Corporate Security: Identifying and Understanding the Levels of Security Work in an Organisation

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Abstract The study undertook an examination of corporate security through the lens of the broader socio-organisational literature to understand its organisational stratum, seating, and function. The methodology applied a survey questionnaire to security practitioners, incorporating two measurement tools to assess work level and time-span of discretion. Findings identified work levels across the corporate security function. These work levels indicate that the corporate security function operates at the operational and tactical strata, with limited strategic executive impact. Furthermore, the corporate security function is positioned within the technostructure, providing analytical support to business operations. The study identified a significant disconnect between the corporate security literature—as written by security practitioners and academia—and the socio-organisational literature, with many points of divergence. These findings suggest the need for study replication and a review of the security literature in regards to executive influence.

Keywords Corporation · Business · Occupation · Stratum · Work · Complexity · Security

Introduction

Corporate security is a practicing domain within the broader security domain that provides for the protection of people, information, and assets within an organisation, providing for the self-protection of a corporation (Smith and Brooks 2012, pp. 51–79). According to Brooks and Corkill (2014), corporate security enables the executive team to exercise control and governance across the organisation in the face of security threats. Such protection encompasses a broad range of focused activities across multiple agencies. However, corporate security's undertakings, along with their position in the organisational structure, are poorly understood

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by many organisational leaders and security practitioners alike, partly due to the developing nature of security as a discipline both professionally and academically (Smith and Brooks 2012, pp. 51–79; Walby et al. 2014; Dupont 2014).

The embedded nature of corporate security across organisations within society requires an exploration of its undefined boundaries and structure, as the very nature of an effective corporate security function requires access transversely and hierarchically (Barefoot and Maxwell 1987; Talbot and Jakeman 2009; Bayuk 2010; Sennewald 2011). Consequently, the ability to accurately define, position, and understand the corporate security function and its personnel stratum is significant in the contemporary organisational environment. In part, this study begins to address some of these issues.

Corporate Security

The practice of corporate security has often been considered from a managerial context (Barefoot and Maxwell 1987; Sennewald 2011; Gill 2014). Consequently, effective security managers view their outputs as contributors to overall business objectives (Smith and Brooks 2012; Campbell 2014) and seek to align the security function to the whole of organisation outputs (Fay 2002; Sennewald 2011; Button and Stiernstedt 2016). Such a position can be historically traced to early theorists of scientific management, where Fayol (1949) purported security to be, among others, a core organisational activity. The embedded nature of the corporate security function within organisations lends credence to the adoption of a management perspective in the examination of the function in aid of understanding corporate security.

Jaques (1951, 1976, 1996) articulated that organisational management fitted within the broader corporate business strata. He premised seven levels of occupational strata, each with a more extensive level of authority and task complexity in the achievement of business outcomes. Jaques' work aligned these occupational levels to key business task indicators, through coupling a roles' task complexity with its time-span of discretion in undertaking corporate work. Such coupling facilitated the articulation of an organisational roles seating within the organisation's broader span of control chart.

In contemporary times, corporations have changed in significant ways, one being expansion to global business operations underpinned by significant reward and risk trade-offs (Talbot and Jakeman 2009). Accordingly, the global business environment has seen that the strata of management within organisations undergo significant changes. These changes include structural shifts, encompassing labour force role changes through the introduction of automation and outsourcing, reduction in temporal-spatial restrictions, and executive level strata transformations, which combined have swayed organisational redesign (Stichweh 2008; Martin and Fellenz 2010). Whilst in such transformations, security remains an essential aspect of doing business, such change means that corporate security's position and influence in senior decision-making and span of authority are poorly understood within the structure of modern organisations as they pursue business goals (Hayes et al. 2013). Nevertheless, in the corporate security literature, differing views prevail, as it is argued by some that security managers are positioned and operate at the executive level whilst others believe that this is not the case (McGee 2006).

Many security practitioners believe that security should be operated within the executive reaches of an organisation (Sennewald 2011; Cubbage and Brooks 2013; Crump 2015). Such a view is said to aid effective decision-making and facilitate long-term alignment between

security operations and business objectives in the management of security risk. Proponents of this view suggest that the stratum of security work permeates throughout organisations, reaching from individuals responding to day to day events on the ground, through middle and executive layers to manage risk at a strategic level (Campbell 2014; Crump 2015).

In contrast, opponents argue that the executive level security practitioner in modern organisations is a misnomer; as McGee (2006) and Gill and Howell (2014) point out, security is better known as a lower strata function and it has no strategic weight within many modern organisations. It is common for security to be considered a cost centre or necessary compliance group in running an organisation, as opposed to a functionally important and skilled discipline of risk reduction and performance enhancement (Coole et al. 2015). Importantly, there is a level of consensus in the literature on the limited penetration of security professionals in modern organisations (McGee 2006; Wakefield 2014), as much as there is an opposing consensus (Talbot and Jakeman 2009; Cubbage and Brooks 2013).

Many discussions on this subject are grounded in experienced reality rather than from independent academic investigation. For example, Fay (2002), Barefoot and Maxwell (1987), and Sennewald (2011) and Bayuk (2010) have written treatise on the application of security through the lens of a practitioner. The perception of the stratum of security work, from this perspective, is hindered by preconceptions inherent in the literature. Thus, there is a demand to better understand the stratum of work in the corporate security sector, both to resolve this literature dispute, and to uncover security's positioning within modern corporate organisations from a broader, more independent literature perspective (Wakefield 2014).

Significance of the Study

Corporate security is a poorly understood occupational practice area across business and society, resulting in inadequately defined educational criteria, career progression pathways, and bounded occupational seating. Furthermore, it is argued that security practitioners will come against a glass ceiling in their careers if they remain with a singular security focus. To address these concerns, the study investigated the stratum of work within the corporate security sector, aligning the corporate security function to the broader socio-organisational literature. Such alignment facilitated a more unprejudiced investigation, considering corporate security from the broader setting of corporate organisations. Thus, extricating predisposed biases or misconceptions aired within the corporate security literature.

