native explanations for observed phenomena are considered. The data presented should form a balanced view and not be molded to fit a particular ideological viewpoint. This paper may well be correct in asserting that PSI have beneficial physiological effects, but, on the basis of the stance adopted and data presented, it is difficult to assess the validity of that assertion.

REFERENCES


Ben Hardy
University of Cambridge

Integrating Organizations and Physiology: Getting Started

We welcome the dialogue generated by Ben Hardy. We are especially excited by his call and recommendations for future research, since we share with him the excitement offered by this theoretical and research domain in organizational studies. We see our AMR paper (2008) as simply a starting point—an invitation to our field to consider human physiology as offering important yet relatively ignored mechanisms for explaining connections between conditions in work organizations and human beings at work. In addition, we see our focus on positive social interactions as a way to open up consideration of how and in what ways work organizations can be salutary for individuals rather than simply sites where employees are physiologically damaged.

In his commentary Hardy applauds our paper’s efforts “to re-embody the study of management” and “to initiate an interdisciplinary conversation.” However, his critiques are concerned with both the strength of the empirical evidence supporting the effect of positive interactions at work and the use of terminology like physiological resourcefulness. We briefly address each of these issues below and conclude with some hopes for this nascent field of inquiry.

STRENGTH OF THE EVIDENCE

In our paper we deliberately provide relatively detailed accounts of the reviewed studies in order to be as transparent as possible about the bases of our inferences. Hardy’s dialogue is helpful in pointing out important qualifications of our interpretations of the links between positive social interactions at work and blood pressure, and in elaborating additional considerations in interpreting the immune and neuroendocrine data that are contained in the studies we review. His major point is that we have simplified very complex processes and relationships, raising questions about the strength of any connection between positive social interactions and employees’ physiology at work.

We attempted to be very clear about what evidence we were using to suggest that there is a probable link between positive social interactions at work and the body, and then to ask the general question of what this might mean for new ways of thinking about such core ideas as organizational practices, organizational culture and leadership, work recovery, and work engagement. We had no intention of presenting an exhaustive review of all possible literature, nor did we intend the paper to be a primer on all the
issues involved in using this kind of method. We wholeheartedly agree that this kind of research should be treated in all of its complexity. The first author has, in fact, organized a symposium (Heaphy, 2005) and a professional development workshop (Heaphy & Akinola, 2007) with colleagues at the annual meeting of the Academy of Management that have included explicit discussion of the challenges, difficulties, and complexities that a number of researchers have faced in engaging in this interdisciplinary research. Our hope is that a paper like ours will not deter researchers from other disciplines from engaging with organizational researchers about this topic but, instead, will suggest ways in which organizational context might influence variables they care about.

**LANGUAGE MISUSE**

In his critique Hardy notes several misuses of language in our description of physiological systems and how they work. We greatly appreciate his corrections of claims that he believes are inaccurate, and we welcome further specification and clarification of core processes. We had experts read our paper before we submitted it, and we thought we had done the homework to make it as accurate as possible. We encourage future researchers to build on our invitation and to explore in even greater depth the core explanations for how they believe organizations can be linked to physiological systems.

**LOOKING FORWARD**

We agree with Hardy’s three recommendations for moving forward: (1) to use data accurately and with care, (2) to resist or avoid terms that are not justified by evidence, and (3) to aspire to provide balanced evidence to support claims and conclusions. We would add one additional suggestion for future work: we encourage a focus on the broader area of organizations and physiology, instead of a potentially narrower field of management. While this research area may be of interest to managers, we do not see it as one that needs to be aligned with managerial interests. We see one of the major contributions of our work as linking physiology to positive social interactions, a construct that is used by organizational researchers who work at many different levels of analysis and in a variety of research domains (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). Even more broadly, our paper connects this area of research to the “relational turn” in the social sciences, in which the interactions between people are an important focus of analysis (e.g., Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000; Dutton & Ragins, 2007; Emirbayer, 1997). We see this as an important theoretical linkage that helps to connect human physiology to a broad array of organizational research areas.

**REFERENCES**


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