Perceptions of Power and Organizational Sentiment: Analysis of One-Word Descriptions

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Abstract-Ambiguity surrounds the use of power within organizations. Positively, power provides a basis for clarity in direction and a means for the execution of work. Negatively, power resides at the nexus of subjugation and coercion. In all its inherent complexity, power is more than an external force that buffets those within organizations. Those employed within organizations also have power regardless of their organizational strata. At a minimum, each member has the power to conform or rebel. The results of this study suggest that the degree to which one perceives this power influences one's organizational sentiment. In terms of the research methods, an author-created survey, developed in SurveyMonkey, was made available to those with accounts in LinkedIn to participate in this study examining linkages between perceptions of power and organizational sentiment. Survey participants provided oneword descriptions of their organizations, which were assessed for positive or negative sentiment using the Bing sentiment lexicon. Using cross-tabulations of these data revealed that accounting for perceptions of power reduced the error of predicting organizational sentiment as measured by Goodman and Kruskal's lambda. The error was reduced further when the moderating demographic variables of age and gender were included. Whereas these results were limited by the potential for self-selection bias and sample size (n = 24), they are useful for those concerned with organizational performance and human resource management.

Index Terms—Business, motivation, philosophy, semantics.

I. INTRODUCTION

Contingency resides at the core of human experience. Few words convey the potential and consequence of contingency better than if. Upon the fulcrum of if, weighs the balance of existence. Perceptions and realities mingle and collide in the anguished assessments, influencing individual and collective action. In the poem The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, William Blake stated, "if the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite" [1]. And so, it is within organizations as well. Potential exists to influence organizational reality, and yet individuals typically experience and perceive socially constructed organizations as givens rather than manifestations amenable to perpetual redefinition [2]-[3]. Such a limiting situation is consequential existentially, if not also organizationally. Power provides a useful point of inquiry for understanding this phenomenon, as it forms the basis of individual and collective action within

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organizations [4], [5]. To situate this concern into the context of this study, it is beneficial to provide some insight into the existent research on power, perceptions, and organizational sentiment.

Prior research has examined key aspects related to power, perceptions, and organizational sentiment. In terms of power, organizational research has examined bullying [6]-[7], productivity [8]-[9], and conformity [10]-[11]. Research on organizational perceptions has explored expectations [12]-[13], equity [14]-[15], and promotions [16]-[17]. Lastly, organizational sentiment research has covered topics ranging from social media [18]-[19] and employee feedback [20] to political rhetoric [21]-[23]. Individually and collectively, this research established that an examination of perceptions of power and organizational sentiment was not only strategically aligned with prior studies but was also beneficial for understanding sensemaking dynamics within professional institutions. Making that linkage explicit requires an examination of the approach taken in this study. This study made use of an author-created survey, to obtain responses from individuals with active LinkedIn accounts. SurveyMonkey was used as the platform in which the survey instrument was developed and administered. Among the questions asked, respondents were afforded the opportunity to provide a one-word description of their organization. Sentiment analysis was conducted on these one-word organizational descriptions using the Bing sentiment lexicon. Because there was no control over who could participate in the survey there was concern that the study results could be skewed due to self-selection bias. Consequently, only descriptive statistics were analyzed in this study of perceptions of power and organizational sentiment. This constraint to an analysis of descriptive statistics does not suggest a lack of analytic rigor. Goodman and Kruskal's Lambda (GKL) was used to measure the proportional reduction in error of organizational sentiment associated with accounting for perceptions of power. Correlation among these elements was assessed at the response level using polychoric correlation, and in cross-tabulation format using Cramér's V. The results of this study, while limited due to the concern of self-selection bias, were robust. As such, they contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon of perceptions of power and organizational sentiment, as well as providing a foundation for subsequent research and inquiry.

This paper made use of a standard format containing a survey of literature (Section II), the methodology (Section III), a presentation of results (Section IV), and lastly, an exposition of limitations, extensions, along with a summary of findings and implications in the conclusion (Section V). Collectively, these results are potentially beneficial to those interested in organizational performance and human resource

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management. Background from prior research related to power, perceptions, and organization sentiment is presented next (Section II).