Such an investigation enabled the functional seating of corporate security within organisations to be located and better articulated, along with the stratum of corporate security work. Specifically, where the glass ceiling for the security practitioner exists along with implications for career progression into the executive level of an organisation. This articulation is relevant to industry, academia, government, and community stakeholders and provides the starting point for the genesis of new perspectives and understandings of the corporate security function.

Research Questions

The study considered corporate security within the concept of a differentiated and stratified society (Durkheim 1933; Parsons 1951). Corporate security acts as a specialised and

functionally important occupational undertaking (Davis and Moore 1945), one which is deeply embedded in the operations of large organisations (Fayol 1949). As with other occupational sectors, corporate security is tied to the notion of consistently increasing work specialisation due to the rising complexity of modern society. Consequently, guided by previous research and discussion into the makeup and occupational spread of corporate security (Brooks and Corkill 2014; Fay 2002; Gill 2014; Sennewald 2011), this study sought to clarify the occupational stratum of work through the following research questions:

(1)   What is the stratum of security practitioners in the corporate context? and
(2)   To what extent does the corporate security function permeate throughout organisations?

In response to these questions, the study aligned the corporate security practice area with the broader socio-organisational literature to uncover its seating within the broader corporate function within organisations.

Understanding the Corporate Management Strata

Corporate management's occupational stratum represents an articulated hierarchy with foundations in structural functionalism, where work is seen as divided and specialised (Dillon 2013). Durkheim (1933) postulated that society is a system with a model of social consensus with various sub-systems, which combined make society work. However, society's sub-systems cause differentiation where society, over time, changes, adapts, and evolves to become more specialised. Accordant with the broader principles of systems theory, Durkheim (1933) suggested that each societal sub-system produces more than the sum of its parts, recognising that the roles of these sub-systems can be competitive and this can cause societal strain.

Davis and Moore (1945) articulated that the distribution of members in a society could be attributed to the inducement of individuals into required roles by means of motivation and desire. Consequently, Parsons (1951, p. 26) examined the role of individuals and things within societies' sub-systems and therefore aligned the notion of inducements to societal status, arguing that individuals' location or status in the societal system is related to their functional importance.

Functional importance is directly related to hierarchically stratified positions within society, where individuals are ranked through their significance to the societal system, along with the complexity or training and talent required to fulfil the role (Dillon 2013, p. 173). According to Davis and Moore (1945), all positions within society require some level of skill and capacity to perform, achieved either through natural capacity or training and education. Furthermore, the more culturally complex a society, the higher the level of specialisation required in occupational role capability (Davis and Moore 1945). Wilensky's (1964) body of work discussed specialisation in terms of professionalisation, where many occupations are considered "professionals," with a seating towards the top of this stratified system as the level of education and skills rises with specialisation.

Hierarchical ranking of positions and roles in society, braced through specialisation and functional significance, led to the notion of an occupational stratum of work (Dillon 2013). The stratum of work is embedded in all aspects of society and is most readily seen in formal organisations. Litterer defined an organisation, and by extension the stratum of work, as "a

social unit within which people have achieved somewhat stable relations (not necessarily face-to-face) among themselves in order to facilitate obtaining a set of objectives or goals" (Litterer 1963, p. 5).

Organisations have become society's vehicle for accomplishing goals and objectives through a system of interpersonal relationships, which aligned to a structure of authority, role, and status (Martin and Fellenz 2010; Robbins and Judge 2011). Organisational structure, along with its embodying occupational roles, their supporting delegations of authority, prestige, and societal status are directly related to and is the functional application of the occupational stratum of work (Parsons 1951; Dillon 2013).

Across the societal-organisational system, there exists a diverse set of structural typologies; however, each demonstrates commonality in the core business activities that must be undertaken. Fayol (1949) categorised and articulated such core activities as technical, commercial, financial, security, accounting, and managerial. According to Fayol, technical includes the production, manufacture, and adaptation of products and services; commercial, includes buying, selling, and the exchange of products and services; financial, which is the search for and provision of capital and its optimum use; security, which allows for the protection of property, persons, and peace of mind; accounting, through which stock take, balance sheets, costs, and statistics are developed; and managerial, which is the provision of organisation and coordination, along with strategic planning and vision, and command and control of the corporate enterprise are carried out.

Mintzberg (1980) expanded Fayol's (1949) work, postulating that alongside core activities, further commonality could be found between organisational forms across five underlying roles with hierarchical organisation (Fig. 1). These five roles include the operating core, the strategic apex, the middle line, and sitting outside of the core the technostructure and support staff. Mintzberg considered the central operations of an organisation to consist of the lower strata operating core, which includes workers directly involved in producing the fundamental products and services of the organisation, or those who directly support their production; the middle line which are those managers who sit above the operating core, providing translation of the strategic goals of the organisation into workable tasks and outputs; and then the strategic apex where strategic goals are created and implemented.

Seated alongside these central operations are the analytical workers making up the technostructure; who apply their skills to the design and maintenance of the organisation, adapting it to its environment. The role of technostructure workers is to advise on technical decision-making among other matters, such as shaping the organisations exposure to the external environment, providing analytical services to organisational functions, and designing and maintaining the organisational structural form (Mintzberg 1980, 2009; Galbraith 1985). Finally, located opposite the technostructure is a support stratum and its associated staff, being those workers who provide non-core support to the organisation, primarily employed for the exchange of special services (1980) such as legal advisers (Martin and Fellenz 2010).

