New Professor, Merideth Thompson, Has Studied Impact of Abusive Work Situations

By Nadiah Johari

Having an abusive boss can create workplace stress that can easily translate into problems at home. For eight years, Merideth Thompson, a new professor at the Huntsman School of Business, has done research to gain insight into how a troubled work situation can impact the family.

Dr. Thompson has focused her research on how abusive supervision and workplace incivility affect an employee’s family experiences. She said she has had friends and family members who had supervisors who were abusive and hostile. She found that instead of leaving the stress of abuse at work, they carried it home and sometimes took it out on their families.

“That was something that I really wanted to better understand,” she said. “If we can understand how it happens, then we can understand how to prevent the abuse in the first place by not hiring managers who will engage in that behavior.”

In 1995, Dr. Thompson earned her bachelor’s degree at Howard Payne University in psychology.

“After getting my undergraduate degree, I did a little bit of work in psychology and realized that it really wasn’t for me. It didn’t suit my interests or my strengths,” Dr. Thompson said. “I had worked in banking when I was in college, and I went back to that and really got interested in the people side of business, which was kind of the mixture between business and psychology that social psychology provides.”
Dr. Thompson worked for the Texas Mental Health and Mental Retardation organization. She then worked at Regions Bank where she did training and development, and systems implementation.

In 1997, Dr. Thompson spent three years working at Deloitte & Touche in Nashville as a senior analyst before taking a leave of absence to pursue an MBA with concentrations in human and organizational performance and information technology at Vanderbilt University. After earning her master’s degree, she worked at Deloitte Consulting as an implementation manager for two years and left the firm in 2002 to work toward a doctorate in management at Vanderbilt University.

Dr. Thompson has been in Utah for three months and said she is thrilled to be at USU. She teaches Introduction to Human Resources and Negotiation courses. In addition, she will be an advisor for the Huntsman school’s chapter of the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) and said she plans to integrate the student chapter with the professional chapter.

“I think one of the things that I found helpful as an undergraduate and graduate student was having somebody older and more experienced who was a good mentor,” she said. “There are some opportunities for mentoring between our students and some HR professionals in the area, so I’m hoping to strengthen some of those ties over the next year or two.”

Dr. Thompson said one of her goals at USU is to strengthen and expand the influence of the Master of Science in Human Resources program in the western region as well as nationally. She hopes that the program will be known for churning out graduating professionals who excel in their chosen area of HR.

Dr. Thompson likes to go rock climbing, backpacking, and traveling with her sons, ages fourteen and nine. Prior to coming to USU, Dr. Thompson was a faculty member at Baylor University.

“One of the really helpful things about working together is we know each other’s work situation, so we can help each other with work problems, which actually kind of goes with some research that I’m doing right now about spouses who either work in the same organization or in the same occupation,” she said. “For us, it’s a strength, and it’s something that we don’t take for granted.”