Jones, R. G. (2012a). Defining a psychology of nepotism. In R. G. Jones (Ed.), *Nepotism in organizations* (pp. 1–9). New York, NY: Routledge.
Jones, R. G. (2012b). Toward a new understanding of nepotistic organizational behavior. In R. G. Jones (Ed.), *Nepotism in organizations* (pp. 253–267). New York, NY: Routledge.
Jones, R. G., & Stout, T. (2015). Policing nepotism and cronyism without losing the value of social connection. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice*, *8*, 2–12.
Livnat, Y. (2004). On the nature of benevolence. *Journal of Social Philosophy*, *35*, 304–317. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9833.2004.00234.x
Mayer, R. C., Davis, J. H., & Schoorman, F. D. (1995). An integrative model of organizational trust. *Academy of Management Review*, *20*, 709–734. doi:10.5465/AMR.1995.9508080335
Muchinsky, P. M. (2012). The nepotistic organization: What is this place and how do the people make it? In R. G. Jones (Ed.), *Nepotism in organizations* (pp. 43–66). New York, NY: Routledge.
Mulder, B. K. (2012). A model of organizational nepotism. In R. G. Jones (Ed.), *Nepotism in organizations* (pp. 219–251). New York, NY: Routledge.
Rousseau, D. M., Sitkin, S. B., Burt, R. S., & Camerer, C. (1998). Not so different after all: A cross-discipline view of trust. *Academy of Management Review*, *23*, 393–404. doi:10.5465/AMR.1998.926617
Schoorman, F. D., Mayer, R. C., & Davis, J. H. (1996). Organizational trust: Philosophical perspectives and conceptual definitions. *Academy of Management Review*, *21*, 337–340.
Schoorman, F. D., Mayer, R. C., & Davis, J. H. (2007). An integrative model of organizational trust: Past, present, and future. *Academy of Management Review*, *32*, 344–354. doi:10.5465/AMR.2007.24348410
Tomlinson, E. C., & Mayer, R. C. (2009). The role of causal attribution dimensions in trust repair. *Academy of Management Review*, *34*, 85–104. doi:10.5465/AMR.2009.35713291
van Hooft, E. A. J., & Stout, T. (2012). Nepotism and career choice, job search, and job choice. In R. G. Jones (Ed.), *Nepotism in organizations* (pp. 67–91). New York, NY: Routledge.

What About the Rest of Us? The Importance of Organizational Culture in Nepotistic Environments

Benjamin Biermeier-Hanson
Albion College

To date, empirical investigations into whether nepotism, specifically, or social connection preference (SCP), generally, is positive or negative within the realm of organizational scholarship has been limited. Indeed, most of

Benjamin Biermeier-Hanson, Department of Psychological Science, Albion College.
Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Benjamin Biermeier-Hanson, Department of Psychological Science, Albion College, 611 East Porter Street, Albion, MI 49224. E-mail: biermeierhanson@gmail.com

https://doi.org/10.1017/iop.2014.7 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the early discussions in this field on the subject have focused on previous work done outside the organizational area (i.e., Bellow, 2003). A recent Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology *Organizational Frontier Series* book on the subject has brought some initial attention to the subject by approaching it from multiple domains within the organizational literature (Jones, 2012). Jones and Stout (2015) have highlighted the possible advantages and disadvantages of SCPs and have taken the stand that SCPs might in fact provide more benefits than drawbacks, particularly given that formalized policies may lead to unfair discrimination.

Broadly speaking, this response agrees with the general arguments laid out in the focal article. Indeed, some of our initial work has confirmed that competence, or merit, is a critical factor in determining the job attitudes of bystanders, or nonfamily employees in a nepotistic environment (Biermeier-Hanson, Nieminen, & Dickson, 2012). With a few exceptions, the other empirical work on the topic has focused on individual-level qualifications and attitudes or on individual legal cases. This response, however, focuses on the importance of broad contextual factors that can lead to differing perceptions of SCPs. Specifically, I believe that organizational culture is a major determining factor that can act as a moderator between SCPs and individual attitudes and organizational-level outcomes.