Furthermore, Mintzberg (1973) outlined roles and responsibilities managerial staff undertake within an organisation, postulating that all managers are required to take on a mixture of interpersonal, informational, and decision roles to be effective. Interpersonal roles consist of the interactions with other people (customers, subordinates, superiors) as a consequence of the type of job held by the manager (Mintzberg 1973, 2009). Such interpersonal roles also include acting as a figurehead, a leader, and a liaison between the higher echelons of an organisation and the subordinates to the role (Martin and Fellenz 2010). Informational roles include the way the manager works with information, including the way information is monitored (context),
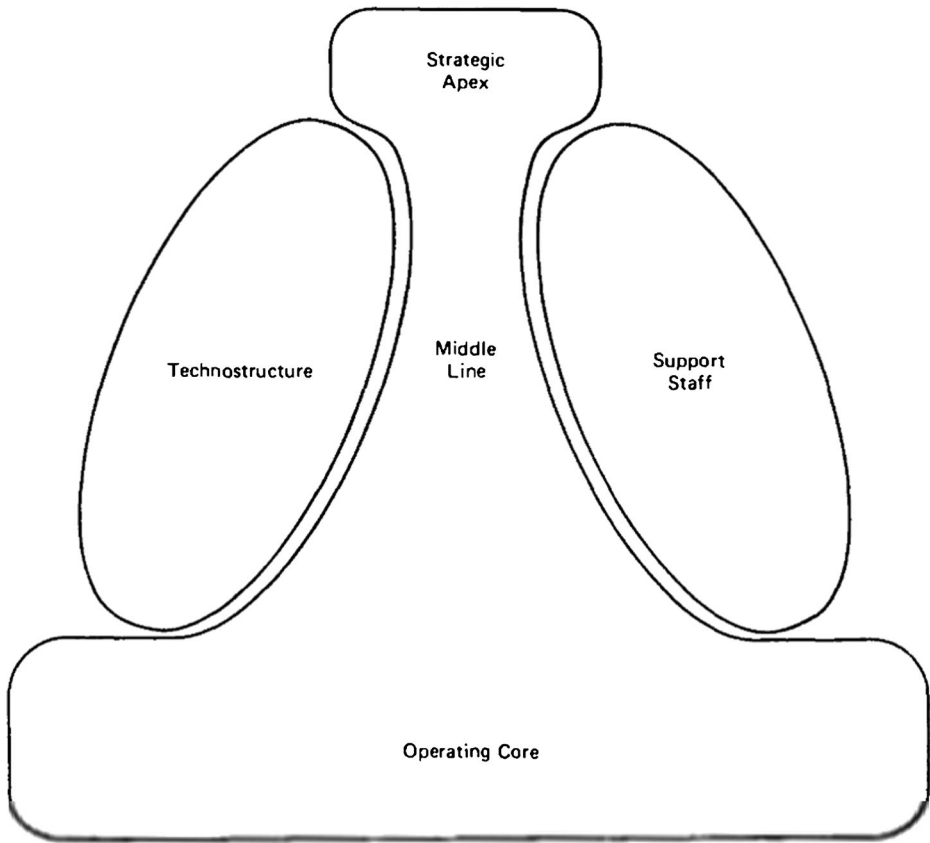
Fig. 1 The five underlying corporate organisational roles (Mintzberg 1980, p. 324)

disseminated to the relevant stakeholders, and the way the manager acts as a spokesperson for his role (Mintzberg 1973). Lastly, decisional roles include the decision-making capacity of the manager within the role. As a decision-maker, a manager must be able to make entrepreneurial decisions, handle disturbances between subordinates, allocate resources effectively, and negotiate both with superiors, customers, and other stakeholders (Mintzberg 1973, 2009).

The conduct of work and its specialisation across these activities and roles provides the basis for all organisations to engage in business activities. According to Jaques (1976, pp. 15–17), the fulfilment of organisational objectives requires work to be conducted by those individuals within the occupational stratum and directed by those in positions of authority within the stratum. Consequently Jaques (1996, 2002, p. 19) posited that work is a goal directed choice and is the direct actions one takes to achieve an assignment or task. The type of work conducted and the goals achieved are directly related to the occupational role one fulfils and its position within the occupational stratum. Jaques (1996, 2002) explained these strata of work in terms of the judgement and decision-making one undertakes within constraints such as law, standards of work, policy, and time to achieve specific goals or objectives.

Jaques (1996) identified seven functional levels of work in this organisational stratum of work (Fig. 2), where specialist functions can be aligned using the time-span of discretion measurement. Such functional levels of work include front line workers, who operate within a

time-span of discretion of 1 day to 3 months; first-line managers, with a time-span of discretion of 3 months to 1 year; unit managers, who have a time-span of discretion between 1 and 2 years; general managers, who operate at a time-span of discretion of 2 to 5 years; business unit presidents, with a time-span of discretion of 5 to 10 years; vice presidents, who have a time-span of discretion of 10 to 20 years; and chief executive officers who have a time-span of discretion of 20+ years.

Jaques argued that an individual's place on the stratum of work can be impartially determined by observing the individual's time-span of discretion, defined as the longest task undertaken in a position where the use of judgement and decision-making is required without direct oversight (Ivanov 2011). Time-span of discretion when paired with the complexity of a task was postulated as indicative of the level of work for a role (Ivanov 2011; Jaques 1996) and uncovered where within the stratum of work the roles sits. Combined, this body of work provides the sociological foundation for measuring the stratum of work in society and aligning occupations to their position within the organisational stratum.

