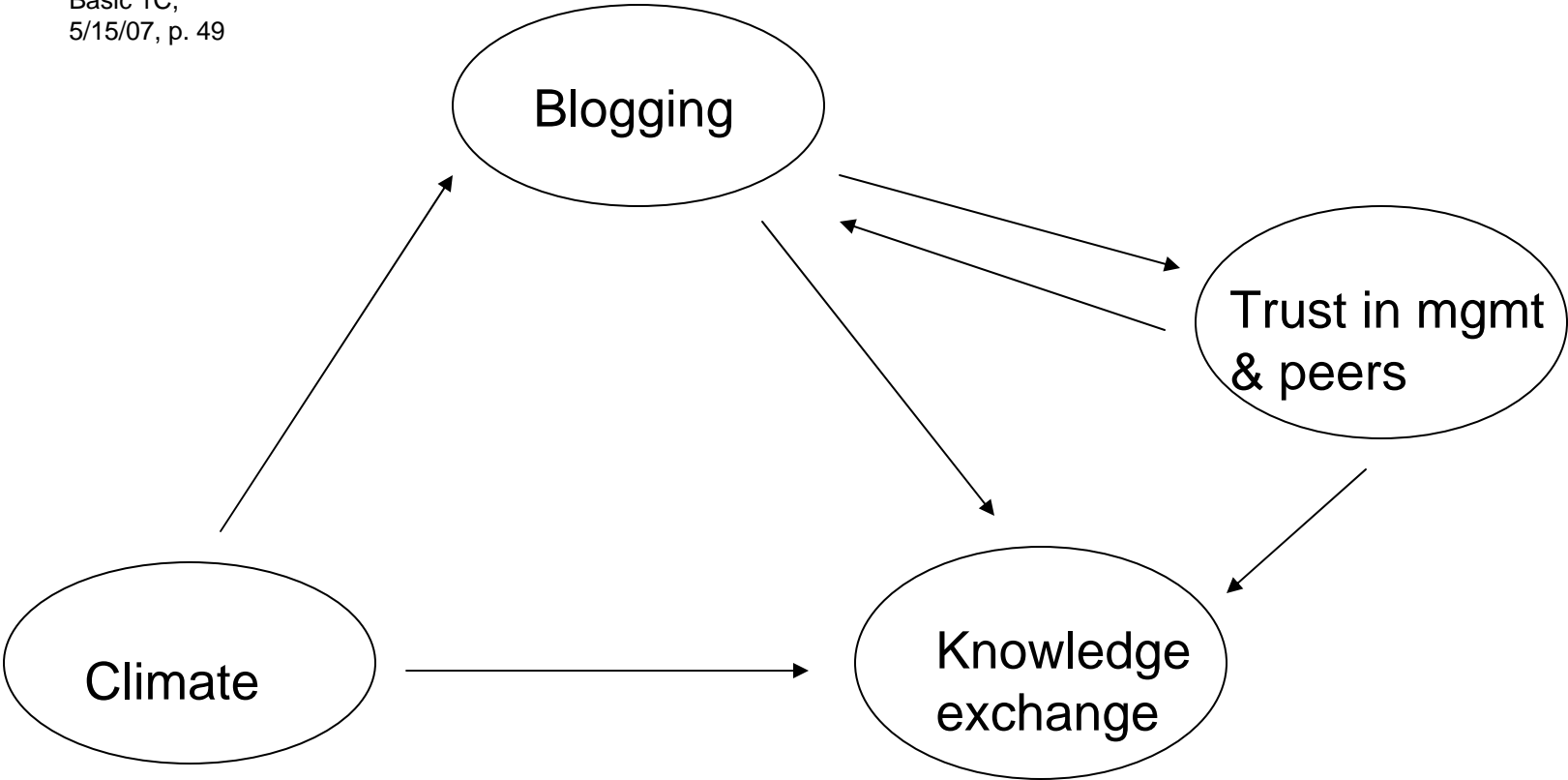


Approx. Complexity of the “Real World”



