This report aims to depict the main points from the research paper titled ‘A comparison of the communication behaviours of temporary employees and new hires’. The research paper was created to focus on temporary employees due to the increase in the number of temporary employees and realising the large impact they were having on the American working population. The paper discussed that in the last five years the number of temporary employees has doubled and is steadily increasing, (Sias, Kramer & Jenkins, 1997) There has always been a recognition of permanent employees in an organisation and many studies have been conducted on this group however, temporary employees have only been focused on very recently.

The primary goal of the research paper was to focus on the temporary employees and was to “identify communication behaviours unique to temporary (disposable) workers” (Sias et al., 1997, pg.1). There are two groups that are being compared, they are the temporary employees; who work for an organisation only upon request and only when their help is required and the second group is referred to as the ‘new hires’ who are employed by the organisation to fulfil a permanent position.

Temporary employees are needed in an organisation for reasons, such as a “sudden surge of work, sickness, holiday or maternity cover, or simply because an organisation has chosen to reduce core employees and hire extra help when it is needed” (http://www.ebjonline.com/article.cfm?IDa=183, 2005 p.1). In my opinion, the appeal to be a temporary employee is fairly clear, these employees request when they want to work, they have flexible hours and they get to experience working in a number of different organisations. Also, they are able to move from an organisation immediately if they are unhappy with that particular work environment. Evidently, some people enjoy the 9-5 hours and the security that their permanent position brings to them however in a changing world where more people with families and other various commitments are entering the workforce, the flexibility of hours for temporary employees is becoming increasingly appealing.

Also, in my opinion, temporary employees are very important to an organisation as they provide a way for an organisation to access extra help upon request without having to go through the long process of hiring a new permanent employee. The temporary employees are directly assisting the organisation in keeping up to date with
their work and helping with the unexpected workload. The temporary employees have had experience in a range of organisations and can provide a lot of valuable input if they are given the chance by the organisation to share their knowledge (Sias et al., 1997). It is important for both the employee and the organisation to nurture an environment where this knowledge can be shared among all employees. Sias et al. (1997) also discuss the isolation that temporary employees may face when they enter a new organisation which he acknowledges can be either brought on by the individual or by the other employees at the organisation. It is understandable that temporary employees are less likely to form relations with other employees because they realise that they will be moving to another organisation in a short amount of time.

The research paper reports on an experiment that was conducted which had 1 research question and 7 different hypothesis. The hypothesis and research question mainly focused on how temporary employees and new hires compare with one another in various aspects of information seeking and information giving. They also look at topics such as perceived social costs, outcome variables and the motivation for temporary employment. These hypothesis were bound by two theoretical concepts being the uncertainty reduction theory and impression management.

The experiment that was carried out had a sample size of 78 employees with 36 being new hires and the remaining 42 were temporary employees. The experiment used various types of scales to measure employee behaviours, the four scales being the Likert scale, Rizzo, House and Lirtzman’s six-item instrument, the Chao, Wiltz and Gardner’s five item instrument and finally the Kramer’s four item instrument. All four scales were self reported, and in my opinion there is a chance that the results may have been confounded by the participants as they may have lied on the scales, which will ultimately decrease the reliability and validity of the experiment conducted. Personally, I thought that the sample size used in this study was too small because using a small sample size does not allow for a suitable representation of the population, in this case the population being all the temporary employees and new hires of the whole industry. I agree with the authors when they comment that even with the small same size used, most of the hypothesis tested were supported however to increase the accuracy of the results further experiments need to be carried out.
The experiment supported most of the hypothesis formulated by the authors of the research paper. The research question was not supported by the results, three hypothesis were supported, three hypothesis were only partly supported and one hypothesis was not supported. There were a number of hypothesis formulated and tested in the research paper therefore only two examples will be discussed in this paper. An example of a hypothesis that was supported was that temporary employees perceived fewer social costs associated with seeking information regarding their performance than new hires. This points out that new hires find that the social pressure to make good friends, perform well and impress employers is much higher than for temporary employees mainly due to the fact that the temporary employees know that they are only going to be in that organisation for a short while. An example of a hypothesis that was not supported was that temporary employees reported directly soliciting on appraisal information more frequently than newly hired permanent employees. A possible reason for why this hypothesis may not have been supported according to Sias et al. is because the new hires may have been worried about losing their jobs if they weren’t performing well which actually reported them as directly soliciting appraisal information on more occasions than the temporary employees. Also, as Morrison (1993) mentions, “the more information that newcomers sought, the more satisfied they were, the better their performance and the less inclined they were to leave their jobs,” (Morrison, 1993, pg.12) which may be another reason for this hypothesis not be supported.

This research paper highlighted some very interesting points about the difference in communication behaviours between temporary employees and new hires. It would be ideal for future research to be conducted with a larger sample size to provide more robust conclusions to predicted hypothesis.
Bibliography