	Support Staff	Operating Core	Technostructure
Stratum VII		CEO/Executive	
Stratum VI		Executive Vice President	
Stratum V		Business Unit President	
Stratum IV		General Manager	
Stratum III		Unit Manager	
Stratum II		Front Line Supervisor	
Stratum I		Front Line Worker	

Fig. 2 The seven strata of work (adjusted from Jaques 1996, p. 65–70; Mintzberg 1980, p. 324)

Methodology

The study was undertaken through a two-phase approach. Phase one of the study comprised a literature critique; extracting key concepts and principles that facilitated the development of a survey questionnaire instrument, drawing significantly from the work of Jaques (1996) and Mintzberg (1973, 2009). Phase two of the study distributed the survey to a purposive multinational sample of corporate security practitioners to measure corporate security's stratum of work.

Phase two's survey questionnaire contained two measurement tools, which included the Work Measurement Scale (WMS) (tool 1) and a Task Complexity Measurement Tool (TCMT) (tool 2). The WMS, in alignment with Jaques (1996) time-span of discretion measurement, examined participant's level of work through their longest task conducted with an outcome focused into the future. Participants were also asked a series of questions relating to different aspects of their work, aligned to managerial types (Mintzberg 1973). Such questions supported an understanding of the longest time in which a participant undertook aspects of their work. The allowed groupings of time-spans across different work types as an indicator of the participants work level.

The TCMT (tool 2) provided a measure of task complexity in participant's work. This tool used a series of Likert questions correlated with task complexity, directed towards participant's role at work and directly adapted from Jaques' (1996, p. 72) exploration of organisational work. The strongest agree statement (or statements) in the series of questions asked provided an indication of the individuals' level of work. These two measurements were then compared and a final work level decided.

Participants consisted of corporate security workers from the UK, the USA, the United Arab Emirates, and Australia across varying levels of seniority. As part of the survey, all participants were asked to forward the survey onto their peers to expand the participant sample in line with a snowball sampling methodology (Cohen et al. 2007). Approximately 300 participants were contacted to undertake the survey, with a response rate of 19% ($n = 58$). However, 16 responses were removed from analysis due to incomplete questionnaires resulting in a final participant sample of 42.

Reliability and Validity

Measures of reliability and validity were considered through content, construct, and face techniques. Such measurements provided insight into the instrument's ability to check results across tools and ensured an understanding of their capability to measure the work construct. Through the implementation of two tools in measuring the same construct, further reliability and internal consistency were satisfied through scored correlation (Christensen and Johnson 2014, pp. 168–169).

Both content and construct validity were supported by the use of the two independent tools in the survey. Each tool attempted to analyse a different measure of work stratification, both of which are indicators that can be self-confirmation measures. Thus, self-confirmation supported intermethod triangulation, improving the reliability and validity of the results (Denzin 1989). Consequently, as the instrument tools were developed in direct correlation to the literature, further evidence to support both content and construct validity is provided.

Furthermore, the instrument was piloted on an independent sample of security practitioners ($n = 16$), which uncovered a similar spread of security work across the occupational stratum.

Subsequent applications of these tools have indicated consistency in findings on other participant samples (Ludbey and Brooks 2015). Such consistency in findings indicates reliability in the instrument design.

Figure 3 provides a plotted standard deviation as an indicator of reliability across the research tools. The majority of assessed responses (72%) fall within the identified standard deviation, indicating that the assessed level of work has fallen within the variance between measurement instruments. This outcome indicates validity in the data and assessment method, as the majority of responses have been assessed within the variance of each work measure. Interestingly, standard deviation decreases as the strata of work increases, mirroring the expectations of Laner et al. (1969) and Allison and Morfitt (1994) who suggest that the application of Jaques (1996) work measurement approach can be difficult to apply to lower levels of the occupational stratum.

Results

Questionnaire analysis uncovered the stratum of security work within the corporate domain spans from stratum one through to stratum four (Fig. 4). Significantly, the weighting of security work is indicated to be within the stratum one and stratum two range, with 27 (67.5%) individuals falling into these categories. However, the number of employees managed at each strata varies, with the average employee count for stratum one being four employees, for stratum two 32 employees, for stratum three 14 employees, and for stratum four 68 employees.

Assessed as Stratum One

Twenty-six percent of participants ($n = 11$) were assessed to be stratum one, through groupings of responses in the WMS. Of these participants, 36% accurately identified their level of work. Further examination of each response indicated that 64% of participants supervised subordinate staff, a finding contrary to Jaques' (1996) work, indicating some misalignment. However,
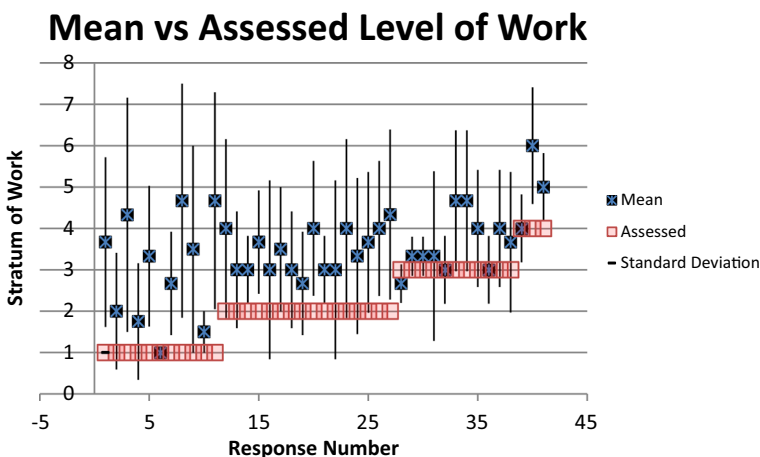