II. POWER, PERCEPTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONAL SENTIMENT

Understanding relationships between perceptions of power and organizational sentiment, through an analysis of one-word descriptions, benefits from the context derived through an examination of previous research. Whereas there are a multitude of research threads that would add both nuance and depth to such an examination, a narrower focus provides one with the essential parameters required for interpretation. Consequently, this survey of literature was parsimoniously limited to only three overarching foci, that covered research in the areas of organizational power, perceptions, and organizational sentiment. Even in a limited state of development, collectively these three foci provide useful context. Due to it being the central element of research focus, power was examined first.

Power can be defined in a multitude of ways depending on one's context and focus. From a critical perspective, Oliga defined power from a "contingent, relational view," where the complex, relational aspects of power come from "the selfunderstandings of the agents involved in a power relation and the structural constraints and conjunctural opportunities they confront in a particular, concrete situation," and the contingent component of power emerges from a "dialectically critical sense" [24]. Organizationally, power can be perhaps most clearly understood in bureaucracies since that organization type makes transparent use of hierarchical relationships based on accepted privilege and subjugation. Downs explained that power in bureaucracies is "concentrated at the top of the hierarchy," that this structure "reinforces the authority of officials holding those positions," and that as a result "bureaus are oligarchic in nature" [25]. These relationships are not simply externally focused on the execution of tasks, but potentially influence psychological aspects of work, which holds implications for one's perceptions. Hummel noted that within bureaucracies, "all relationships, even the relationship of psychic functions, involve hierarchy and therefore power" [26]. As indicated, such a dynamic can influence one's perceptions. More fundamentally, power could be inseparably linked to one's notions of truth. For Foucault, "truth isn't outside of power...truth is...produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power" [27]. Power within organizations is a complex phenomenon. As indicated in the introduction (Section I), previous research on organizational power has focused on, among other elements, the topics of bullying [6]-[7], productivity [8]-[9], and conformity [10]-[11]. The definition of power used here was contingent and relational and pointed to a linkage between power and perceptions within organizations. As such, it is useful to turn attention now to aspects of perceptions.

Perception, as defined by Pickens, is "the process by which organisms interpret and organize sensation to produce meaningful experience of the world." [28]. It is through perceptions that people make sense of what is going on around them. Such sensemaking occurs at work as well. As stated previously, research on organizational perceptions has explored elements including expectations [12]-[13], equity [14]-[15], and promotions [16]-[17]. Ideally, one's

perceptions are accurate; however, as noted by Pickens, "what an individual interprets or perceives may be substantially different from reality" [28]. Pickens' finding in this regard suggests that there are at least some potential concerns associated with how and what people perceive. Stated more directly, there is uncertainty associated with the accuracy of perceptions, and there is ample room for error. These errors are produced, in part, based on the selectivity associated with human attention. Sherif and Cantril explained, that what "we perceive of the natural and social world around us is highly selective," which are "determined by external and internal conditions" [29]. Such a situation holds important implications for this study, as people assess the degree to which they perceive having organizational power. As indicated through this survey of literature related to perceptions, there is a potential gap between one's perceptions of a situation and reality. Whereas such a gap is consequential objectively, it does not limit this study as the focus is one establishing potential linkages between perceptions of power and one's organizational sentiment. Since both elements being assessed are ultimately subjective, the perceptions related to organizational power are not constraining in respect to the research focus. The focus on perceptions is narrowed by focusing on the concept of organizational sentiment.

Organizational sentiment research, as previously presented, has covered the topics of social media [18]-[19], employee feedback [20], and political rhetoric [21]-[23]. To understand better organizational sentiment, it is beneficial to examine its foundation which is sentiment analysis. In other words, organizational sentiment can be defined as a specific context in which sentiment analysis techniques are applied. As explained by Prabowo and Thelwall, "a sentiment analysis task can be interpreted as a classification task where each category represents a sentiment," and this can be done by categorizing sentiment "into two categories: positive and negative; or into an n-point scale" [30]. In conducting sentiment analysis there are a variety of concerns. One set of concerns associated with sentiment analysis deals with issues related to aggregation. Whether that aggregation occurs at the sentence, page, or chapter level, there is concern associated with how to integrate sentiment assessments accurately and effectively. Such a concern is avoided, as it is in this study, when the sentiment assessment occurs at the word level, since there is no aggregation. Another concern of sentiment analysis is the lexicon used for assessment. Feldman contended that, "the sentiment lexicon is the most crucial resource for most sentiment analysis algorithms" [31]. Consequently, care should be given to ensure the selected sentiment lexicon is robust and proven.