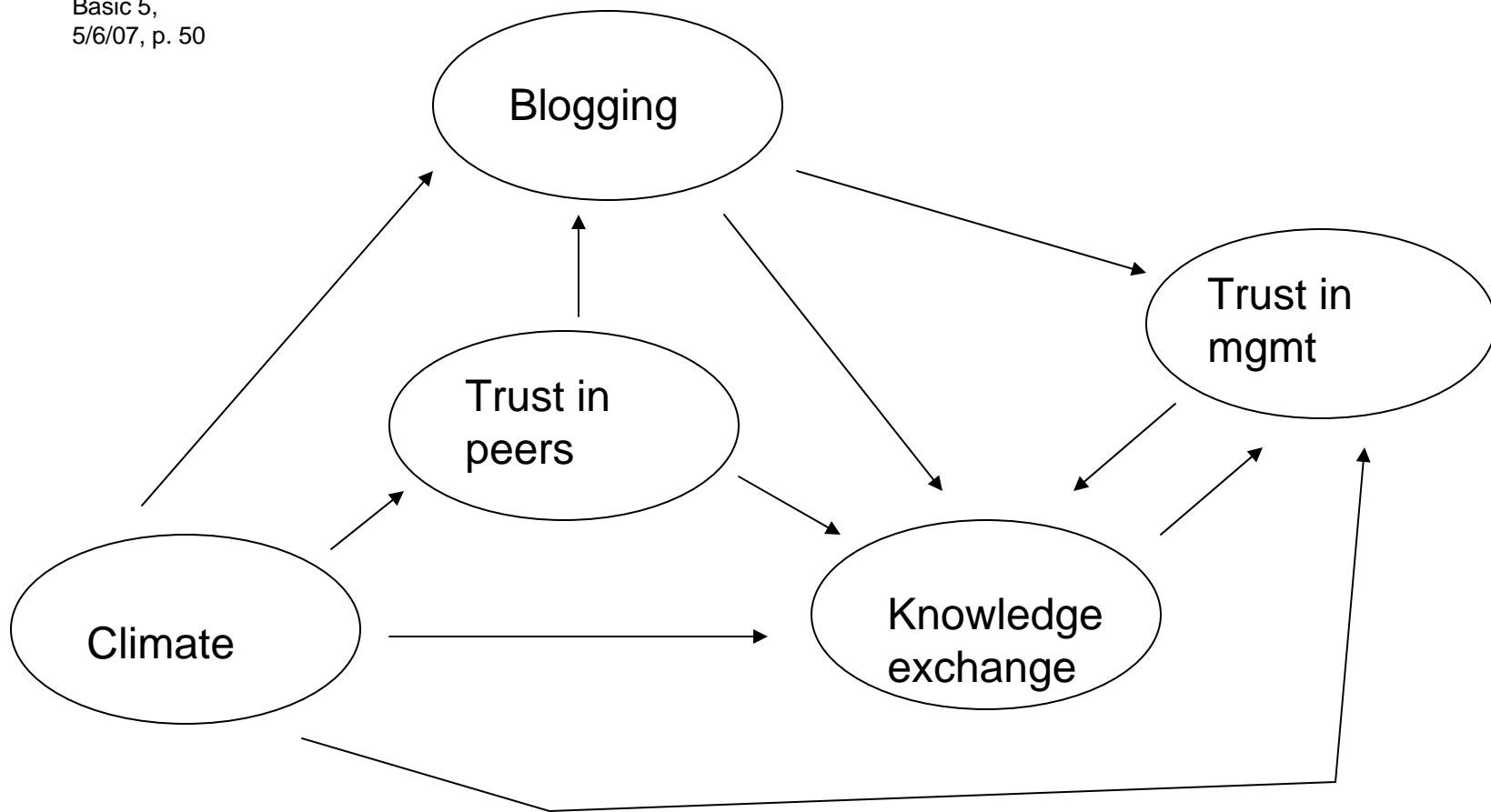
Core Model

Basic 1C,
5/15/07, p. 49



Breaking Out Trust

Basic 5,
5/6/07, p. 50



RQ 2: If and how does blog and wiki usage correlate with a positive organizational climate encouraging innovation, knowledge sharing and knowledge creation?

H1.1: Individual participants will perceive business blogs to be more successful if those blogs help build strong ties – cohesion -- within the primary work group or department.

H1.2: Individual participants will perceive business blogs to be more successful if those blogs build weak ties within the firm, i.e. they bring in people outside the primary work group.



RQ 2: (continued)

- H2.1 A positive organizational climate positively correlates with the adoption of blogs.
- H2.2 A positive organizational climate positively correlates with the use of blogs. (Reading of, posting to, number of blogs.)
- H2.3: Contributors' positive evaluations of their company blogging policies increases blog usage.
- H2.4: Contributors' positive evaluations of their company blogging policies increase the perception of blog quality and/or utility.



RQ 3: How do psychological, sociological, and social-psychological trust in individuals in organizations foster blogging behavior?

H3.1: Organizational trust positively affects the adoption and use of blogs.

H3.2: Organizational trust is affected positively by the adoption and use of blogs.

In addition, if both of those hypotheses are true, trust and blogging form a virtuous circle.



RQ 4: How do blogs change the patterns of communication and discourse in firms?

- H4.1 Employees in organizations using blogs will report less email overload.
- H4.2: Employees will rate the amount of project or task-related email as less with blogging in use.
- H4.3 Organizations with higher levels of trust will favor blogs over email for project coordination.
- H4.4 Use of blogs will stimulate the use of phone contacts. (This is a partial replication of the Jackson, et al. (2007) finding.)
- Research question 4, while very interesting, is supplemental to the main research questions.



Data Collection for Dissertation Elements

Descriptive element:

Bloggging policy and goals (e.g. relative emphasis on knowledge vs. relationship-building) by survey of random sample of Wilshire 5000. Phone interviews with spokespeople; collection of policies.

Also seek access approvals for employee survey.



Data Collection for Dissertation Elements (cont.)

Analytical element:

2a. Pilot and then online survey of MBA students

2b. Online survey individuals in at least one firm



Data Collection & Analysis

- Cross-tab classification of organizational blogging policies by
 1. What is supported or allowed
 2. Expectations of management
 3. Employee participation



Data Collection & Analysis

- Survey data inspection & scaling
 1. Distributions
 2. Reliabilities
 3. Confirmatory factor analysis
- Hypothesis testing of survey data via
 1. Correlation
 2. Structural equation modeling fit
 3. Use multiple regression as backup
 4. Significance testing



Anticipated Contributions

- More generalizable random sample data on corporate goals and policies on intra-firm blogging
- Theoretical insights on the contribution of blogging at work on desirable social behaviors, particularly, trust, organizational climate, networking and knowledge sharing.
- To practice on blogging in companies
- To the research stream related to Web 2.0



Questions?



Mahalo!

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<http://www2.hawaii.edu/~smithdan/blogs&trust/blogpage1.html>

<http://inblogswetrust.blogspot.com/>