Fig. 3 Mean, standard deviation, and assessed level of work for participant sample
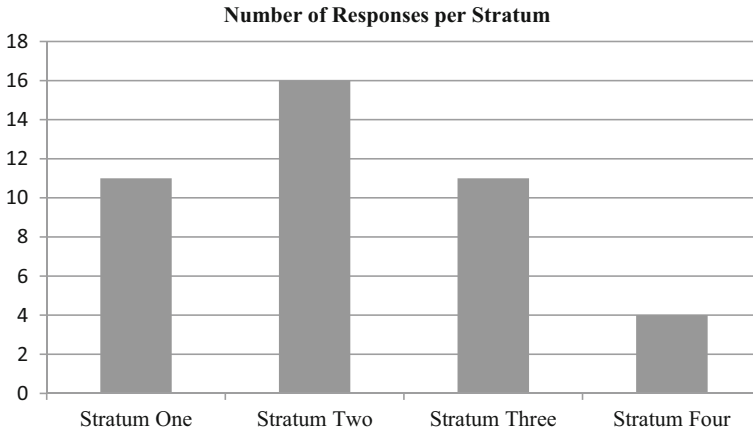
Fig. 4 Number of responses per strata

as Laner et al. (1969), and Allison and Morfitt (1994) point out, accurate measurement of responsibility at the lower stratums of work can be difficult which may contribute to these findings.

Assessed as Stratum Two

Thirty-eight percent of participants were assessed to be working at stratum two ($n = 16$), with 13% of participants accurately identifying their job level. Furthermore, 50% of these participants revealed that they manage subordinates in their role. All participants in this category indicated response groupings in the WMS, which correlated to stratum two work roles.

Assessed as Stratum Three

Twenty-six percent of participants ($n = 11$) were assessed to be stratum three, with 64% of participants accurately identifying their level of work. Nevertheless, 43% of participants identified that they manage subordinates in their role. Such an assessment is supported by the standard deviation across measurement outcomes (1.09), indicating less variance across measurement tools than in the lower strata measures. In this case, a lower standard deviation across the measurement tools provides insight into the consistency of responses in relation to the identified level of work. According to Laner et al. (1969) and Allison and Morfitt (1994), this is indicative of Jaques' time-span of discretion measure being more effectual for higher levels of work.

Assessed as Stratum Four

Ten percent of participants ($n = 4$) were assessed as working at stratum four, with one participant underestimating, one correctly identifying, and two participants overestimating their job level. However, those participants assessed as meeting the criteria for stratum four indicated a strong correlation with Jaques' work in terms of number of employees managed. For example, all participants at stratum four identified that they manage subordinates, with 75% managing more than 50 subordinates. The standard deviation between measurement outcomes (1.02) indicated a

strong correlation across data components, demonstrating a low variance between data collection tools.

Findings

Research Question One

Research question one asked: *What is the stratum of security practitioners in the corporate context?* Findings indicate that corporate security operates at four distinct strata of work (Table 1). Table 1 indicates identified levels of work within the corporate security function when aligned with the socio-organisational perspective of business activities, aligning each functional role alongside their operational, tactical, or strategic time-spans of discretion.

Table 1 Identified corporate security stratum of work

Stratum	Indicative role title	Function descriptor	Role type
One	Security guard, security technician, investigator, security consultant, sales and technical support, locksmith	Work is service-oriented and focussed on operational tasks that can be overcome or mitigated through direct trial and error approaches to security control. Problems can be solved with technical knowledge and pre-learned behaviours and tools.	Operational 1 day–1 year
Two	Security supervisor, senior security consultant, security coordinator	Work is restricted to specific operational boundaries and involves problem solving that cannot be wholly tackled by pre-learned behaviour. Individuals must collect information about a problem using security knowledge and skills to provide a solution to an immediate security objective.	
Three	Security manager (specialist)/lead security consultant	Work requires strong diagnostic skills to solve security problems. Individuals must consider a situation using their technical security knowledge and some generic managerial skills in their interaction with internal and external stakeholders to develop short-term mitigation strategies whilst considering consequences.	Tactical 1–5 years
Four	Security director/national security director	Work becomes unstructured and ill-defined, with multiple projects occurring simultaneously. Individuals move away from strong technical security knowledge and begin to harness generic managerial skills in the management of budgets, staff, and projects to meet medium term risk mitigation strategies.	
Five	NA	Not assigned strata in corporate security.	
Six	NA	Not assigned strata in corporate security.	Strategic
Seven	NA	Not assigned strata in corporate security.	5 years–20+ years

The study indicates that corporate security practitioners operate between stratum one to stratum four within the broader stratum of occupational work, with no evidence of practitioners beyond stratum four. Furthermore, the weighting of security works is between strata one and two. Jaques (1996) articulated that work conducted between these levels of an organisation is confined within a business unit and is thus tactically and operationally focussed. Tactical and operational focus suggests that individuals undertake short-term tasks or problems that can be overcome without dealing with high levels of uncertainty. Furthermore, the literature suggests that these lower work levels require strong technical and specialist skills that allow for work to be conducted within niche areas (as shown in Table 1, indicative role title), resulting in difficulty in the translation of these skills across occupation types.

The four distinct strata of work identified by the findings indicate that the majority of security work in organisations is conducted within an operational time horizon of 1 day to 1 year. Analysis correlates this operational level of work with stratum one and stratum two roles, comprising of direct and visible problems and restricted and highly specialist work environments (Mintzberg 1973; Jaques 1996). However, tactical time horizons are encountered at stratums three and four, with a functional time horizon between 1 and 5 years. These levels of work involve progressively more abstract thinking, stakeholder engagement, and managerial skills. Significantly, the strata identified comprise the lower half of the broader occupational stratum of work in organisations, indicating corporate security's functional boundaries.

Research Question Two

Research question two asked: *To what extent does the corporate security function permeate throughout organisations?* In response to the question, the study revealed that the security's corporate function operates within an organisation as a function of the technostructure, which is solely responsible for providing specialised analytical advice towards business operation. Corporate security leverages its diagnostic, inference, and treatment capabilities to consider tactical and operational problems within the security context. Such capabilities include the management of security risk through physical, electronic, and procedural security controls (Sennewald 2011). Whilst security may not be seated at the executive strata of an organisation, the advice it prepares safeguard business operations is communicated to the executive and strategic levels of an organisation (Coole et al. 2015).