Research on power, perceptions, and organizational sentiment suggest that individuals and organizations contend with these concerns with varying degrees of awareness and effect. Power can manifest itself organizationally in a variety of ways. Perception, as the process through which individuals interpret sensations, allows one to consolidate experiences. This occurs too in terms of experiences of organizational power. The underlying correspondence of these subjective assessments to reality is unknown; however, individual perceptions of power provide insight into how those working within organizations have made sense of that experience. People develop organizational sentiment in a similarly subjective fashion. Whereas existing research provides useful insight into power, perceptions, and organizational sentiment,

there is an observable gap between perceptions of power and organizational sentiment. This research was designed to fill part of that gap. With the context established through this survey of literature one is equipped to interpret the structure and results of this study, which is developed subsequently in the methodology (Section III).

III. METHODOLOGY

Power is consequential organizationally [32]. As developed in the survey of literature there are complex interrelationships among the elements of power and perceptions of socially constructed, organizational reality. The information presented in the survey of literature was instrumental in understanding the direct effects power has within organizations. Understanding potential relationships between perceptions of power and organizational sentiment benefit from further research. This study addressed a portion of the identified gap in existing research. Methodologically, this research was comprised of two distinct parts. The first aspect of the methodology related to the approach taken for data collection, whereas the second dealt with the analytic techniques. Both parts benefit from a brief explication. The approach used for data collection is presented first.

Data were collected for this study using an author-created survey, developed in SurveyMonkey, and administered through LinkedIn. The survey consisted of fifteen questions. Previous research from these data examined insights into perceptions of power, autonomy, and self-editing in organizations [33]. This paper extended that research and was based on the responses provided to a subset of four questions. More specifically, this study analyzed the responses provided to question one, to which gender do you most identify, question two, what is your age, question eight, which of the following corresponds best to the level of power you have within your organization, and question fifteen, what one word best describes your organization. Three requests were made within LinkedIn between October 2021 and January 2022 for participation in the study. There are at least three potential concerns associated with the selected approach for data collection for this study. First, the use of SurveyMonkey was determined to be unproblematic as it is already established in academic research [34]-[36]. Likewise, the use of LinkedIn is similarly grounded in academic publications [37]-[39]. These two concerns, upon examination, were considered relatively negligible in terms of potential consequences. However, the last concern addressed was determined to be more problematic. Since there was no control for survey participants, these results were prone to errors associated with self-selection bias [40]-[43]. Generally, the concerns of selfselection bias here were related to collecting a sample that was not representative of the population and errors associated with nonresponses. The concerns of representativeness and non-responsiveness were compounded by a relatively small sample size. The limitations imposed by these concerns influenced the analytic techniques used, which are developed

Due to the limitations associated with a small sample cohort and the potential issues resulting from self-selection bias the analysis of these data were constrained to descriptive statistics. The data were analyzed in cross-tabulation format. Descriptive analysis and analysis of cross-tabulation data are adequately covered in textbooks on statistical analysis [44]. In addition, three analytic techniques were used as part of the assessment methodology. Since these techniques are slightly less common, a little context is provided for each. GKL measures the proportional reduction in error for data in crosstabulation format [45]. Using GKL one can assess the benefit associated with accounting for various elements in the data. Within this study, GKL was used to determine the reduction in error of predicting organizational sentiment based on accounting for first perceptions of power and subsequently perceptions of power with the moderating demographic elements of age and gender. In addition to GKL, polychoric correlation was used to assess the dependency structure of the underlying distribution [46], using the polycor package in RStudio [47]. When possible, Cramér's V was used to assess correlation in the aggregate using the cross-tabulation data [48] and was calculated in RStudio using the *lsr* package [49]. Based on this review, it should be clear that no attempt was made in this study to generalize these findings. In interpreting the results (Section IV) one should avoid generalizing these findings beyond those delimited by this study. Prior to presenting the results, it is essential to provide insight into how the sentiment of the one-word descriptions was assessed.