Organizational Culture and Attraction–Selection–Attrition

Organizational culture, defined as a set of shared beliefs, values, and assumptions that guide behavior within an organization (Schein, 1985), has been studied in a wide variety of contexts. It has been discussed in the context of nepotism, in that nepotism has been posited to accelerate the attraction–selection–attrition process (Dickson, Nieminen, & Biermeier-Hanson, 2012). As was alluded to in the focal article, being socially connected may result in individuals being more attracted to an organization and being selected because of "fit" and advantages in human capital (i.e., family members may have more knowledge of the business from exposure at a young age). In addition, family members or socially connected individuals may be socialized into an organization's culture more quickly than are those who are not similarly connected. Finally, individuals who are not socially connected individuals may be more prone to turnover because of a misfit with the culture. Although attraction–selection–attrition presents one lens to view nepotism in the context of culture, there are other perspectives that could (and should) be considered.

Organizational Culture as a Moderating Contextual Factor

In addition to accelerating attraction–selection–attrition, other aspects of an organization's culture (and, hence, its shared values and beliefs) likely dictate

https://doi.org/10.1017/iop.2014.7 Published online by Cambridge University Press

how SCPs are perceived and, as a result, whether they act as a positive or negative force within an organization. Although it may seem obvious, it is notable that cultures in which SCPs are accepted are more likely to find success when employing these practices. Jones and colleagues have argued that we should not eliminate these practices (Jones & Stout, 2015). If this is the case, it begs the question of how a culture can be more conducive to SCPs.

Much of the organizational culture literature has focused on the critical role of the founder of an organization (e.g., Schein, 1985, Schneider, 1987). Founders are critical to an organization's culture, particularly in organizations that employ SCPs. Many organizations start small and often rely on SCPs in the beginning. Some of the examples given in the focal article, such as Walmart and Ford, highlight the familial beginnings of large and successful organizations that have traditionally and openly relied on familial relations. The founders of these organizations have intentionally "kept it in the family" to varying degrees and have created and maintained a culture in which this is openly a core value. The balance, however, is struck with merit. That is, many family-owned companies have no issues hiring a highly talented family member to take charge in varying capacities. Some evidence exists that suggests that the cultures of family-owned firms promote the development of employees more than do the cultures of firms that are not family owned (Denison, Lief, & Ward, 2004). Ford's hiring of Allan Mullaly stands as one recent and highly successful example of a family-controlled organization hiring on the basis of merit. SCPs thus likely have fewer detrimental effects when there is a transparent culture around SCP that also values merit for nonconnected individuals.

> *Proposition 1*: Organizational cultures whose use of SCPs is a transparent part of their core values and beliefs see greater benefits than do organizations in which SCPs are employed but are not part of the core culture.

> *Proposition 2*: Organizational cultures that use SCPs while encouraging hiring or promotion because of merit-based factors for nonconnected individuals see greater benefits from SCPs than do those that rely solely on social connection for promotion and retention.

Related to this, culture strength, or consistency, is another factor that likely shapes how SCPs are perceived and how they affect an organization. To truly maximize the benefits of SCPs while minimizing the disadvantages, there must be also a consensus around the culture. Previous research has shown that culture strength acts as a moderator between other culture dimensions and performance (Kotrba et al., 2012). For a culture to be supportive of SCPs, there must be an agreement regarding the core values around these practices.

> *Proposition 3*: Organizational cultures with higher levels of culture strength see greater benefits in the use of SCPs than do organizational cultures with low levels of culture strength.

https://doi.org/10.1017/iop.2014.7 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Culture, in this instance, has been framed at a broad conceptual level. This response does not advocate a particular measure of culture, though certain schools of thought may lend themselves better to empirical measurement in this context. Specifically, descriptive measures that focus on values or dimensions may better capture how conducive an organization is to SCPs. For example, more collectivistic cultures may be more accepting of SCPs when compared with highly individualistic cultures. That said, efforts should be made in both prescriptive and descriptive domains to further our field's ability to measure values around SCPs.