Mintzberg's (1980) discussion on technostructure functions, considered alongside Martin and Fellenz (2010), lends to the alignment of security within this structure. Whilst the technostructure does operate outside of the central profit making operations of the organisation, it does provide vital services that enhance business operations. Security is one such vital service (Fayol 1949). Figure 5 presents the findings of this study, aligning corporate security and the identified strata of work to Mintzberg's (1980) organisational form.

Whilst security practitioners believe corporate security should be considered at the executive level of an organisation, the socio-organisational literature and the findings of this study suggest that this should not be done by a security specialist, directly contesting a consensus in the corporate security literature.

Interpretation and Discussion

The study investigated the stratum of work within the corporate security domain, aligning its participant's roles to the broader socio-organisational literature. This approach facilitated an
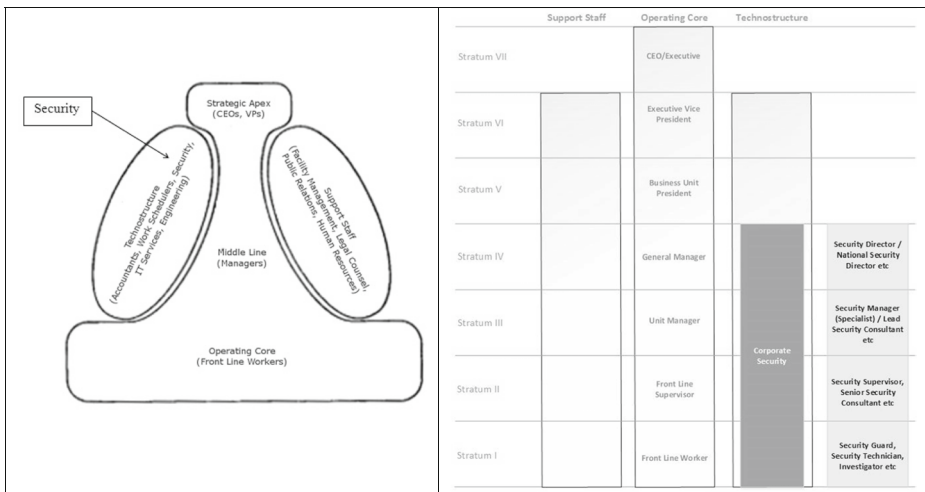
Fig. 5 Corporate security seating in the corporate organisation (adjusted from Mintzberg 1980 and Jaques 1996)

examination of corporate security's function with an appreciation of organisational goals, objectives, and structure and extricated itself from potential biases or misconceptions existing within the corporate security literature. Such alignment identified a significant disconnect between the current corporate security literature, as written by security practitioners and academics, and the socio-organisational literature, with many identified points of divergence. By identifying levels of work within the corporate security function, the study's findings indicate that corporate security provides operational and tactical support to the organisation. Corporate security operates at the lower reaches of corporate organisations, identified as stratum one through to stratum four with most workers operating at the organisational stratum two level. Furthermore, the positioning of the corporate security function within organisations is seated within the technostructure, which provides specialist analytical advice to support profit making activities as opposed to the organisations' core structure or support structure. Subsequently, corporate security appears responsible for providing specialised analytical and technical advice in the reduction of organisational risk exposure to protect broader business operations.

Corporate Security's Divergence of Literature

The study identified that there is a significant disconnect between the corporate security and socio-organisational literature. The corporate security literature generally perceives the corporate security function to be a strategic activity within an organisation, ideally operating at the executive stratum of work (Bayuk 2010; Sennewald 2011; Brooks and Corkill 2014). This view is disputed by the findings of the study, which are supported by the broader socio-organisational literature.

The security literature expounds the view that the corporate security function is a business enabler that can support and strengthen business operations (Sennewald 2011; Talbot and Jakeman 2009). Nevertheless, there is a consensus that the function can be considered a cost centre, with no direct impact on increasing market share or profits (Smith and Brooks 2012; Fischer et al. 2008; Gill and Howell 2014). In consideration of these seemingly oxymoronic

points, the security literature argues that the corporate security function should ideally operate strategically within an organisation to ensure it can have greater reach and impact on organisational planning and direction (Cubbage and Brooks 2013; Fay 2002; Sennewald 2011; Campbell 2014).

The security literature also purports that corporate security's current relegation to the lower stratum of work is due to immaturity in the industry, lack of professional consensus, and misunderstandings of the function at higher levels of work in the organisation (Barefoot and Maxwell 1987; Brooks and Corkill 2014; McGee 2006; Gill and Howell 2014). However, this study argues that in contrast to these views, such positioning can be better understood through an alignment with Mintzberg's (1980, 2009) work, dividing an organisation into the operating core, the technostructure, and support staff.

The literature appears to support several divergent viewpoints, particularly when observed through the socio-organisational literature. As discussed, the literature suggests a security function that operates at the highest reaches of an organisation, whilst simultaneously lamenting its lack of importance. This study identified the potential utility of widening the viewpoint and shifting the discussion. For example, instead of attempting to position security within a linear hierarchy, consideration to the fundamental function of security within an organisation and aligning it with similar corporate professional offerings will allow a more objective comparison. Such an alignment to the concept of a technostructure may facilitate a better understanding of the security function within organisations as a whole.

Further, the study found another significant disconnect between the corporate security and socio-organisational literature. Fayol's (1949) articulation of corporate security is one that should be governed by the executive reaches of an organisation, not operate within it, whereas some strands of the corporate security literature dictates an executive level function (Apollo Education Group 2015). Thus, it is argued that the perception of security as a strategic decision-making function with executive reach is not valid. Significantly, the findings of this study correlate to the broader socio-organisational literature and position corporate security as a technostructure function with an occupational ceiling, not directly aligned to profit generation operations.