There are a variety of analytic techniques and lexicons available for conducting sentiment analysis. For this study, the sentiment analysis was conducted in RStudio using the tidytext package [50]. More specifically, within the tidytext package, the Bing lexicon was used to determine the sentiment associated with the respondent provided one-word, organizational descriptions. The Bing sentiment lexicon contains 6,785 words, each with a corresponding positive or negative sentiment determination. Previous work by Hu and Liu examined the "semantic orientation," using a positive/negative polarity, for "opinion words" [51]. These opinion words are determinative in sentiment analysis. As Ahmad, Bakar, and Yaakub explained "sentiment words" are "the most important elements to consider" in semantic analysis [52]. Whereas different sentiment lexicons (e.g., AFINN) make use of a more granular assessment scale, the binary determination provided by the Bing sentiment lexicon was determined to be most appropriate for this study as the focus was on simply determining if perceptions of power influence organizational sentiment in a positive or negative fashion, rather than on the degree to which it does so. In terms of application, there is a relatively wide spectrum of research which has made use of sentiment analysis. These studies include research examining aspects of business [53], [54], healthcare [55], [56], defense [57], [58], and law [59], [60]. Since this research is looking at simple, one-word descriptions, no aggregation methodology was needed. Such an approach would have been required had the unit of measurement being assessed was larger than a singe word (e.g., sentence, paragraph, chapter). With the approach to the sentiment analysis of this study established, it is possible to summarize the key points of the methodology.

Data for this study were collected using an author-created survey in SurveyMonkey, targeting members of LinkedIn. Because there was no control over participation, this study was limited by potential self-selection bias. To account for this, only descriptive analysis techniques were used. Crosstabulated data were analyzed using GKL, Cramér's V, and polychoric correlation. Sentiment of one-word descriptions were assessed using the Bing sentiment lexicon. Collectively, this approach generated results which provide insight into perceptions of power and organizational sentiment; those results are presented next (Section IV).

IV. RESULTS

This study aimed to assess descriptive statistics and correlations among perceptions of power and organizational sentiment, as determined through an assessment of the oneword descriptions provided by survey respondents. The results section is comprised of three major focus areas. The first focus is comprised of a presentation of the results associated with the one-word organizational descriptions and the corresponding sentiment assessment (Table I). Following those results, are the incorporation of the results associated with the corresponding perceptions of power, with a presentation of these results as cross-tabulation (Table II). Lastly, the results are further elaborated upon to include a cross-tabulation of perceptions of power and organizational sentiment accounting for the demographic data of age and gender (Table III). Collectively, these results provide insight into perceptions of power and organizational sentiment available through an analysis of one-word descriptions. To establish the context of these results it is beneficial to provide detail as to the specific one-word descriptions provided, where modifications were made to establish sentiment, and the corresponding sentiment assessments. These results are provided in Table I.

TABLE I: ONE-WORD ORGANIZATIONAL DESCRIPTIONS AND SENTIMENT

Response	Synonym	Sentiment
Amazing		Positive
Bureaucratic*	Rigid	Negative
Busy	Hectic	Negative
Change	Refine	Negative
Collaborative*	Cooperative	Positive
Comfortable		Positive
Community formation	Cooperative	Positive
Determined	Purposeful	Positive
Fast-growing		Positive
Flexible		Positive
Hierarchy	Rigid	Negative
Immature		Negative
Inconsistent		Negative
Lacking	Lack	Negative
Mundane		Negative
Ok	Fine	Positive
Purpose	Purposeful	Positive
Success		Positive
Tedious		Negative
Top-heavy		Negative
Tyranny		Negative
Unrelevant	Irrelevant	Negative