Conclusions

Ultimately, I agree that formalized policing of SCPs is an ineffective and potentially discriminatory way of dealing with this prevalent phenomenon. In this response, I argue that organizational culture is a critical moderating element that can help maximize the potential benefits of SCP while minimizing the potential disadvantages of subsequent negative outcomes. Ideally, if SCPs are heavily used, they should be an accepted aspect of organizational culture instilled by the founder from the outset. Leaders within an organization must continue to shape and maintain a culture that accepts SCPs by maintaining standards of merit while remaining both transparent and consistent. That is, an organizational culture that (a) has core values around the use of SCPs, (b) relies on merit-based selection and promotion, and (c) has an agreement around the core values of the culture will likely maximize the benefits of SCPs described in the focal article while minimizing potential negative outcomes, such as perceptions of violated justice, lowered job satisfaction, or counterproductive work behaviors (to name a few possibilities).

This is by no means a full model of the many ways culture can affect SCPs. There are many related constructs, such as leadership, which are not directly addressed here. This commentary is aimed at bringing increased attention to the importance of context, broadly, and culture, specifically, to future theory development and study around SCPs.

References

Bellow, A. (2003). *In praise of nepotism: A natural history*. New York, NY: Doubleday.

Biermeier-Hanson, B., Nieminen, L. R. G., & Dickson, M. W. (2012, April). *The effect of nepotism on bystander job attitudes.* Poster presented at the 27th Annual Conference of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, San Diego, CA.

Denison, D., Lief, C., & Ward, J. L. (2004). Culture in family-owned enterprises: Recognizing and leveraging unique strengths. *Family Business Review*, *17*, 61–70. doi:10.1111/j.1741-6248.2004.00004.x

Dickson, M. W., Nieminen, L. R. G., & Biermeier-Hanson, B. (2012). Nepotism and organizational homogeneity: How the attraction–selection–attrition (ASA) process is accelerated by nonmerit-based decision making. In R. G. Jones (Ed.), *Nepotism in organizations* (pp. 93–128). New York, NY: Routledge.

Jones, R. G. (Ed.). (2012). *Nepotism in organizations*. New York, NY: Routledge.

https://doi.org/10.1017/iop.2014.7 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Jones, R. G., & Stout, T. (2015). Policing cronyism and nepotism without losing the value of social connection. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice, 8*, 2–12.

Kotrba, L. M., Gillespie, M. A., Schmidt, A. M., Smerek, R. E., Ritchie, S. A., & Denison, D. R. (2012). Do consistent corporate cultures have better business performance? Exploring the interaction effects. *Human Relations*, *65*, 241–262. doi:10.1177/0018726711426352

Schein, E. H. (1985). *Organizational culture and leadership: A dynamic view*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Schneider, B. (1987). The people make the place. *Personnel Psychology*, *40*, 437–453. doi:10.1111/j.1744-6570.1987.tb00609.x

The Bittersweet Silver Spoon: Considering the Mixed and Contextual Effects of Nepotistic Organizational Practices

Thomas Stephen Calvard
University of Edinburgh

Cindy Rajpaul-Baptiste
University of Kent

The focal article by Jones and Stout (2015) has revealed just how much there is for industrial and organizational (I-O) psychologists to try to unpack in the implications of nepotism for organizations and employees, particularly in relation to selection and development practices. In this brief commentary, we try to make two contributions to this state of affairs. First, we discuss the importance of disentangling different types of nepotistic and social connection preference (SCP) effects in context because these differences may in turn implicate distinct processes and effects that shape employee outcomes. We do this in part by drawing on findings from some of our own data on nepotistic hiring within a Caribbean coast guard organization (Rajpaul-Baptiste & Calvard, 2012). Second, we argue that for nepotism and SCP to be considered more fully and fruitfully as topics for I-O research and practice, these topics need to be integrated and consolidated more thoroughly along with existing work on diversity management, cross-cultural psychology, organizational discourses, organizational contexts, institutional logics, and social network

Thomas Stephen Calvard, University of Edinburgh Business School, Edinburgh, United Kingdom; Cindy Rajpaul-Baptiste, School of Psychology Keynes College Canterbury, University of Kent, Kent, United Kingdom.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Thomas Stephen Calvard, University of Edinburgh Business School, 29 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh, United Kingdom EH8 9JS. E-mail: thomas.calvard@ed.ac.uk

https://doi.org/10.1017/iop.2014.7 Published online by Cambridge University Press