Corporate Security as a Technostructure

Mintzberg (1980, 2009) considered that an organisation's operating core is facilitated and improved through the continued provision of services and innovation of organisational outputs by the executive strata of work (Martin and Fellenz 2010; Robbins and Judge 2011). Fayol (1949) identified the specialist role fulfilled by security practitioners as a core activity of organisational work. However, Mintzberg (1980) and Galbraith (1985) later articulated the concept of a technostructure within organisations that consists of disciplines that use analytical problem solving to shape an organisations' exposure to the external operating environment. Congruent with these body of works, the security literature identifies the function of corporate security to be the protection of business operations from disruption and harm, including people, information, assets, and reputation through procedural, technical, and physical risk mitigation and control measures (Smith and Brooks 2012; Fischer et al. 2008; Talbot and Jakeman 2009).

Such views were reinforced by Coole et al.'s (2015) work, which articulates that security practitioners utilise an analytical problem solving mindset that requires diagnosis of the problem, inference to develop a protective strategy, and treatment controls for a business

solution. Consequently, there is an identified relationship between the socio-organisational literature and security literature in this regard, lending credence to the argument that techno-structure activities provide functions that align with core security objectives (Fayol 1949; Jaques 1996; Mintzberg 1980; Galbraith 1985).

Corporate Security's Operational Strata

Security is argued to operate at the lower strata of an organisation, fulfilling a tactical and operational role within the analytical support function of the technostructure. That is, corporate security shapes the operating environment of an organisation, limiting exposure to risk from malevolent human actors. Furthermore, it is argued that security does not operate in either the core structure or at the executive level of an organisation, rather it supports these areas of the business by informing decision-makers of risk and acting to reduce risk exposure. Whilst it is acknowledged that in some organisations an executive level security practitioner may exist, they exist as an outlier rather than an example general practice. The executive level operates within organisations as management generalists with no specialist focus, inherently precluding a technical and analytical focus area such as security to operate effectively at this level (Fayol 1949; Mintzberg 1973; Martin and Fellenz 2010).

The study revealed that the corporate security function operates at tactical and operational levels (between stratum one and stratum four), indicating that corporate security practitioners operate within a maximum of 5-year time horizon. Stratum one work in the corporate security function is indicated to be very direct and restricted in scope, with practitioners relying on procedures and training to undertake their duties. Stratum two work is indicated to be restricted to specific operational boundaries, with capacity to draw on basic problem solving skills to solve immediate problems. Stratum three work is indicated to require a strong diagnostic ability, which can be applied in conjunction with extensive internal and some external stakeholder liaison. Finally, stratum four work is indicated to include unstructured and ill-defined tasks, with practitioners being responsible for managing multiple projects simultaneously.

Consequently, it is argued that the concept of the *security champion*, which, within the literature is an individual who operates strategically within the executive suite of an organisation to embed security within all aspects of an organisation is not entirely invalid. It is suggested that whilst such a person may exist, the individual would not be a security specialist that is embedded within the corporate security function. Moreover, the security champion, as outlined by the security literature, would instead be a management generalist who identifies the significance of the corporate security function and leverages the outputs of this function to align with strategic business objectives. Therefore, this alignment of the security literature to the organisational literature is supported by the findings and is reinforced by Fayol (1949) who originally outlined this process in his discourse on the corporate security function within organisations.

Implications

The security literature provides little consistency in the articulation of security roles and levels of work within the corporate sphere. Security academics argue that such inconsistency can be attributed in part to the ill-defined nature and relative immaturity of the corporate security

function. However, the significantly more mature socio-organisational literature provides a framework through which the corporate security function can be better understood and delineation of roles within the organisational sphere aligned. For example, that corporate security's function operates within relatively short decision-making time-spans of up to 5 years, which has been classified as stratums one to stratum four within the organisational stratum of work. The implications of this finding are significant to the corporate security literature as this role articulation is formulated from an exterior perspective, allowing a more dependable measure for use across disciplines. The use of the broader socio-organisational literature, as opposed to the security literature, to disclose corporate security's stratum of work affords a more representative alignment of corporate security's position within the organisation. Such an approach provides an external rather than an internal and possibly biased articulation of corporate security's position in the stratum of work.

Accordingly, through such an alignment the articulation of corporate security as a specialist activity of functional importance to the broader organisation can be argued (Fayol 1949). Whilst there has been appreciation for this importance throughout the security literature, it has not been clearly articulated where the corporate security function sits within the broader organisation. Subsequently, the security literature discourse has suggested that corporate security is positioned within the concept of support staff, where the provision of indirect support to business activities is undertaken (Talbot and Jakeman 2009; Smith and Brooks 2012). However, conflicting with this view, the study findings indicate that corporate security's function is positioned within the technostructure of an organisation, providing specialist analytic advice towards safeguarding business operations and shaping exposure to the external environment (Mintzberg 1980; Galbraith 1985). Such an articulation provides a shift in the perception of security activities as it postulates evidence to support the assertion that security is a significant embedded corporate activity within organisations.

Substantially, by reframing this literature perception, security as a technostructure function can be understood outside of a profit making business operation and as a contributor to an organisation's ability to navigate external environmental risk and uncertainty. For example, rather than attempting to understand security from the lens of a practitioner operating within an organisational hierarchy, shifting to a broader perspective and breaking down organisational work into sub-structures allows for a more fine-grained review of the utility of security and its application. Thus, the discussion of where security is seated within organisations shifts from being purely hierarchical to functional grouping according to organisational worth.