^{*}Denotes a response that occurred twice

Potential respondents had access through LinkedIn to an author-created survey, administered through SurveyMonkey, between the dates of 17 October 2021 and 20 January 2022. All those who responded (n = 30) agreed to participate in the study. However, only a subset of that number (n = 27) provided answers to the survey questions. In cases for which the provided one-word description did not have a

corresponding sentiment in the Bing lexicon, synonyms of the term were assessed sequentially in the order provided. Of the original responses (n = 27), three terms did not have a corresponding sentiment for either the provided word or for any of the identified synonyms. The one-word organizational descriptions of client, growing, and life were therefore omitted from the study. Due to the omission of those three responses, all subsequent analyses were based on the resulting subset cohort (n = 24). Of those providing one-word organizational descriptions with corresponding sentiments (n = 24), most descriptions (n = 22) were unique. The descriptions bureaucratic and collaborative were each used twice. Several of the words (n = 11) required the use of a synonym to establish sentiment. This treatment, while reasonable, did inject a degree of contestability in the results. There are two aspects that reduce the concern with the adopted treatment. First, of the eleven words requiring the use of synonyms to establish sentiment, there was near parity between those assessed as positive (n = 7) and those assessed as negative (n = 6). The treatment does not appreciably alter the observed polarity in aggregate sentiment. Second, in aggregate there are an equal number of positive (n = 12) and negative (n = 12) sentiment descriptions. This provides a comparable number of observations from which to assess potential relationships. Based on the one-word organizational descriptions and corresponding sentiment (Table I), it was possible to cross-tabulate these data with perceptions of power. These data are presented in Table II.

TABLE II: CROSS-TABULATION OF PERCEPTIONS OF POWER AND

SENTIMENT					
Power	Positive	Negative	Total		
Little	5	9	14		
Moderate	3	2	5		
Significant	4	1	5		
Total	12	12	24		

As indicated in Table II, there were an equal number of positive (n = 12) and negative (n = 12) sentiment descriptions of organizations among the provided survey responses. Additionally, there were more responses indicating perceptions of holding a *little* power (n = 14) than either a moderate amount (n = 5) or significant (n = 5) amount of power. These data were further analyzed using GKL, Cramér's V, and polychoric correlation. The results of the GKL analysis revealed that accounting for perceptions of power, as measured by one having a little, moderate, or significant amount, reduced the error of predicting the sentiment, associated with one's one-word organizational description ($\lambda = 0.333$). Between perceptions of power and description sentiment in the aggregate, there was a moderate amount of correlation determined by using Cramér's V (ϕ_c = 0.362). Similarly, at the individual response level, there was a moderate amount of correlation observed between perceptions of power and organizational sentiment when measured by polychoric correlation ($\rho = 0.521$). These results suggest that perceptions of power influence organizational sentiment. More specifically, those holding perceptions of little power were prone to hold negative organizational sentiments, whereas those holding perceptions of significant power were more prone to hold positive organizational sentiments. Additional insight was achieved through a crosstabulation of these data to account for moderating effects of age and gender on the observed response relationships. These results are presented in Table III.

TABLE III: CROSS-TABULATION OF AGE, GENDER, POWER AND

Age	Gender	Power	Positive	Negative
F 29 & Younger M		Little	1	0
	F	Moderate	0	1
		Significant	0	0
		Little	2	3
	M	Moderate	2	1
		Significant	0	2
F 30 & Older M		Little	2	3
	F	Moderate	0	0
		Significant	1	1
		Little	2	1
	M	Moderate	1	0
		Significant	1	0
Total			12	12

Due to an inadequate number of observations (n = 24) visà-vis the of categorical elements (n = 12), it was not possible to calculate Cramér's V. However, it was possible to determine the GKL value, which provided insight into the effect of accounting for the moderating effect of demographics on the previously observed relationship between perceptions of power and organizational sentiment. The results of the GKL analysis revealed that accounting for the demographic elements of age and gender, along with perceptions of power, reduced the error of predicting the sentiment, associated with one's one-word organizational description ($\lambda = 0.417$). These results suggest that while accounting for perceptions of power reduced the error associated with predicting organizational sentiment (λ = 0.333), accounting for age and gender added further explanatory power to one's prediction.

These results centered around one-word organizational descriptions and the corresponding sentiment assessment (Table I), the relationship between perceptions of power and organizational sentiment (Table II), and the moderated relationship between perceptions of power and organizational sentiment when the demographic elements of age and gender were included (Table III). Of the original responses (n = 30), a few did not provide responses to the questions (n = 3). Additionally, the terms client, growing, and life did not have corresponding sentiments for either the provided response or its available synonyms. As a result, this analysis was based on a reduced cohort (n = 24). As presented in Table II, there was a degree of positive correlation observed between perceptions of power and organizational sentiment as measured using both Cramér's V ($\phi_c = 0.362$) and polychoric correlation ($\rho = 0.521$). Further, accounting for perceptions of power reduced the error associated with predicting organizational sentiment ($\lambda = 0.333$), and that relationship was further improved by incorporating the moderating demographic elements of age and gender ($\lambda = 0.417$). Collectively, these results suggest that organizational sentiment, when assessed using one-word descriptions, is influenced by perceptions of power. With these results summarized in sufficient detail, it is possible to turn attention to some limitations and extensions to this study, which are presented in the conclusion (Section V).

V. CONCLUSION

Perceptions of power was correlated with organizational sentiment. Accounting for perceptions of power reduced the error of predicting organizational sentiment ($\lambda=0.333$). When the demographic elements of age and gender were included, prediction error was reduced further ($\lambda=0.417$). That the underlying relationship between perceptions of power and organizational sentiment were moderated by the demographic elements of age and gender could be of interest to those engaged in research and praxis related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The core relationship between perceptions of power and organizational sentiment could be of benefit to those engaged in organizational performance and personnel management. Whereas these results are useful and informative, there were several limitations that warrant interrogation.

This study was based on responses of those in LinkedIn to an author-created survey administered in SurveyMonkey. There were several limitations associated with this approach. First, there was no control over those participating in the survey. Consequently, there was concern that the results could be biased due to self-selection bias. Second, the results were limited to those who have LinkedIn accounts. LinkedIn is a common social medium; however, since it was the only source of survey responses one should avoid generalizing the observed findings of this study. Lastly, this study was based on a relatively small cohort (n = 24). Whereas one can certainly analyze even small samples beneficially, there was utility associated with acknowledging that small samples further constrain one's ability to generalize results. These concerns were important individually and collectively as they delimit the results of this study. However limited, these results do contribute to establishing a relationship between perceptions of organizational power and organizational sentiment. Establishing the relationship further would benefit from extensions to this study. Several of the most immediate extensions are offered for consideration.

The results of this study contribute to the establishment of a relationship between perceptions of power and organizational sentiment. Extensions to this study would contribute to a more complete and robust understanding of this phenomenon. While this research could be extended in a variety of ways, only the most immediate extensions are presented here. As indicated, this study was based on selfselected participants from LinkedIn. Future studies would benefit from both a controlled sampling protocol and a broader sampling frame. This study had a single question related to perceptions of power and organizational sentiment that was based on one-word descriptions. Expanding the line of questioning associated with perceptions of power would add nuance and enable the establishment of response consistency. Allowing respondents to provide narrative responses related to their organizational descriptions would provide additional context as well as textual material for sentiment analysis. Lastly, the results of this study could be extended beneficially by examining potential gaps between perceived and actual power within organizations and relationships among economic and existential components of organizational assessments. In short, it would be beneficial to move from perceptions to elements amenable to a more direct and concrete assessment. With this in mind, it is possible to conclude this examination of perceptions of power and organizational sentiment.

Power, real or perceived, provides a foundation for agency. The results of this study suggest a relationship between perceptions of power and organizational sentiment. From the perspective of power, such a relationship could conceivably convey that those sensing a significant degree of power are able to influence determinative elements of work and they, therefore, hold positive sentiments; alternatively, the observed relationship could convey that one who perceives having a significant degree of power at work is grateful for that autonomy and correspondingly has a positive organizational sentiment. Further research is needed to ascertain the complex web of meanings potentially underlying the observed relationship between perceptions of power and organizational sentiment. Until then, there is still value associated with considering the latent organizational implications of these results. Returning now at the end of this study to the fulcrum of if, if organizations wish to improve morale, at least as conveyed through employee sentiment, perhaps empowerment is an effective place to start. Power is not only the power to do but also the power to be, and this research suggests that being positive organizationally is linked to higher perceptions of power.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

R. A. Jackson developed the research focus, analyzed the results, and wrote the initial draft of the paper. E. M. Slover developed and administered the survey instrument, collected the data, and edited the paper for publication. B. L. Heath analyzed the data and edited the paper for publication. All authors approved the final version of the paper.

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