Furthermore, an implication of this interpretation includes insights into security career progression, alongside the supposed glass ceiling inherent in the function (Coole and Brooks 2015; Coole et al. 2015). Significantly, findings indicate an underlying stratum of work that when considered from the broader occupational stratum of work allows for the mapping of career progression and alignment of job roles and functions for corporate security personnel. For instance, understanding the seating of security roles within the stratum enables security education institutions to align learning outcomes and supporting curriculum to their targeted stratum of work. The study found that the maximum level of work in the corporate security function is indeed stratum four, or middle management level, suggesting that there is evidence to support a glass ceiling in the domain.

In consideration of the varied industries that security operates within and thus the variety of corporate and societal cultures that security practitioners are exposed to, some aspects of this identified glass ceiling may vary cross-culture (Bird and Mendenhall 2015). For example, substantial differences exist between national and cultural divides within the corporate context.

The importance of leadership in individualistic or collectivistic cultures, the perceived and actual distance in decision-making power between manager and subordinates, and the influence of autocratic organisational structures could all have a significant impact on the perceived and actual importance of the security function (Dickson et al. 2012).

Therefore, corporate security education needs to be focused towards roles and tasks commensurate with this level of work. For those seeking corporate roles beyond stratum four, their further experience and educational needs relate to broader management affairs and decision-making, leaving behind technical security knowledge, which may not be apparent to educators and practitioners at this stage.

Subsequently, through an examination of the socio-organisational literature, the argument can be made that a glass ceiling exists for almost all technical occupational activities of work in organisations. Such a view is supported by Mintzberg (1973, 2009), Jaques (1996), and Robbins and Judge (2011) whom postulate that higher strata work require a generalist managerial approach with limited specialist skills. Consequently, these specialist skills include the application of those core activities identified by Fayol (1949). Therefore, to progress beyond the confines of the business unit and enter the executive stratum of work, individuals must shed their specialist focus and embrace generalist approaches to management.

Limitations

Study findings must be considered within the research limitations which are inherent in both the study design and analysis of the results. Jaques' (1996) theories concerning the time-span of discretion and its relation to an individual's level of work within the occupational strata do have significant support from the literature (Craddock 2002). However, it is important to note that shifts in globalisation and technology may have considerable impact on its application to modern work environments (Boal and Whitehead 1992; Ivanov 2011; Rossi 2008; Stichweh 2008). In addition, the decrease in temporal-spatial concerns with the rise of modern technology across all job roles could have significant impacts on the relationship between complexity and time-span of discretion (Rossi 2008). Consequently, it could be argued that complexity has penetrated the lower echelons of organisational work through the adoption of information technology, simultaneously decreasing the time-span of discretion required to action tasks. Boal and Whitehead (1992) further suggest that Jaques (1976) theories are only applicable to individuals that are tackling "tame" problems as opposed to "wicked" problems, which could impact the theories applicability to the corporate security domain.

Furthermore, criticisms lay in consideration of behavioural traits, as Jaques (1996) does not consider behaviour to be a contributing factor to an individual's capacity to handle complexity in work. Boal and Whitehead (1992), alongside Mintzberg (1973, 2009), and the broader literature (Martin and Fellenz 2010; Robbins and Judge 2011) consider behavioural traits to be a significant contributor to an individual's work capacity. Moreover, these considerations are especially true in difficult circumstances such as crisis and high-impact events (Talbot and Jakeman 2009), where security individuals are generally responsible.

Finally, the lack of demographic data collected during the survey stage, aligned with the potential for cross-cultural aspects of corporate work and progression, presents a limitation in understanding the full impacts of the presented findings. The extent to which culture between nations and industries has shaped the data collected and its subsequent interpretation is unknown. Future research should consider this dimension to understanding the potential

security glass ceiling within organisations and the impact on the structure of organisational work.

Recommendations

The study presents significant findings to the corporate security literature, broader academia, industry, government, and regulatory bodies. Consequently, whilst some limitations are identified in the research, the implications of these findings must be seriously considered going forward. Therefore, it is suggested that the following steps be taken:

1. Study replication; specifically to increase the sample size to allow for statistically valid generalisation
2. Review of the corporate security function; specifically an exploration of each identified stratum of work in aid of establishing functional boundaries and definable roles
3. Investigate the alignment between security training and educational curriculum and the identified stratum of work; specifically between prescribed training and procedures at lower strata, and education and abstract concepts at higher strata
4. Investigate and consider career progression pathways along the identified stratum of work; specifically those of graduates
5. Further research into the corporate security functions and its alignment to the technostructure; specifically aligning outputs and functions with this embedded activity of organisational work
6. An extensive critique of the corporate security literature in light of this study's findings; specifically that future security literature understands and articulates corporate security and its work roles
7. Further research into the time-span of discretion measurement; specifically, its application in modern times to contemporary organisations

Conclusion

This article has presented an innovative and unprejudiced study that explored the corporate security stratum of work within organisations. Whilst security practitioners believe corporate security should be considered at the executive level of an organisation, this study suggests that this should not be undertaken by a security specialist that directly contests the corporate security literature. The study revealed that corporate security operates at a tactical and operational level, functionally positioned between stratum one and stratum four. Furthermore, that the corporate security function, as an operating activity, is situated within the technostructure of organisations. Consequently, these findings have uncovered a significant disconnect between the corporate security literature and the socio-organisational literature, with many points of divergence.

Accordingly, such divergence leads to several significant implications for policy, education, academia, and the broader community. These implications include the glass ceiling in career progression for security practitioners, reduced progress of the security sector towards professionalisation, poorly defined educational curriculum, and understanding corporate security's role definition and articulation. Consequently, this study has provided an extensive

list of recommendations for application and future research. Finally, corporate security is an activity that should be governed by the executive level of the organisation but not operate within it.

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